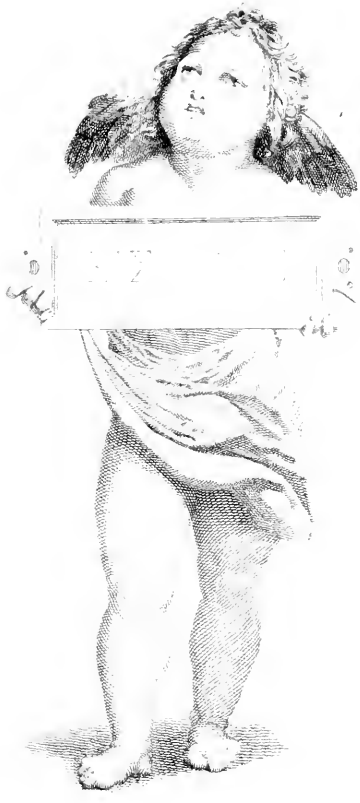

George Barnard

William Davis

Betsey Davis
a New years Gift.
from her father.

SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. JOSEPH S. BUCKMINSTER.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY

1815.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE collection of this volume of posthumous discourses was undertaken in compliance with the general wishes of those, who had the privilege of hearing the preaching of Mr. Buckminster, and particularly of the society in Brattle Square. About sixty sermons were first selected, from the whole number found among his papers, by two distinguished members of his parish. From among this number, those, which compose the present volume, were taken and prepared for the press by two of his brethren in the ministry. In performing the difficult and delicate task of revision, every other liberty has been very sparingly used, except that of omitting such passages, as appeared not to have received the usual degree of the author's care and attention. The only general principle of selection, which could be adopted, was, to take those sermons, which, with regard to their literary execution, were found to be in a state most fitted for publication. Many discourses, therefore, have been necessarily neglected, containing passages not inferiour to the best in the present volume, but which appear not to have been laboured throughout with equal felicity. One or two have been admitted, where the author, in some of his leading ideas, may seem to have been indebted to

other writers. But his thoughts, where these coincidences exist, appear always to have passed through and taken an original colouring from his own mind; and he has adopted nothing, which he has not embellished and improved. The sermons alluded to are those on faith, which bear some resemblance to the discourses of Cappe on the same subject. Of the sermon on the character of our Saviour, also, the general argument has been often stated by different writers, particularly by Mr. Belsham in his chapter on the internal evidences of christianity.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SO favourable has been the reception of this volume by the public, that a new edition has become necessary within the short space of six months. The publishers have added to this edition, an Oration on the Dangers and Duties of Men of Letters, which will be found at the end of the Memoir; and "The Right Hand of Fellowship," delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Charles Lowell, at the end of the volume.

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MEMOIR

OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE

REVEREND JOSEPH S. BUCKMINSTER.

MEMOIR.

The sermons, which compose the following volume, are selected from a number of discourses written without any expectation of publication in the regular course of the official duties of the author. The objections to offering to the world writings left under such circumstances are obvious, and certainly not inconsiderable. The disadvantages of all posthumous works, which have not received the author's last corrections, are exceedingly great; but especially of those of a pulpit orator. A very different degree of attention will usually be given by every writer to compositions intended only for the ear of a miscellaneous audience, and those, which are to meet the eye of a cool and, perhaps, fastidious reader. It must, also, often be incident to one, who is tasked to be ready to speak at a given hour, that amidst the glow and hurry of composition, sentiments will be struck out, which are not sufficiently weighed, or not carefully limited, or not perfectly consistent with each other, or which, perhaps, are unconsciously supplied to him by memory, instead of invention. It is obvious, too, that many great improvements, and a certain finish and perfection will be suggested by a last revision, which the author himself—while his discernment is quickened by the anticipation of the public tribunal, before which he is

about to stand—alone can give. These, and other similar considerations, seem to establish the propriety of a general rule, which shall forbid the publication of posthumous writings, except where the author has directed it, or, at least, appears to have, in some degree, prepared for it.

Powerful, however, as these considerations undoubtedly are, they have yielded, in the present case, to a conviction of the very extraordinary merit of these discourses. The mind of Mr. Buckminster was so singularly and habitually accurate, that, though these sermons have a claim to all the indulgence, which is due to posthumous writings, there are few which have so little need of it. It seemed, therefore, to his friends, that it would be unjust to him, to his country, which is interested in his fame, and even not consistent with what we may believe to be the purposes of Providence, in committing to him such powers for the support of religion and virtue, that all their beneficial effects should be confined to the small circle of his immediate hearers. It surely would not be right, that a mind so richly and splendidly endowed should be suffered to pass away, after shedding a momentary warmth and lustre around it, without leaving any permanent proof of its salutary and benignant influence.

Of the propriety of this decision the public have, in this volume, the means of judging.—As it was believed, that few will read these sermons without a desire of knowing something more of the author, the office of giving some particulars of his life and character has been committed to one of his friends, who may advance that claim to the confidence of his readers, which is given by an unreserved and affectionate intercourse with Mr. Buckminster of many years.

Joseph Stevens Buckminster was born May 26, 1784, at Portsmouth, New-Hampshire. His ancestors, both by his father's and mother's side, for several generations, were

clergymen. His paternal grandfather was the author of several tracts of some celebrity in their day, in defence of a mitigated form of Calvinism. Dr. Stevens of Kittery, his maternal grandfather, is yet remembered, as a very learned, judicious and pious divine; in short—to use the language of the very high authority* from whom I received this account—"he was a man, of whom one may say every thing, that is good." His father, the late Dr. Buckminster, was for a long time a minister of Portsmouth, and was esteemed one of the most eminent clergymen of that state. His mother, I find, all accounts unite in representing as a woman of a very elegant and cultivated mind; and though she died while her son was yet in early youth, it was not till she had made many of those impressions on his mind and heart, which most deeply and permanently affect the character.

Mr. Buckminster was a striking example of the early development of talents. There is some diversity in this respect in the accounts, which are given us of eminent persons. As far, however, as the intellectual differences of men arise from differences in their original constitution, from greater sensibility, greater capacity of exertion, or superiour susceptibility of external impressions, these differences, we should think, would be more or less clearly displayed in every stage of the mind's progress. When, therefore, nothing remarkable is remembered of the youth of a man of genius, the cause may probably be traced, either to a want of attention, or a want of philosophical discrimination in the observers. The instances of the early display of the powers of Mr. Buckminster were very extraordinary. There was no period, after his earliest infancy, when he did not impress on all who saw him, strangers, as well as friends, a conviction of the certainty of his future eminence. It seemed as if the early opening of a mind so

* The late Chief Justice Parsons.

fruitful and so fair was intended to prepare, and in some degree to compensate us for its sudden and premature loss. An account of some of the peculiarities of his youth will be found in the following extract of a letter. It was given me, I presume, with the expectation, that the facts it contains would be interwoven with my own narration; but, as it must evidently be injured by any alteration, I shall venture to give it in the form in which it was received.

"From the birth of my brother, our parents intended him for the ministry, and took the greatest delight in cultivating a mind, whose early promise gave them reason to hope he was to be a blessing to the world. I do not know how soon he was able to read; but at four years old he began to study the Latin grammar, and had so great a desire to learn the Greek also, that my father, to please him, taught him to read a chapter in the Greek Testament by pronouncing to him the words. As early as this he discovered that love for books and ardent thirst for knowledge, which he possessed through life. He was seldom willing, while a child, to leave his books for any amusement, and my father was so much afraid, that close application would injure his health, that he used to reward him for playing with boys of his own age, and would often go with him to persuade him, by example, to take part in their sports. I have no recollection, that, when we were children, he ever did any thing that was wrong. He had always the same open, candid disposition, that marked his manhood; nor can I recollect any time, when I did not feel the same confidence, that whatever he did was right; the same affection and respect, which made the last years I spent with him, so happy. From the time he was five, till he was seven years old, it was his practice, to call the domestics together on Sabbath morning, and read to them one of my father's manuscript sermons, repeat the Lord's prayer, and sing a hymn; and he performed the service with such solemnity, that he was

always heard with attention. I have heard my dear father say, he never knew him tell an untruth, or prevaricate in the least. Indeed, there was always something about him, which gained the love of all who knew him; and never any thing, which made them fear, their expectations of his future excellence would be disappointed."

"We lost our excellent mother, when he was six years old. But he had received an impression of her character, which time could not efface; and I believe through life he was anxious to be, in every respect, what he knew she would have wished him to be. After he went to Exeter, he passed but little time at home. The year before he entered college, his eyes were so weak, that my father thought it necessary to take his books from him. It was a deprivation he could not bear to submit to; and he found means to secrete some old folios in the garret, which he would spend some time each day in reading. This is the only act of disobedience, of which I ever knew him guilty. I perfectly remember the great delight he used to take, in listening to the conversation of men of literature and science, and in works of taste and imagination. But the progress of his mind, and the development of his powers, I was too young to observe or take an interest in.—Should this letter contain any such information, as you wish, I shall not regret the painful exertion, it has cost me to write it."

At the age of twelve, he was ready for college, but, fearing his extreme youth, his father detained him for some time at Exeter—where he had received his preparatory education under the care of Dr. Benjamin Abbot—and he was entered as a student at Cambridge, in 1797, nearly a year in advance. It may seem strange to those, who take their ideas of an university from the establishments of England and Germany, that one so young should be fully prepared for admission into the oldest of our seminaries,

where the preliminary knowledge demanded is greater than at any other in our country. But it is the genius of all our institutions—arising, perhaps, in a great degree, from the thinness of our population, which creates a premature demand for every species of talents—to bring forward our young men very early into life; and, though such proficiency, as we find in Mr. Buckminster is, no doubt, rare, it is no uncommon thing to find them closing their professional studies at an age, when Europeans are just entering their universities. This fact opens a field for many interesting speculations on the state and prospects of society, as well as of letters, among us; and will, perhaps, hereafter be found to furnish a solution of some of the peculiarities of that national character, which—if our political institutions should possess any permanency—will, we may suppose, be ere long completely formed and developed.

On the entrance of Mr. Buckminster at college, the same decided designation for peculiar excellence, which had so strongly impressed those who knew him in his early youth, was at once seen and acknowledged. His career at this institution was equally honourable to his moral principles and to his mental powers. Amidst the temptations inseparable from the place, he gave an example of the possible connexion of the most splendid genius with the most regular and persevering industry, of a generous independence of character with a perfect respect for the governours and the laws of college, and of a keen relish for innocent enjoyment with a fixed dread of every appearance of vice. It may be worth while to record, that he never incurred any college censure, and was not even fined, till the last term of his senior year, and then only for some trifling negligence. It may be said of him, as has been remarked of a kindred genius, that "he did not need the smart of guilt to make him virtuous, nor the regret of folly to make him wise."*

* President Kirkland's Life of Mr. Ames.

In the summer of 1800 he received the honours of the university. There are many, who recollect the oration, which he then delivered on "the literary characters of different nations," and the impression produced by the sight of his small and youthful figure, contrasted with the maturity and extent of his knowledge, the correctness, as well as brilliancy of his imagination, and the propriety and grace of his elocution.

To the study of theology he was inclined from the period, when he received his earliest religious impressions; and he devoted himself to it for more than four years after leaving college. His time was spent, partly in the family of his relative, Theodore Lyman, Esq. at Waltham and Boston, and partly at Exeter, as an assistant in the academy. The portion of this time, which was given to the instruction of youth, he always remembered with pleasure, as leading him to a review of his early classical studies, and giving him that accuracy in elementary principles, in which our preparatory schools have been, heretofore, chiefly deficient.

The number of works in theology, metaphysics, morals and general literature, which he read during the period, of which we speak, would appear scarcely credible to one, who did not know the rapidity, with which he looked through a book, and the almost intuitive sagacity, with which he seized and retained all that was valuable in its contents. That what he read was thoroughly digested, was apparent from the accuracy—so often observed and admired by his friends—with which he would discriminate the peculiar merits of different writers. I find, from some fragments of a journal of his studies, that, where he thought a book of particular importance, he was accustomed to make a copious analysis of its contents. It was, also, his habit to make references, at the end of a volume, to the pages, where any interesting passages were found. Par-

ficulars like these are, it is true, unimportant in themselves; but they may, perhaps, gratify, in some degree, that natural and not useless curiosity, which we feel with regard to all the circumstances of a distinguished man's preparation for his future eminence.

The process of study and of thought, through which he passed in forming his theological opinions, cannot be too much praised. It is strange, that a principle so natural, and so constantly observed in all other sciences—that of beginning with what is simple and clear, and gradually proceeding to what is doubtful and dark—should have been so often reversed in the study of theology. It was not, however, overlooked by Mr. Buckminster. He avoided, as much as possible, all discussion of the controverted doctrines of systematic divinity, till he had given himself a thorough initiation in the evidences of religion, natural and revealed,—examined the nature and degree of the inspiration of the sacred writings, in order to determine what laws of interpretation are to be applied to them,—taken a general survey of the questions connected with the criticism of the Bible,—and sanctified all his investigations by the habitual study of the spirit and maxims of practical religion. Having by these inquiries, together with an accurate knowledge of the original languages, prepared himself for the interpretation of the more difficult and obscure parts of the scriptures, he commenced the study of them with the aid derived from a comparison of the opinions of the best commentators of different sects. The writers on dogmatic theology he now permitted himself to consult; and he has often told me, with what eager curiosity, and even trembling interest, he read Taylor and Edwards on original sin, and pushed his researches into those high speculations, where so much caution is necessary to prevent the mind from becoming enslaved to a system, and shut for ever against the light of truth.

Having, in this manner, gone over an uncommonly wide and extensive field of preparatory studies, in October, 1804, he yielded to a request to preach to the society in Brattle Street, Boston. I cannot attempt to describe the delight and wonder, with which his first sermons were listened to by all classes of hearers. The most refined and the least cultivated equally hung upon his lips. The attention of the thoughtless was fixed. The gayety of youth was composed to seriousness. The mature, the aged, the most vigorous and enlarged minds were at once charmed, instructed and improved. After preaching for a few weeks, he received an invitation to become the minister of this society, and was ordained January 30, 1805. The fatigue and agitation of spirits, which he experienced on this occasion, produced a severe fit of illness, which interrupted his labours till the following March, when he recommenced them with the sermon on the *advantages of sickness*, which makes a part of the present collection.

The situation, in which he was now placed, introduced him to many new and most important duties. The task of a christian teacher can never be a light one to any conscientious man. There are, however, circumstances, in some respects, peculiar to the situation of a clergyman in Boston, which—while they are a source of constant interest and delight to him—serve to make his duties uncommonly great. It is the general habit of the place for the individuals of each society to make their minister a part almost of their families, a sharer of their joys and sorrows, one who has always access to them, and is always welcomed with distinguished confidence and affection. There are many obvious advantages arising from this unreserved intimacy. Religion is more easily made to mingle, as it ought, with the common business and pleasures of life, when the idea of its ministers is not associated merely with images of awe and terrour, of gloom and death. Both admonition and

consolation come home to the heart with redoubled effect, when they are heard from the lips of one, who is not only respected from the sanctity of his office, but who is personally beloved as a friend. This intimate connexion with his people—although, to a man of any sensibility, a source of some of the most exquisite gratifications of the human heart—makes a great addition to his toils. It makes a deep inroad on the time he would give to study; and almost compels him to redeem it from the hours, which ought to be given to exercise or repose. By the variety and painful interests, also, of the scenes and occupations, to which it calls him, the mind is often agitated and worn down; while the reflection, which it is impossible always to exclude, of the insufficient ability, with which his duties are performed, and the inadequate returns he can make for the friendship and confidence he receives, must often come over and oppress his spirits.

The effect of these labours on the delicate frame of Mr. Buckminster could not fail to be soon visible. A disorder, which had made its appearance some years before, was sensibly increased during the year 1805. It was one of the most tremendous maladies, which God permits to afflict the human frame; and to which it has often been found, that minds of the most exquisite structure are peculiarly exposed. The manner, in which this visitation was endured by Mr. Buckminster, I can never think of, but with increasing admiration of the fortitude, and reverence of the piety, which sustained him. Those—who saw his habitual gayety of disposition, and observed the lively interest, which he took in his friends, and all the usual occupations of life; and especially, who witnessed all his cheerfulness and activity, returning almost immediately after the severest of these attacks—were disposed to think, that he could not be sensible of the terrific nature of his disorder, or ever look forward with any distinct anticipation to its

threatened consequences. It was seldom that even his nearest friends heard from him any allusion to his calamity; and, perhaps, there was only one of them, to whom all the thoughts of his soul, on this subject, were confided. How little they knew of him, who imagined, he was insensible to any of its appalling consequences, will appear by the following extract from his private journal, which I can scarcely transcribe without tears.

October 31, 1805. "Another fit of epilepsy. I pray God, that I may be prepared, not so much for death, as for the loss of health, and, perhaps, of mental faculties. The repetition of these fits must, at length, reduce me to idiocy. Can I resign myself to the loss of memory, and of that knowledge, I may have vainly prided myself upon? O God! enable me to bear this thought, and make it familiar to my mind, that by thy grace I may be willing to endure life, as long as Thou pleasest to lengthen it. It is not enough to be willing to leave the world, when God pleases; we should be willing, even to live useless in it, if He, in his holy providence, should send such a calamity upon us. I think, I perceive my memory fails me. O God, save me from that hour!"

It is proper to remark, that this suspicion of the failure of his memory was, I believe, wholly without foundation. His fears for the safety of a faculty—which, in him, was always so eminently perfect, that his friends scarcely ever thought of appealing from it on any question of fact—were awakened, probably, by that loss of facility of retention, which every philosophic mind, trained to the habit of classifying its ideas, is accustomed to experience with regard to those insulated facts, which cannot be easily connected with its general knowledge.

In the spring of 1806, the increase of his disorder induced him to think of a voyage to Europe. His society, with a generous preference of his advantage to their own conve-

nience and pleasure, readily consented to his departure; and he sailed for Liverpool early in May. He was received in London at the house of his relative and countryman, Samuel Williams, Esq. who, with his brother, an early friend of Mr. Buckminster, made his residence delightful by every possible attention. In August—having been joined by a friend from Boston, whose office it is to collect this imperfect memorial of his worth—he embarked for the Continent, and landed at Harlingen, on the Zuyder Zee. He passed rapidly through the chief cities of Holland, ascended the Rhine, and, partly on foot, made the tour of Switzerland. At Geneva he wrote, in a letter to a friend, a description of the fall of the mountain of Rossberg, or Ruffberg, which is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful and interesting of the minor productions of his pen. I subjoin it in a note, as a proof of how he could feel, and how he could describe.* From Switzerland he directed his course to Paris, where his stay, which he had intended should be short, was protracted to five months by the embarrassments to the intercourse with England, produced by the first operations of the Berlin decree. His residence there, however, could not be tedious amidst the literary resources of the French capital, and the inexhaustible treasures of the fine arts, with which the plunder of Europe has enriched it. Much of his time, also, both here and in London, was employed in collecting a library, for which his remarkable knowledge of literary history eminently qualified him; and, before he left Europe, he formed and sent home a collection of near three thousand volumes of the choicest writers in theology and general literature. Some of the motives, which induced him to expend so large a part of a small fortune in the purchase of books, will be seen in the following extract of a letter to his father

* Note A.

—accompanied with another very touching reference to the calamity, which still followed him.

London, May 5, 1807.

"If the malady, with which it has pleased God to afflict me, should not entirely disappear, I hope I shall be able, by his grace, so to discipline my mind, as to prepare it for any consequences of such a disorder; consequences, which I dread to anticipate, but which I think I could bear without guilty complaint. I sometimes fancy my memory has already suffered; but, perhaps, it is all fancy. You will, perhaps, say, that it is no very strong proof, that I have any serious apprehensions on this score, that I am continually purchasing and sending out books, and saying to my mind, thou hast goods laid up for many years. True—but, though I may be cut off by the judgment of God from the use of these luxuries, they will be a treasure to those, who may succeed me, like the hoards of a miser, scattered after his death. I consider, that, by every book I send out, I do something for my dear country, which the love of money seems to be depressing almost into unlettered barbarism."

In February he returned to London, passed the following spring and summer in a tour through England, Scotland and Wales, embarked at Liverpool in August, and reached home in September. Some of the general impressions, which he received from his visit to Europe, may be collected from a Thanksgiving sermon, which he preached soon after his return, and which is inserted in this volume. His disorder—though the mild climate of the continent seemed to mitigate it, and even for a while to flatter him with the hope of complete recovery—remained radically the same. His constitution, however, probably gained some additional vigour by his travels, and was thus enabled onger to endure the attacks of his malady.

He returned now to all the duties of his office with redoubled activity. He was welcomed by his society with unabated affection and regard. But no praise ever seduced him to intermit his diligence. His books gave him an inexhaustible source of interest and delight; and, as he was unavoidably exposed to frequent interruptions during the day, his studies were protracted till midnight with fatal constancy. In the inquiries peculiar to his profession he took increasing pleasure; and he has more than once told me, that he was fast losing his taste for all other studies. In order that this all-absorbing interest in theology should not wholly destroy his relish for elegant letters—which he justly considered as a valuable auxiliary to his ministerial influence—he occasionally lent his aid, as he had done previously to his voyage, to the Monthly Anthology, and other literary periodical publications of the day. I refer in a note to several pieces in these works, of which he was the author.*

His only habitual relaxation was music, of which, from his youth, he was passionately fond, and in which his taste was, I believe, very exquisite. This, of course, led him to take an interest in the sacred music of his church; and, to make this part of worship more perfect, he collected and published, in 1808, a number of hymns, as a supplement to those appended by Dr. Colman to Tate and Brady's psalms. The collection was formed on the general principle, that, as singing is an act of worship, in which all christians are to join, it is proper, that those sentiments, which are peculiar to any of the different sects, should be excluded, so that no tender conscience may be prevented from sharing in this part of social devotion. Reasonable, however, and evangelical, as is this principle, it did not prevent his little book—though designed only for his own society, and not regularly published—from being attacked with a great deal of asperity. He was accused, in a con-

* Note B.

temporary theological journal, of mutilating the hymns of Watts and others, in order to cover a design of suppressing the great doctrines of the gospel by the authority of their names. The charge was sufficiently absurd; and I would not, willingly, revive a forgotten controversy. But, as I find a reference to this affair in his private journal, and as the charge affects his personal integrity, and may hereafter meet the eye of those, who have not the means of knowing how unfounded it was, I feel obliged to insert the following extract. The observations, which introduce it, are very striking illustrations of his humility, and of his habitual and elevated piety.

"January 2, 1809. A new year has begun. In looking back upon the events of my life the last year, I see little or no improvement. Sure I am, that my stock of theological knowledge has not been increased, though I have some reason to hope, that my sermons, for the last year, have not been inferiour to any preceding. In the trials, to which God has exposed me, I endeavour to discern the design of his providence. The disorder, to which I am yet subjected, ought to be to me a perpetual lesson of humility. I have sometimes thought, that, if our powers and state of mind, in another world, depend at all upon the condition of the understanding, when we leave this, I should prefer to die, before my mind shall be irrecoverably debilitated by this disorder. May this consideration—with others—keep me in a state of perpetual willingness and readiness to depart. My greatest trial this year was, the attack upon my selection of hymns for the use of Brattle Street church. I cannot but think it insidious and impertinent. If I have indulged any improper feelings towards the supposed author, I pray God to forgive me; at least, I trust, they do not appear in my reply. As to the principal and most important charge in the review, that of unsignified alterations, I can here put down, what it was not

necessary to tell the public, that I DID NOT KNOW OF THEM, TILL THEY WERE POINTED OUT BY THE REVIEWER. I took the hymns, without alteration, from Dr. Kippis's collection."

In the beginning of 1809 Mr. BUCKMINSTER published a sermon on the death of Governour Sullivan, the first production of his pen to which he gave his name. In the course of the year he wrote the circular address of the Massachusetts Bible Society, an institution, in which he took a very lively interest, and of which he was corresponding secretary. He also published an address "on the dangers and duties of men of letters," pronounced before the society of Φ. B. K. at Harvard College—an enchanting specimen of the variety and elegance of his literature, and of his power and disposition to make it auxiliary to the cause of truth and virtue.* These, together with a sermon on the death of Rev. William Emerson, are the only writings which he published, except the fugitive pieces in the literary journals, to which I have referred.

In 1808, he engaged, in conjunction with his friend, Mr. William Wells, and under the patronage of the university at Cambridge, in the publication of Griesbach's Greek Testament, containing a selection of the most important various readings. This work passed under the most careful revision, in the course of which several errours in the original were discovered and corrected. I believe, that this American edition may be safely said not to yield the palm of accuracy to any, which has been published in Europe. Mr. BUCKMINSTER wrote several pieces, in which the general merits of Griesbach were largely and ably discussed, the peculiarities of the minor edition were pointed out, and the fidelity and accuracy of this most candid and learned critic were vindicated and explained.† Proposals were, also, issued for a supplementary volume to Griesbach,

* This Address will be found inserted at the end of this Memoir.

† Note C.

to contain an English translation of the Prolegomena to his large critical edition, the authorities for his variations from the received text, and some dissertations, original and selected, on subjects connected with the criticism of the Bible. Some progress was made in preparing this work by Mr. Buckminster and one of his friends; but, as he did not give his name to the proposals, they did not receive sufficient encouragement to induce him to persevere. In 1810 he formed the plan of publishing all the best modern versions of the prophetical books of the Old Testament. He proposed to use the version of Bishop Lowth for Isaiah, with the various renderings of Dodson and Stock in the margin, where they differ materially from Lowth. The major prophets were to be completed by Blaney's version of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Newcome's of Ezekiel, and Wintle's of Daniel, with Blaney's of the LXX weeks. Newcome's translation of the minor prophets was to have followed, with the most important variations from Horsley's Hosea, Benjoin's Jonah, and Blaney's Zechariah. After this he hoped to have been able to give an additional volume, containing the most important notes and preliminary dissertations to the several books. The whole design, however, I am almost ashamed to say, failed for want of a sufficient taste for these studies among our countrymen.

The remaining years of the short life of Mr. Buckminster were marked by few incidents. The peaceful duties of a clergyman admit of but little variety, and possess no general interest. He was an active member of almost all our literary and charitable societies. He took the liveliest interest in every plan for the improvement of the intellectual, moral and religious character of the community; and scarcely one was attempted, in which his advice and co-operation were not sought and afforded. In 1811 he received a proof of the estimation, in which his knowledge in his favourite walk of study was held, by his appointment, as the

first lecturer on biblical criticism at Cambridge, on the foundation established by the late Hon. Samuel Dexter. This appointment was universally thought to be an honour most justly due to his preeminent attainments in this science. All his studies had contributed to fit him for this office; but, to increase his qualifications, he immediately began the study of the German language, and engaged in a minute review of his former reading. He laid out a very extensive plan for his lectures—of which, however, some fragments only were found among his papers—and expected to have been prepared to deliver them early in 1813.

But the all-wise Disposer had otherwise determined. In the midst of all his usefulness and activity, when he was never more interesting to his friends, and their hopes from him were never more highly raised, they were all at once extinguished. A sudden and violent access of his old disorder instantly made a total and irrecoverable wreck of his intellect, and, after lingering for a few days—during which he had not even a momentary interval of reason—he sunk under its force, Tuesday, June 9, 1812, having just completed his twenty-eighth year.

It remains, that I should now attempt to embody some of my recollections of his person and manners, his intellectual habits, acquisitions and powers, his religious character and views, and his ministerial endowments.

In his person, Mr. Buckminster scarcely reached the middle size. His limbs were well proportioned and regular. His head resembled the finest models of the antique; and his features presented an almost faultless combination of dignity, sweetness and intelligence. The portrait prefixed to this volume, engraved by Edwin from one of the happiest efforts of the pencil of Stuart, will give a general idea of his face; though some of the most interesting traits, which are yet remembered with fond regret by his friends, it is, perhaps, beyond the reach of art to preserve.

There were very few peculiarities in the manners of Mr. Buckminster, to distinguish him from the generality of men of refined minds and familiar intercourse with the best society. He was affable and unconstrained, and very accessible to the claims of his friends and the curiosity of strangers. There was a remarkable simplicity and directness, if I may so speak, an absence of all disguise in his mode of uttering his thoughts; and it might sometimes seem, that his first impressions were made known with a freedom, which more prudence or more selfishness would have taught him to repress. He had that unfailing mark of a good disposition, an easiness to be pleased. His conversation, in large companies, was not remarkably copious, but always very correct and elegant. In the private society of his friends he delighted in the exchange of minds—particularly on subjects connected with education, classical learning, biography, the theory and laws of morals, the nature and influence of religion, the prospects of mankind, &c.—and was very communicative of his great variety of knowledge on all these subjects. Though he was eminently and habitually cheerful, there were occasional inequalities in his manner; and there were moments, when there appeared in him a sort of reserve, and want of interest in those about him, which made his character misunderstood by several, who, if they had known him more, would have found him formed to engage all their esteem and love. These occasional departures from his habitual manners were, I am confident, to be traced to his bodily indisposition. Many of his friends, who have entered his room, when he was suffering under this effect of his disease, well remember, that, after a few moments of conversation, he would shake off the oppression of his languor, his wonted smile would play over his features, that peculiar animation, which usually lighted up his countenance, would again break out, and he would

enter into any subject proposed, with the warmest and liveliest interest.

Mr. Buckminster possessed all the characteristic features of a mind of the highest order. It was not marked by any of those eccentricities, which sometimes distinguish and disgrace men of brilliant genius; and which, I suppose, are usually to be ascribed, either to the deficiency, or the undue predominance of some one of the mental powers. His mind was a perfectly well balanced one. There was a soberness, a rationality, a practicableness in all his views, which proved, that judgment—in a degree very rarely found united with such splendid gifts of fancy—presided over his other faculties and regulated their use. The most shining attribute of his mind was, undoubtedly, philosophic imagination. It was this, which gave him such unrivalled powers of delineation and illustration, and enabled him to impart novelty and lustre to every thing he touched. His conception of any subject, which engaged his mind, was strong and original; and he could hold it in view, till it spread before him in all its parts, and unfolded all its connexions. When he was preparing to communicate his thoughts, a thousand associated ideas sprang up and gathered round the subject; and imagination stood ready to furnish him with innumerable delightful resemblances, which would often carry with them the force of arguments from analogy, as well as shed light and beauty on his conceptions. Yet he did not abuse this exuberant faculty by too prodigal a display of it. The sermons of this volume—while they will prove, that I have not said too much of the richness and fertility of this power—will show, also, the taste and judgment with which he always controlled its exercise.

In his intellectual habits I do not remember to have remarked any singularity. He was a real student. He had

that first requisite of all true and durable greatness, the habit of patient and long continued attention. He possessed the genuine φιλοπονια, the love of labour for itself. He could delight in the dryest and most minute researches, as well as in the lofty and ethereal visions of fancy. Like the majority of men of learning, he loved to read more than to think, and to think more than to write. He composed with rapidity, but with intellectual toil ; and his best efforts were not made without a high degree of mental excitement.

His acquisitions were, for his years, preeminently great. Besides the studies peculiar to theology, his reading was very extensive in metaphysics, morals, biography, and particularly literary history ; and whatever he had once read, his memory made forever his own. If I were required to state, in one word, in what branch of knowledge his excellence was most conspicuous, I should say it was, philology—understanding by this word, the knowledge of language as an instrument of thought, in all its propriety and force, as well as all its shades and varieties of meaning, in its general theory, as well as in its modifications in different countries ; and finally in all its grace and beauty, as it is fitted to invest truth in its richest and most attractive dress.

But it was the light, which philology pours on the records of our faith and hope, which gave it its chief value to the mind of Mr. Buckminster. It was the study of the scriptures in their original languages, which most powerfully seized and occupied his attention, and engaged him in a course of inquiries, which he never thought himself at liberty long to desert. His attainments in this department of knowledge would not have been thought lightly of, when compared with those of European critics. He was always of opinion, that the principles of christianity, in their original purity and simplicity, were to be preserved, where they are already held, and recalled, where they are lost or ob-

scured, only by the study of the Bible, according to the maxims of a sound, and cautious, and enlightened criticism. One of his strongest passions was, the desire to diffuse a love of biblical studies ; and the impulse among us, which has been lately given to inquiries on these subjects, is, in no slight degree, to be attributed to his exertions and example.

It cannot but be interesting to know, in what views of religion the inquiries of a mind so active, so candid, so enlightened, and so pious as that of Mr. Buckminster resulted. It will be apparent from the following sermons, that the foundation of all his opinions was laid in the belief, that the great design of the gospel is, to produce a moral influence on the human character—to raise it from the degradation and ruin of sin, and fit it for the pure and intellectual happiness of heaven. From this simple principle—so obvious, so undeniable, and yet so often forgotten—all his views of christianity took their character. It necessarily follows from it, that all the doctrines and views of the gospel—as far, at least, as they regard man—are to be considered in the light of motives and means ; of no intrinsic value, except as they are auxiliary to this great end. Christian faith, therefore, derives none of its efficacy from the number merely, much less the mysticism and obscurity of the articles we believe. Its genuineness and its worth are to be determined by the energy and permanence of our practical persuasion of those truths, which supply the strongest and most affecting motives and encouragements to repentance and a holy life. These, in the view of Mr. Buckminster, were, the paternal character of God—his constant presence and overruling Providence—the connexion of his favour always and only with moral goodness—the pardon of sin to the penitent through Jesus Christ, his mission to enlighten and redeem mankind—the confirmation of our immortality by his resur-

rection from the dead—the impartation of all needed spiritual aids to assist our sincere exertions—the just and impartial retributions of eternity to all the human race, according to their deeds. These, surely, are views, which, every christian will acknowledge, enter largely into the grounds and support of his faith, and hope, and charity. They are, beyond all question, those, on which the writers on vital religion—who are most universally acknowledged to have caught the true spirit of the gospel—chiefly insist. And who will say, that any man, whose understanding acknowledges, and whose heart is imbued with these truths, will want any essential characteristick of a true disciple of his Saviour?

It was the great object of the ministerial labours of Mr. Buckminister to produce, under the influence of these views, the practical religion of the heart and life, as it is explained in the teaching and illustrated in the example of our Saviour. How near this purpose was to his heart, is very strikingly displayed in the closing passage of his sermon on the mutual influence of knowledge, piety and charity. "It is the constant object of my wishes and prayers, and may it be the effect of my preaching, under the blessing of God, to contribute to the formation of that noblest of characters, the christian, whose love, as the apostle describes it, abounds more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, who approves the things which are excellent, and who remains sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." These are the words, with which he closed his earthly labours in the desk of instruction.* His people bear him witness now—and, I

* This sermon was delivered before the society for promoting christian "knowledge, piety and charity," and afterwards altered and adapted to his own people, and preached on the Lord's day before he was seized with his last illness.

trust, will hereafter bear him witness before the throne of God—that all his preaching justified this declaration, and all his life harmonized with this prayer.

It is impossible, that a man, who entertained such views of the nature of religion, should be exclusive or intolerant. Mr. Buckminster was eminently charitable towards those, who differed from him on speculative points. He felt, with all wide observers of human character, that great errours of the understanding, on almost every subject, are consistent with uprightness of heart. How, indeed, can any one fail to acknowledge, that this may be so in religion, who remembers, that even the disciples of our Lord were confessedly full of prejudice and misapprehension before their Master's death? Mr. Buckminster could extend his affection towards good men of every sect and communion. He could acknowledge in a Fenelon, with all his zeal for transubstantiation and Papal infallibility, one of the purest and most lovely exemplifications of the christian charazter, which the world has seen, since the days of St. John. He did not, however, conceive, that any part of his or any other man's goodness consisted in, or was necessarily connected with his errours. He was, therefore, a steady opposer of what he believed to be the corruptions of christianity—not only because the gospel is rendered incredible by them to so many intelligent men—but because they lessen, in the minds of many good persons, that joy and peace in believing, which the religion of Christ is fitted and intended to impart.

Of what Mr. Buckminister was, and of what he did, these sermons are now to be the only permanent memorial. If the effect, which some of them produce, when read, might be anticipated from their effect, when delivered, it will not often be surpassed. The remark of Quinctilian, however, on the eloquence of Hortensius, is, in some degree, true of the compositions of every fine speaker. There is a

certain charm thrown over his thoughts by his manner, while speaking, which, when we read them, we seek for in vain.* But, though something of that interest will, no doubt, be lost, which particular passages derived from the liquid voice, the eloquent eye, the illuminated countenance, the indescribable animation, the variety and frequent pathos of the manner of Mr. Buckminster, there are still several sermons in this collection, which will gain by being read more than they will lose; and merits will be discovered, which were overlooked, or not distinctly seen, amidst the general splendour of his eloquence.

They will, perhaps, be considered as, upon the whole, the most successful attempt yet made to unite the peculiar excellencies of the English and French pulpits. The best English sermons are, no doubt, very powerful performances. There are to be found in them some of the ablest defences of christianity, the most just and rational statements of its peculiar doctrines, the most complete delineation of the virtues and vices, the most learned and judicious illustrations of the scriptures, the best and weightiest maxims of habitual conduct, and the deepest and most intimate views of the nature and spirit of devotion. They have almost every merit as dissertations and essays; but, considered as addresses intended for an actual audience, they certainly have many important defects. They often fail of making any other, than a very intellectual hearer, feel his own personal interest in the truths, they inculcate. They are wanting in directness and closeness of application. They are studiously unimpassioned, to a degree, which makes them often appear cold and unimpressive. Some exceptions are to be made for the sermons of Taylor and Barrow, and several writers of later years; but the general character of English pulpit eloquence, since the Restoration, has been

* Apparet placuisse aliquid eo dicente, quod legentes non invenimus. Lib. IX. c. 3.

such as we describe. It has been produced, without doubt, in a great degree, by a desire of avoiding those extravagancies, which, in the times of the Commonwealth, brought religion into disgrace, and laid the foundation of the unbelief and libertinism of the age of Charles II.

It would be opposing the decision of all Europe, to deny the great excellencies of the French sermons. They are, perhaps, the most finished compositions of modern times. They abound in passages of the most splendid description, and, sometimes, of the truest pathos. But their eloquence is usually too artificial, too much designed for mere stage effect. An excessive ambition of the higher attributes of eloquence leads them to constant overstatements of the doctrines and duties of the gospel. They have a want of truth and nature in their representations of religion and of human life—a fault, which no other excellencies can redeem. The origin of almost all the corruptions of christianity may be referred to this tendency in men to overcharge their statements of religion, in order to make them dazzling and impressive. If we attend to the arguments, which are brought by the church of Rome to defend what we esteem its errours, we find them chiefly drawn from a literal interpretation of the rhetorical exaggerations contained in the homilies of the early fathers. The fact, that false eloquence has thus been the great corrupter of christianity, will give a lesson of caution to every rational christian in the employment of that which is real; and will lead, perhaps, to the general conclusion, that the higher forms of it cannot be often safely attempted in the pulpit. Although, therefore, no one, who is not wholly insensible to what is beautiful and sublime, can read the best French sermons without perpetual admiration, yet, when they are considered, not as a mere feast of taste, but as an instrument for the improvement of the hearts and minds of men in religion, they must be often viewed with the most serious disappro-

bation. If we would admire them without reserve, we must regard them merely as beautiful poetry; and read Bossuet and Corneille, Massillon and Racine too often with very similar emotions.

That there is nothing necessarily irreconcilable in what is really excellent in both these rival schools, the following sermons will, I persuade myself, furnish a proof. They seem to be the union of Truth, and Reason, and Eloquence. Without saying, they are faultless, every one will perceive in them a strength and originality of conception, a power of delineation, a beauty, novelty, and richness of illustration, which proclaim a powerful and peculiar mind. When, also, we consider the seriousness, the rationality, the earnestness, the warm glow of devotion, they every where exhibit, the apostolic freedom and intrepidity, with which sin and errour, however popular and fashionable, are denounced in them—and when, in addition to all this, we recollect, that they are sermons, not prepared for the press by himself, but selected by his friends from among several hundreds, all written between his twentieth and twenty-eighth year—they will be regarded as among the most rare and admirable efforts, which the pulpit has called forth.

I have not attempted a formal description of the qualities of Mr. Buckminster's heart. A life of such uniform purity and rectitude, of such devotedness to God, of such disinterested zeal for the good of mankind, is the surest pledge of its soundness and its sensibility. I might speak of his perfect sincerity, his simplicity, his love of truth, his candour of disposition. I might remark, how little the unbounded admiration, he received, impaired any of the essential features of his character. I might attempt—but I am sure it would be in vain—to describe the magick influence, by which he drew around him a circle of most devoted friends, by whom his memory is embalmed in the fondest

recollections and regrets. There are many, who feel with me, that his death was the rupture of some of the strongest ties, which the human heart can know. Even now, when time has interposed to subdue all the more powerful emotions of grief, there are those, who delight to recall the hours, we have passed with him, and to dwell on those traits, which we loved, while living, and which death cannot efface from our memories. While we think, how important to the interests of truth and virtue were the light of his knowledge and the weight of his influence, how many plans of improvement were connected with his exertions and encouragement—when we remember, that a mind so rich, so active, so original, so elevated, is no more to impart its conceptions to other minds; that the voice, which has warmed so many hearts, and guided so many steps to immortality, is silent as the grave, and is no more to be heard in the church of God, or the circle of friendship, we are oppressed by the magnitude of the loss, and are ready to number it among the darkest of the divine dispensations. Yet it is ordered by better wisdom than our's; and we cannot but discern many proofs of mercy in the time of his departure. His wish was granted not to survive his usefulness. He disappeared in all the brightness of his honours, without any twilight coming over his fame. We are spared the dreadful spectacle of beholding such a mind in ruins. God can raise up other instruments to effect his benevolent purposes—Farewell then! We must say of thee, Felix non vitæ tantum claritate, sed etiam opportunitate mortis.* May the example of a life like thine, devoted to truth, to virtue, and the best interests of mankind, animate us to follow thy career of piety and benevolence, that, by the grace of God, we may join thee in another world, where friendship will be uninterrupted, and virtue eternal.

* Tac. Agric.

NOTES.

NOTE A. PAGE xxii.

TO ARTHUR M. WALTER, ESQ.

Geneva, Sept. 26th, 1806.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have at length finished the tour of Switzerland, and add two more to the ten thousands, who have seen and admired before us. Mr. ******** has been my companion, ever since we reluctantly parted with ******* at Rotterdam (13th of Aug.); and as he has a taste for the picturesque, and I have pretty good eyes, we have seen and enjoyed as much, as other galloping travellers. You, I know, are rather curious in geography; and if you are at leisure to pore over a large map of Switzerland, you will have it in your power to trace your friend's route through this interesting country. After a satisfactory journey up the Rhine, from Rotterdam through Utrecht, Nimeguen, Cleves, Cologne, Coblentz, Mayence, Worms, Strasburg, and Colmar, we entered Switzerland at Basle the 5th of September. For the sake of seeing the famous chute du Rhin we went fifty miles out of our way as far as Schaffhausen, passing through a part of the Brisgau, once belonging to the humbled house of Austria, but now given to the Prince of Baden. From Schaffhausen we travelled to Zurich, in my estimation the most eligible spot in Switzerland; thence we crossed mount Albis on our way to Lucerne, by a road almost too difficult for carriages.

From Lucerne we sent our voiture empty to Berne, while we prepared for our excursion into the mountains. We began by crossing the lake of Lucerne to Russnacht, thence over a strip of land to Imisee on the lake of Zug; thence to Art at its southern extremity, and thence along the small lake of Lowertz to Boünner, where we again embarked for Altorf. In this day's tour we were in three of the small cantons, Zug, Schweitz and Uri. At Altorf properly commenced our passage into the mountains, along the road which leads over the St. Gothard into Italy. The path lies near the banks of the Reuss, which it frequently crosses, especially by the famous Pont du Diable. This road into Italy is passable only by mules and pedestrians, to which latter class we had the honour for three days to belong. We travelled on foot as far as Hopital, a small village in the valley of Urseren, at the foot of St. Gothard. Here we took mules to carry us over the difficult passes of the Furca and the Grimsel, two of the vast chain of Alps which lay between us and Berne. The 14th September we crossed the Furca, being obliged to descend from our mules, and wade through snow above our knees, because the customary path was entirely concealed. We descended then to the source of the Rhone, and to the village of Oberyestelen in the Haut Valais, from which point we began to ascend the Grimsel. If you have a good map, you will see that we here made a very devious track, because the shortest route which leads over the Mayenwund, was rendered impassable by the snow. At five o'clock we reached the summit of the Grimsel, seven thousand feet above the sea, and the highest point of our peregrinations; we slept this night in what is called the Hospice of the Grimsel. The next day we descended to Meyringen and left our mules, thence across the lakes to Brienz and Thun to Thun, where we took a carriage for Berne. At this capital we found our empty voiture, and our trunks safe, and sat off the next day

for Lausanne. We passed through Morat, Avenches, Payerne and Moudon, all Roman cities, and full of antiquities, and arrived the 19th at Lausanne, which was totally uninteresting to us, except as the favourite residence of Gibbon. The next day we travelled over one of the most superb chaussées in the world to Geneva. Nothing remained now but to visit Chamouni and the glaciers of Mont Blanc, which, by the blessing of heaven, we have safely accomplished in four days, and are ready to set off for Paris to-morrow morning. From this sketch of our wanderings, you will see that we have made a pretty complete tour through Switzerland, by travelling less, probably, than four hundred miles.

Excuse the meagre aspect of this itinerary. You know it would be absurd to attempt to give in a letter a proper journal of one's travels; and to pretend to describe any spot particularly interesting, would be only to repeat what you may easily find in books. All I mean by this sketch is, to let you know, where your friend has been; perhaps too it may refresh for a little while your geographical recollection.

There is an event, however, which happened just before our arrival in Switzerland, of which no particular account may have yet reached America, and which I think cannot be uninteresting, especially to those of our friends who have visited this charming country. Indeed it is too disastrous to be related or read with indifference.

If you have a large map of Switzerland, I beg of you to look for a spot in the canton of Schweitz, situated between the lakes of Zug and Lowertz on two sides, and the mountains of Rigi and Rossberg on the others. Here, but three weeks ago, was one of the most delightfully fertile vallies of all Switzerland; green, and luxuriant, adorned with several little villages, full of secure and happy farmers. Now three of these villages are forever effaced from the earth, and a broad waste of ruins, burying alive more than fourteen hundred peasants, overspreads the vally of Lowertz.

About five o'clock in the evening of the 3d of September, a large projection of the mountain of Rossberg, on the north east, gave way, and precipitated itself into this valley; and in less than four minutes completely overwhelmed the three villages of Goldau, Busingen, and Rathlen, with a part of Lowertz and Oberart. The torrent of earth and stones was far more rapid than that of lava, and its effects as resistless and as terrible. The mountain in its descent carried trees, rocks, houses, every thing before it. The mass spread in every direction, so as to bury completely a space of charming country, more than three miles square. The force of the earth must have been prodigious, since it not only spread over the hollow of the valley, but even ascended far up the opposite side of the Rigi. The quantity of earth, too, is enormous, since it has left a considerable hill in what was before the centre of the vale. A portion of the falling mass rolled into the lake of Lowertz, and it is calculated that a fifth part is filled up. On a minute map you will see two little islands marked in this lake, which have been admired for their picturesqueness. One of them is famous for the residence of two hermits, and the other for the remains of an ancient chateau, once belonging to the house of Hapsburg. So large a body of water was raised and pushed forward by the falling of such a mass into the lake, that the two islands, and the whole village of Seven, at the southern extremity, were for a time, completely submerged by the passing of the swell. A large house in this village was lifted off its foundations and carried half a mile beyond its place. The hermits were absent on a pilgrimage to the abbey of Einsideln.

The disastrous consequences of this event extend further than the loss of such a number of inhabitants in a canton of little population. A fertile plain is at once converted into a barren tract of rocks and calcareous earth, and the former marks and boundaries of property obliterated. The main

road from Art to Schweitz is completely filled up, so that another must be opened with great labour over the Rigi. The former channel of a large stream is choked up, and its course altered; and as the outlets and passage of large bodies of water must be affected by the filling up of such a portion of the lake, the neighbooring villages are still trembling with apprehension of some remote consequence, against which they know not how to provide. Several hundred men have been employed in opening passages for the stagnant waters, in forming a new road for foot passengers along the Rigi, and in exploring the ruins. The different cantons have contributed to the relief of the suffering canton of Schweitz, and every head is at work to contrive means to prevent further disasters.

The number of inhabitants buried alive under the ruins of this mountain is scarcely less than fifteen hundred. Some even estimate it as high as two thousand. Of these, a woman and two children have been found alive, after having been several days under ground. They affirm that while they were thus entombed, they heard the cries of creatures who were perishing around them, for want of that succour which they were so happy as to receive. Indeed, it is the opinion of many well informed people, that a large number might still be recovered; and a writer in the Publiciste goes so far as to blame the inactivity of the neighbouring inhabitants; and quotes many well-attested facts to prove, that persons have lived a long time, buried under snow and earth. This at least is probable in the present case, that many houses, exposed to a lighter weight than others, may have been merely a little crushed, while the lower story, which, in this part of Switzerland, is frequently of stone, may have remained firm, and thus not a few of the inhabitants escaped unhurt. The consternation, into which the neighbouring towns of Art and Schweitz were thrown, appears indeed to have left them incapable of contriving and executing those labours, which an enlightened compassion would dictate.

The mountain of Rossberg, as well as the Rigi, and other mountains in its vicinity, is composed of a kind of brittle calcareous earth, and pudding stone or aggregated rocks. Such a prodigious mass as that which fell, would easily crumble by its own weight, and spread over a wide surface. The bed of the mountain, from which the desolation came, is a plane inclined from north to south. Its appearance, as it is now laid bare, would lead one to suppose that the mass, when first moved from its base, slid for some distance before it precipitated itself into the valley. The height of the Spitsberg—the name of the projection which fell—above the lake and valley of Lowertz, was little less than two thousand feet. The composition of the chain of the Rigi, of which the Rossberg makes a part, has always been an obstacle in the way of those system makers, who have built their hypotheses upon the structure of the Alps. It has nothing granitick in its whole mass, and though nearly six thousand feet above the sea, is green and even fertile to its summit. It is composed of nothing but earth and stone, combined in rude masses. It is also remarkable that the strata of which it is composed, are distinctly inclined from the north toward the south, a character which is common to all rocks of this kind through the whole range of Alps, as well as to the greater part of calcareous, schistous, and pyritick rocks, and also to the whole chain of the Jura.

It was about a week after the fall of the mountain, that our route through Switzerland led us to visit this scene of desolation; and never can I forget the succession of melancholy views, which presented themselves to our curiosity. In our way to it, we landed at Art, a town, situated at the southern extremity of the lake of Zug; and we skirted along the western boundary of the ruins, by the side of Mount Rigi, towards the lake of Lowertz. From various points on our passage, we had complete views of such a scene of des-

truction, as no words can adequately describe. Picture to yourself a rude and mingled mass of earth and stones, bristled with the shattered parts of wooden cottages, and with thousands of heavy trees, torn up by the roots, and projecting in every direction. In one part you might see a range of peasants' huts, which the torrent of earth had reached with just force enough to overthrow and tear in pieces, but without bringing soil enough to cover them. In another were mills broken in pieces by huge rocks, transported from the top of the mountains, which fell, and were carried high up the opposite side of the Rigi. Large pools of water had formed themselves in different parts of the ruins, and many little streams, whose usual channels had been filled up, were bursting out in various places. Birds of prey, attracted by the smell of dead bodies, were hovering all about the valley. But the general impression made upon us by the sight of such an extent of desolation, connected, too, with the idea that hundreds of wretched creatures were at that moment alive, buried under a mass of earth, and inaccessible to the cries and labours of their friends, was too horrible to be described or understood. As we travelled along the borders of the chaos of ruined buildings, a poor peasant, wearing a countenance ghastly with woe, came up to us to beg a piece of money. He had three children buried in the ruins of a cottage, which he was endeavouring to clear away. A little further on, we came to an elevated spot, which overlooked the whole scene. Here we found a painter seated on a rock, and busy in sketching its horrours. He had chosen a most favourable point. Before him, at the distance of more than a league, rose the Rossberg, from whose bare side had rushed the destroyer of all this life and beauty. On his right was the lake of Lowertz, partly filled with the earth of the mountain. On the banks of this lake was all that remained of the town of Lowertz. Its church was demolished; but the tower yet stood amid the ruins, shattered, but not thrown

down. The figures, which animated this part of the drawing, were a few miserable peasants, left to grope among the wrecks of one half their village. The foreground of the picture was a wide desolate sweep of earth and stones, relieved by the shattered roof of a neighbouring cottage. On the left hand spread the blue and tranquil surface of the lake of Zug, on the margin of which yet stands the pleasant village of Art, almost in contact with the ruins, and trembling even in its preservation.

We proceeded, in our descent, along the side of the Rigi, toward the half-buried village of Lowertz. Here we saw the poor curate, who is said to have been a spectator of the fall of the mountain. He saw the torrent of earth rushing toward his village, overwhelming half his people, and stopping just before his door! What a situation! He appeared, as we passed, to be superintending the labours of some of the survivors, who were exploring the ruins of the place. A number of new-made graves, marked with a plain pine cross, showed where a few of the wretched victims of this catastrophe had just been interred.

Our course lay along the borders of the enchanting lake of Lowertz. The appearance of the slopes, on the eastern and southern sides, told us what the valley of Goldau was a few days since, smiling with varied vegetation, gay with villages and cottages, and bright with promises of autumnal plenty. The shores of this lake were covered with ruins of huts, with hay, with furniture and clothes, which the vast swell of its waters had lodged on the banks. As we were walking mournfully along towards Schweitz, we met with the dead body of a woman, which had been just found. It was stretched out on a board, and barely covered with a white cloth. Two men, preceded by a priest, were carrying it to a more decent burial. We hoped that this sight would have concluded the horrours of this day's scenery, and that we should soon escape from every painful vestige of the calamity of Schweitz. But we continued to

find relicks of ruined buildings for a league along the whole extent of the lake; and a little beyond the two islands, mentioned above, we saw, lying on the shore, the stiff body of a peasant, which had been washed up by the waves, and which two men were examining, to ascertain where he belonged. Our guide instantly knew it to be one of the inhabitants of Goldau. But I will mention no more particulars. Some perhaps that have been related to me are not credible, and others which are credible are too painful.

The immediate cause of this calamitous event is not yet sufficiently ascertained and probably never will be. The fall of parts of hills is not uncommon; and in Switzerland especially there are several instances recorded of the descent of large masses of earth and stones. But so sudden and extensive a ruin, as this, was, perhaps, never produced by the fall of a mountain. It can be compared only to the destruction made by the tremendous eruptions of Etna and Vesuvius. Many persons suppose that the long and copious rains, which they have lately had in this part of Switzerland, may have swelled the mountains, in the Rossberg, sufficiently to push this part of the mountain off its inclined base. But we saw no marks of streams issuing from any part of the bed which is laid bare. Perhaps the consistency of the earth in the interiour of the mountain was so much altered by the moisture which penetrated into it, that the projection of the Spitzberg was no longer held by a sufficiently strong cohesion, and its own weight carried it over. Perhaps, as the earth is calcareous, a kind of fermentation took place sufficient to loosen its foundations. Bnt there is no end to conjectures. The mountain has fallen, and the villages are no more.

I cannot but reflect upon my weakness in complaining of our long delay at Strasburg. If we had not been detained there ten days, waiting for our passports, we should have been in Switzerland the 3d of September, probably in the

vicinity of the lake of Lowertz—perhaps under the ruins of Goldau. Several travellers or rather strangers, were destroyed; but whether they were there on business or for pleasure, I know not. Among them are several respectable inhabitants of Berne, and a young lady of fine accomplishments and amiable character, whose loss is much lamented. My dear friend, bless God that we are alive and enjoying so many comforts.

[In the Monthly Magazine for July, 1807, a part of the above letter is quoted, together with other particulars of this event, translated from a memoir of M. Saussure, communicated to the Philosophical Society at Geneva, and the narrative of M. J. H. Meyer. The number of individuals, who perished, was, according to these accounts, considerably less than that stated by Mr. Buckminster.

Something of the manner, in which Mr. Buckminster was affected by the Alpine scenery, will be seen by the following extract.]

You find in some of the rudest passes in the Alps homely inns, which publick beneficence has erected for the convenience of the weary and benighted traveller. In most of these inns albums are kept to record the names of those, whose curiosity has led them into these regions of barrenness, and the album is not unfrequently the only book in the house. In the album of the Grande Chartreuse, Gray, on his way to Geneva, recorded his deathless name, and left that exquisite Latin ode, beginnning 'O! tu severi religio loci;' an ode which is indeed 'pure nectar.' It is curious to observe in these books the differences of national character. The Englishman usually writes his name only, without explanation or comment. The Frenchman records something of his feelings, destination, or business; commonly adding a line of poetry, an epigram, or some exclamation of

pleasure or disgust. The German leaves a long dissertation upon the state of the roads, the accommodations, &c. detailing at full length whence he came, and whither he is going, through long pages of crabbed writing.

In one of the highest regions of the Swiss Alps, after a day of excessive labour in reaching the summit of our journey, near those thrones erected ages ago for the majesty of nature, we stopped, fatigued and dispirited, on a spot destined to eternal barrenness, where we found one of these rude but hospitable inns open to receive us. There was not another human habitation within many miles. All the soil, which we could see, had been brought thither, and placed carefully round the cottage to nourish a few cabbages and lettuces. There were some goats, which supplied the cottagers with milk; a few fowls lived in the house; and the greatest luxuries of the place were new-made cheeses, and some wild alpine mutton, the rare provision for the traveller. Yet here nature had thrown off the veil, and appeared in all her sublimity. Summits of bare granite rose all around us. The snow-clad tops of distant Alps seemed to chill the moon-beams that lighted on them; and we felt all the charms of the picturesque, mingled with the awe inspired by unchangeable grandeur. We seemed to have reached the original elevations of the globe, o'ertopping forever the tumults, the vices, and the miseries of ordinary existence, far out of the hearing of the murmurs of a busy world, which discord ravages and luxury corrupts. We asked for the Album, and a large folio was brought us, almost filled with the scrawls of every nation on earth that could write. Instantly our fatigue was forgotten, and the evening passed away pleasantly in the entertainment, which this book afforded us. I copied the following French couplet:

Dans ces sauvages lieux tout orgueil s'humanise;
Dieu s'y montre plus grand; l'homme s'y pulverise!

Signed, p. ed. trénir.

I wish I could preserve the elegance, as well as the condensed sentiment of the original.

> Still are these rugged realms: e'en pride is hush'd:
> God seems more grand: man crumbles into dust.

Note B. Page xxiv.

Review of Dr. Miller's Retrospect of the eighteenth century, the first piece ever published by Mr. B. *Literary Miscellany*, Vol. I. p. 82. Remarker, No. 5, on criticism. *Monthly Anthology*. Vol. III. 19. Review of Sherman on the Trinity. *Id.* III. 249. Review of the Salem Sallust. *Id.* II. 549. Introduction to retrospective notices of American literature. *Id.* V. 52. Remarker, No. 3,4 on Gray. *Id.* V. 367. and 484. Review of Logan's version of Cato Major. *Id.* V. 281, 346 and 391. Editor's address. *Id.* VI. 1. Discourse before the Φ. B. K. *Id.* VII. 145. Translation of the article ΠΝΕΥΜΑ from Schleusner's Lexicon, with notes. *General Repository and Review*. Vol. I. p. 296.

Note C. Page xxvi.

Notices of Griesbach's Greek Testament. *Anthology*. V. 18. VI. 349. X. 107 and 403. Defence of the accuracy and fidelity of Griesbach. *General Repository*. I. 89.

*** The "Right Hand of Fellowship" delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Charles Lowell, by Mr. Buckminster, will be found at the end of this volume.

ON THE

DANGERS AND DUTIES OF MEN OF LETTERS;

AN ADDRESS PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF

Φ B K,

On Thursday, August 31, 1809.

BY J. S. BUCKMINSTER.

[See page xxvi.]

It is not without reluctance, my friends, that I appear before you this morning; not because I feel any distrust of your candour, but because I find it so difficult to offer you any thing which shall be worthy of your candour. The orator, on this occasion, as he has no definite object, is not restrained in the choice of his topics. This appears indeed to be a privilege; but others, I doubt not, as well as myself, have found themselves embarrassed by the liberty of choosing without direction, and their spirits exhausted by indecision, before the thoughts were fixed, as they were at last, by necessity.

When I look round, however, on those whom I am called to address, and find them to be men with whom learning is at least in esteem; men too, whose mutual friendships, as they commenced on classic ground, will always preserve, I trust, something of the raciness of their origin, I should think myself unfaithful to this occasion, and to the character of the audience, if I were to choose any other subject, than

that which is common to us as scholars. For, however different our professions, opposite our connexions, wide our opinions, or uncertain our destinies in life, in this we agree, that letters have been our study, perhaps our delight. By these we are to live; and by these too, *si qua fata aspera sinant!* we are to be remembered. In your company, then, I have no inclination to stray beyond the gardens of the academy, or within the noise of the city and the forum.

Is there a man who now hears me, who would not rather belong to an enlightened and virtuous community, than to the mightiest empire of the world distinguished only by its vastness? If there is, let him cast his eye along the records of states. What do we now know of the vast unlettered empires of the east? The far extended conquests of the Assyrian hardly detain us a moment in the annals of the world, while the little state of Athens will for ever be the delight of the historian and the pride of letters; preserving, by the genius of her writers, the only remembrance of the barbarian powers which overwhelmed her. To come down to our own times; who would not rather have been a citizen of the free and polished republic of Geneva, than wander a prince in the vast dominions of the Czar, or bask in the beams of the present emperour of a desolated continent.

In the usual course of national aggrandizement, it is almost certain, that those of you, who shall attain to old age, will find yourselves the citizens of an empire unparalleled in extent; but is it probable, that you will have the honour of belonging to a nation of men of letters? The review of our past literary progress does not authorize very lofty expectations, neither does it leave us entirely without hope.

It is our lot to have been born in an age of tremendous revolution; and the world is yet covered with the wrecks

of its ancient glory, especially of its literary renown. The fury of that storm, which rose in France, is passed and spent, but its effects have been felt through the whole system of liberal education. The foul spirit of innovation and sophistry has been seen wandering in the very groves of the Lyceum, and is not yet completely exorcised, though the spell is broken. When we look back to the records of our learning before the American revolution, we find, or think we find, (at least in New-England) more accomplished scholars than we have since produced; men, who conversed more familiarly than their children with the mighty dead; men, who felt more than we do the charm of classical accomplishments; men, in short, who had not learned to be ashamed of being often found drinking at the wells of antiquity.* But so greatly have our habits of thinking been disturbed by the revolutions of the last thirty years, that the progress of our education, and, of course, the character of our learning, have not a little suffered. It is true, we have shared the detriment with Europe; but the effect upon us, though perhaps temporary, has been peculiary extensive and unfortunate, because our government and our habits were in some degree unsettled.

In France† and in some other countries of Europe, what literature has lost seems to be compensated by the progress

* Ch. Justice Pratt, Jas. Otis, Prof. Sewall, Bowdoin, Winthrop, Chauncey, perhaps from the natural effect of distance, appear to us to have been eminent scholars. Whether in New-England we have since produced their superiours, *docti judicent.* There are now living a few men, who were educated before the revolution, whom we should be proud, though not perhaps at liberty, to name. We can only wish, that they may long animate us by their living example, rather than by their remembrance.

† We have lately seen a discourse of M. Dacier, Secretaire perpetuel de la Classe d'Histoire et de Literature ancienne de l'Institut, delivered 20th February, 1808, before the Emperour, on presenting a report of the progress of literature in France during the last twenty years. This class of the Institute, which comprises very nearly the same objects with the ancient Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, and to which its remaining members have been transferred, was charged by the Emperour with an inquiry into this subject, preparatory to some steps, which will be

of science. In England the trunk of her national learning was so deeply rooted, that it has been swayed only, and not injured by this tempest of reform. It yet retains its vigour, and we doubt not will entirely recover its former direction. But here, the French revolution, immediately

taken to revive these studies. The following extracts are made here; the *first*, because it gives a very accurate definition of the different objects and value of literature and of physical science; the *others*, because they contain the deliberate result of the inquiries of a body of men of letters on the present state of French learning.

"Si les sciences de calcul et d'observation ajoutent à nos jouissances physiques, et nous en font espérer de nouvelles pour l'avenir, les sciences morales exercent leur empire sur l'ame; elles l'éclairent, la dirigent, la soutiennent, l'élèvent ou la tempèrent; elles avancent ou conservent la civilisation; elles apprennent à l'homme à se connoître lui-même, et lui donnent dans tous les temps, dans tous les lieux, dans toutes les conditions, ce bonheur dont les autres sciences ne peuvent lui promettre que des moyens." Page 5.

"Votre Majesté verra que, malgré les troubles politiques qui ont agité la France, elle n'est, jusqu'à present, restée en arrière dans aucune des branches de la littérature; mais c'est avec un sentiment péuible que nous sommes forcés de lui faire apercevoir que plusieurs sont menacées d'un anéantissement prochain et presque total. La philologie, qui est la base de toute bonne littérature, et sur laquelle reposent la certitude de l'histoire et la connoissance du passé, qui a répandu tant d'éclat sur l'Académie des belles-lettres que notre classe doit continuer, ne trouve presque plus personne pour la cultiver. Les savans dont les travaux fertilisent encore chaque jour son domaine, restes, pour la plupart, d'une génération qui va disparoître, ne voient croître autour d'eux qu'un trop petit nombre d'hommes qui puissent les remplacer; et cette lumière publique, propre à encourager et à juger leurs travaux, diminue sensiblement de clarté, et son foyer se rétrécit tous les jours de plus en plus. Faire connoître le mal à votre Majesté, c'est s'assurer que votre main puissante saura y appliquer le remède." Page 6, 7.

"Cependant, en France, quelques hommes de lettres continuoient, dans le silence de la solitude, leurs études et leurs travaux; et, dès que les circonstances l'ont permis, on a vu paroître dans les collections de l'Institut un assez grand nombre de notices de manuscrits et de mémoires relatifs à notre histoire du moyen âge et à la diplomatique. Le quatorzième volume du Recueil des historiens de France a été publié par les ordres et sous les auspices du Gouvernement; le quinzième s'imprime, ainsi que le quinzième volume du Recueil des ordonnances des rois de la troisième dynastie francoise. D'autres ouvrages du même genre, qui ont été interrompus, attendent encore, à la vérité, des continuateurs; et nous sommes obligés d'avouer, quoiqu'à regret, à votre Majesté, que nous ne pouvons espérer qu'ils en trouvent tous, à moins qu'un de vos regards puissans ne ranime ce genre d'études dans lequel la France s'est illustrée, pendant plus de deux siècles, *et qu'elle paroît aujourd'hui avoir presque entièrement abandonné.*"—Pages 13, 14.

succeeding our own, found the minds of men in an unsettled state, and, as you may well imagine, did not help to compose them. Our forms of education were becoming more popular and superficial; the knowledge of antiquity began to be despised; and the hard labour of learning to be dispensed with. Soon the ancient strictness of discipline disappeared; the curriculum of studies was shortened in favour of the impatience or the necessities of candidates for literary honours; the pains of application were derided, and a pernicious notion of equality was introduced, which has not only tainted our sentiments, but impaired our vigour, and crippled our literary eminence.

This secret influence of public opinion, though not easily described, has been felt and lamented by many of us who were educated in the present generation. We have many steps to recover; and before we shall travel in the suite of the learned in the old world, we have some long strides to make. Our poets and historians, our critics and orators,* the men of whom posterity are to stand in awe and by whom to be instructed are yet to appear among us. The men of letters, who are to direct our taste, mould our genius, and inspire our emulation; the men, in fact, whose writings are to be the depositories of our national greatness, have not yet shown themselves to the world. But if we are not mistaken in the signs of the times, the genius of our literature begins to show symptoms of vigour, and to meditate a bolder flight; and the generation which is to succeed us will be formed on better models, and leave a brighter track. The spirit of criticism begins to plume itself, and education, as

* That we havo had poets, critics, and historians, is not denied. Belknap and Minot have furnished us good specimens, and Dr. Holmes valuable materials, for which our future historians will give them credit and thanks. All that is meant here is, that we have not yet produced standards, or models in these departments of literature. We have also now among us men, who want nothing but the discipline of a more thorough education, to be consummate orators, worthy of any age or nation.

it assumes a more learned form, will take a higher aim. If we are not misled by our hopes, the dream of ignorance is at least disturbed; and there are signs that the period is approaching, in which it will be said of our own country, "*tuus jam* regnat Apollo."

You then, my friends, are destined, I hope, to witness the dawn of our Augustan age, and to contribute to its glory. Whatever may be your place in society, I am confident you will not willingly discard the love of virtue and of knowledge; and it is with this confidence, that I shall now venture to speak to you of some of THE DANGERS AND DUTIES OF MEN OF LETTERS. The subject is copious; and what will now be offered is a mere essay. If it should be found suitable to this occasion, and to the actual state of our literature, my purpose will be answered.

Every where there are dangers and evils, of which some affect the intellectual improvement, and others are unfavourable to the moral worth of literary men. In this country, especially, it too often happens, that the young man, who is to live by his talents, and to make the most of the name of a scholar, is tempted to turn his literary credit to the quickest account, by early making himself of consequence to the people, or rather to some of their factions. From the moment that he is found yielding himself up to their service, or hunting after popular favour, his time, his studies, and his powers yet in their bloom, are all lost to learning. Instead of giving his days and nights to the study of the profound masters of political wisdom, instead of patiently receiving the lessons of history and of practical philosophy, he prematurely takes a part in all the dissentions of the day. His leisure is wasted on the profligate productions of demagogues, and his curiosity bent on the minutiae of local politics. The consequence is, that his mind is so much dissipated, or his passions disturbed, that

the quiet speculations of the scholar can no longer detain him. He hears at a distance the bustle of the Comitia—He rushes out of the grove of Egeria, and Numa and the Muses call after him in vain. It is, perhaps, one of the incurable evils of our constitution of society, that this ambition of immediate notoriety and rapid success is too early excited, and thus the promises of literary excellence are so frequently superseded.

The history of genius is not wanting in examples of powers thus perverted, and passions too early inflamed. If we may go so far back for examples, we find them in Alcibiades and the Gracchi; men educated with all the advantages which Greece and Rome could bestow, and yet lost to every thing but faction. There are no doubt many other instances, but most of them are not now to be recovered from oblivion; for the records of civil dissension, let it be remembered, are not so lasting as those of learning. Here I should be tempted to adduce even the name of Burke, and support myself by the authority of Goldsmith, who ventured early to lament that

> ———he narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.

But the awful history of our own times has persuaded me to forbear; for of Burke, at least, posterity will never cease to say, *what he gave up to party, he gave to mankind.* The life of Milton, however, is a memorable instance of the temporary degradation of learning. For, notwithstanding the sublime fiction of Gray,* that the loss of his sight was occasioned by the brightness of his celestial visions, it is, alas! nothing but a fiction. Those fine orbs were quenched in the service of a vulgar and usurping faction; and had they not been thus early "closed in endless night," the

* Ode on the progress of Poesy, III. 2.

world, perhaps, would have wanted the Paradise lost, and that master spirit of England have been wasted in more praises of Cromwell and more ribaldry against Salmasius. You, then, who are impatient to take a part in public life, remember, that there is hardly to be found a consummate statesman or warriour in a literary age, who was not himself a man of letters. I will not weary you by an enumeration; but you will instantly call to mind Alexander, the accomplished scholar of Aristotle; Caesar, at the head of Rome, the *deliciae literatorum;* Charlemagne, master of all the science that an ignorant age could afford; Alfred, the philosophical translator of Boethius; and Frederic, who gathered around him the great men of his age, not so much their patron, as their competitor.

On the other hand, there are some finely attempered spirits, who, disgusted at the grossness which belongs to the common contests and occupations of active life, are in danger of entirely relinquishing its real duties in the luxurious leisure of study. In the actual state of the politics of our country, this opposite temptation has been already felt by many studious minds. The young man, early enamoured of literature, sometimes casts a disdainful glance at the world, and then sinks to repose in the lap of his mistress. He finds it easier to read than to think, and still easier to think than to act. His indisposition increases by indulgence. His learning becomes effeminate. He reads to furnish amusement for his imagination, not to provide materials for intellectual greatness. He passes his time among the muses, it is true; but it is the graces, who mingle in the circle, that engross his attention; and his life, though nominally given to contemplation, is little else than "to sport with Amaryllis in the shade, and play with the tangles of Neaera's hair." He goes to his books, to enjoy a certain mild delirium of the mind, regardless of the claims of society, and of the account, which he must give at last, of his

studies and advantages. Whenever he comes out into the world, he thinks it was not made for him; and soon returns in disgust, to seek relief in that employment which has been admirably called the "invisible riot of the mind, that secret prodigality of being, secure from detection, and fearless of reproach."*

The history of letters does not at this moment suggest to me a more fortunate parallel between the effects of active and of inactive learning, than in the well known characters of Cicero and Atticus. Let me hold them up to your observation, not because Cicero was faultless, or Atticus always to blame, but because, like you, they were the citizens of a republic. They lived in an age of learning and of dangers, and acted upon opposite principles, when Rome was to be saved, if saved at all, by the virtuous energy of her most accomplished minds. If we look now for Atticus, we find him in the quiet of his library, surrounded with his books; while Cicero was passing through the regular course of public honours and services, where all the treasures of his mind were at the command of his country. If we follow them, we find Atticus pleasantly wandering among the ruins of Athens, purchasing up statues and antiques; while Cicero was at home blasting the projects of Cataline, and at the head of the senate, like the tutelary spirit of his country, as the storm was gathering, secretly watching the doubtful movements of Caesar. If we look to the period of the civil wars, we find Atticus always reputed, indeed, to belong to the party of the friends of liberty, yet originally dear to Sylla, and intimate with Clodius, recommending himself to Caesar by his neutrality, courted by Anthony, and connected with Octavius, poorly concealing the epicureanism of his principles under the ornaments of literature and the splendour of his benefactions; till at last this inoffensive and polished friend of successive usurpers hastens out

* Rambler, No. 89.

of life to escape from the pains of a lingering disease. Turn now to Cicero, the only great man at whom Caesar always trembled, the only great man whom falling Rome did *not* fear. Do you tell me, that his hand once offered incense to the dictator? Remember, it was the gift of gratitude only and not of servility; for the same hand launched its indignation against the infamous Anthony, whose power was more to be dreaded, and whose revenge pursued him till this father of his country gave his head to the executioner without a struggle, for he knew that Rome was no longer to be saved! If, my friends, you would feel what learning and genius and virtue should aspire to in a day of peril and depravity, when you are tired of the factions of the city, the battles of Caesar, the crimes of the triumvirate, and the splendid court of Augustus, do not go and repose in the easy chair of Atticus, but refresh your virtues and your spirits with the contemplation of Cicero.*

A little observation of the state of knowledge in this country brings to mind the remark of Johnson on the learning of Scotland: "that it is like bread of a besieged town, where every one gets a little, but no man a full meal." So it is among us. There is a diffusion of information widely and thinly spread, which serves to content us, rather than to make us ambitious of more. Our scholars are often employ-

* The character of Cicero has seldom been contemplated, as it ought to be, in the whole; and therefore of late years, especially since the translations of Melmoth, it has become fashionable to talk of his weakness, and even to impeach his integrity. But the true difference between him and Atticus in their political conduct was, that Cicero was mistaken in always attempting to reconcile the contending parties in the state, when he would have done better to maintain by vigorous measures the cause which he approved; while Atticus was so deliberately or selfishly inactive, that he would not even take the pains to conciliate. They who form their opinions of Atticus only from the panegyric of Cornelius Nepos, may perhaps be correct; but even they will esteem him with more or less reserve according to their previous notions of virtue and their habits of life. But there are some reasons for thinking, not only that Cicero understood his character better than we do, but, notwithstanding their long familiarity, esteemed it less. See Oeuvres de St. Real. vol. I. and his translation of the letters to Atticus, in notis.

ed in loose and undirected studies. They read, it is true, but without an object; and lose their time in superficial and unconnected inquiries. Such is the want of leisure in some of our professions, and the necessity of turning our knowledge to immediate account; so defective in many places are our rudiments of education, and so inadequate the provision made for instructers; so insulated are our men of study in this vast territory, and such is, after all, the genius of our government, that we find few who are willing to pass through the long and severe discipline of early application, and still fewer of whom we can say, γηραιοκουροι διδασκομενοι. We have yet to form systems of more effectual instruction, and to assign the departments of literary labour, where exertion shall be encouraged by suitable rewards. In the mean while, in this unsettled state of our studies, let us not weaken our powers by feebly grasping at every thing. We have been long enough flying from novelty to novelty, and regaling upon the flowers of literature, till we begin to know *where* learning may be found; it is time *now* to think of making it our own. The most powerful minds, which the world ever knew, have sometimes dissipated their powers in the multiplicity of their pursuits. Gibbon,* in his masterly portrait of Leibnitz, concludes with comparing him to those heroes, "whose empire has been lost in the ambition of universal conquest." If then a mind like his, formed for intellectual supremacy, may suffer by designing more than it can accomplish, or by neglecting to concentrate its powers and pursuits, let us not spend *our* lives in hastily traversing regions of knowledge, which we certainly shall never conquer, and which we may never inhabit, but turn to the patient cultivation of some of the provinces of literature.

The moral defects and faults of temper, to which scholars are exposed, are not peculiar to any country. It is every

* Antiquities of the house of Brunsw. Ch. 1. Sect. 1. Misc. works, vol. iii. 8vo.

where the natural tendency of a life of retirement and contemplation, to generate the notion of innocence and moral security; but men of letters should remember, that, in the eye of reason and of christianity, simple unprofitableness is always a crime. They should know too, that there are solitary diseases of the imagination not less fatal to the mind, than the vices of society. He who pollutes his fancy with his books, may in fact be more culpable, than he who is seduced into the haunts of debauchery by the force of passion or example. He who by his sober studies only feeds his selfishness or his pride of knowledge may be more to blame, than the pedant or the coxcomb in literature, though not so ridiculous. That learning, whatever it may be, which lives and dies with the possessor, is more worthless than his wealth, which descends to his posterity; and where the heart remains uncultivated and the affections sluggish, the mere man of curious erudition may stand, indeed, as an object of popular admiration, but he stands like the occasional palaces of ice in the regions of the north, the work of vanity, lighted up with artificial lustre, yet cold, useless, and uninhabited, and soon to pass away without leaving a trace of their existence. You, then, who feel yourselves sinking under the gentle pressure of sloth, or who seek in learned seclusion that moral security, which is the reward only of virtuous resolution, remember, you do not escape from temptations, much less from responsibility, by retiring to the repose and silence of your libraries.

I pass over many of the faults of scholars, and what Bacon calls the "peccant humours of learning," such as the love of singularity, contempt for practical wisdom, the weakness of literary vanity, and the disease of pedantry, to warn you against two principal evils, of which one is that alienation of affection, so frequent among men of letters. Their history is too often that of factions and intrigues, of envy and recrimination. The *odium theologicum* has long

since become a proverb; and perhaps there are few writers, whose libraries have not at some time been a repository of poisoned darts, and implements of literary warfare. In modern times the licentiousness of criticism has aggravated this evil. The shafts of Apollo, the god of criticism, are as numerous, and often as envenomed as those, which the same god, under a different character, launched among the Greeks at the prayer of Chryses his offended priest. It is fortunate, however, that in the arrows of criticism the smart of the wound is greater than the danger. Authors, jealous of reputation, or conscious of merit, have lost all the influence of their philosophy and all the meekness of their religion under anonymous attack, or in their ardour for repelling it. It is painful to dwell on the animosities of the learned, however just they may sometimes appear; but it is well for us to know, that the last lesson, which great minds learn, is to bear a superiour, or be just to a rival. Even Newton and Leibnitz (and I can go no higher) were alienated and debased by their mutual jealousy. They separated, they accused, they recriminated; and the cool mathematicians of Europe were heated by their quarrels. When we read the works of these two sublime men, we should as soon have expected a collision in the celestial spheres, which they were in the habit of contemplating; and, if they have met in the calm regions of intellectual purity and light, no doubt they are content to leave with posterity their angry dispute about the invention of fluxions, and wonder at the imperfection of terrestrial greatness.*

The other dangerous infirmity of scholars, against which we should be always on our guard, is the indiscriminate im-

* This dispute is related with the greatest minuteness in the life of Leibnitz, by M. le Chevalier de Jaucort, prefixed to the edition of the Essais de Theodicée, printed at Amsterdam, 1747, 2 vols. 12mo. a most interesting piece of biography. The writer is very much disposed to give to Leibnitz not only this honour of the invention of the differential calculus, but the credit of behaving the most honourably in the dispute; but this, I believe, is not the general opinion; at least among the English mathematicians.

itation of the eminent. There are many, who seek to show their relation to men of genius by exhibiting some kindred deformity. If they know any thing of the history of authors, we find them quoting their authority, and seeking shelter behind their defects; if not, they content themselves with copying the irregularities of some living and contemporary genius. It is so old a fiction that contempt of rules and order is a constituent of genius, that one would think it should have lost its authority. We have had deep philosophers, who would not have been suspected of thinking, except for their occasional absences of mind; and fine spirits, who were thought to resemble Horace, because they could roar a catch, or empty a cask of Falernian. We have had satirists with nothing of Dryden but his vulgarity, and of Churchill but his malice; wits, who got drunk, because Addison was not always sober; liquorish writers in imitation of Sterne; and others foul from the pages of Swift. We have had paradoxes and confessions in the style of Rousseau, without any of his genius, and freethinkers innumerable of the school of Voltaire, who could not afford to be at once wits and christians. In a more harmless way, we have had sterile writers, whose veins would flow only at particular seasons; puny moralists, talking big like Johnson; orators, with nothing, as one may say, of Tully but his wart, and of Demosthenes but his stammer; in short, my friends, we have had enough of "the contortions of the Sybil, without her inspiration."

The infirmities of noble minds are often so consecrated by their greatness, that an unconscious imitation of their peculiarities, which are real defects, may sometimes be pardoned in their admirers. But to copy their vices, or to hunt in their works for those very lines, which, when dying, they would most wish to blot, is a different offence. I know of nothing in literature so unpardonable as this. He who poaches among the labours of the learned only to find

what there is polluted in their language, or licentious in their works; he who searches the biography of men of genius to find precedents for his follies, or palliations of his own stupid depravity, can be compared to nothing more strongly than to the man, who should walk through the gallery of antiques, and every day gaze upon the Apollo, the Venus, or the Laocoon, and yet, *proh pudor!* bring away an imagination impressed with nothing but the remembrance that they were naked.

But I must pursue this subject no further. My friends! you who are now to enter into the world with the fruits of your education here, and you too who have for many years made learning your employment, permit me to remind you, that all our acquisitions are due to that country, which gave us birth, to that society, which protects and encourages us, to those parents and friends, who have aided our progress, and to that religion, which is the strength of our excellence, and which alone promises eternal life and satisfaction to the mind of man panting after truth. Truth, truth is indeed the ultimate object of human study; and though the pleasure of learning is often in itself a sufficient motive and reward, yet are we not to forget that we all owe something to society. That well known tendency of men of letters to inertia and repose must, therefore, be resolutely counteracted. You must tear yourselves away, my friends, from the *noctes caenaeque Deorum*, where you hold converse with the fine spirits of former days, and inquire what you may do for mankind. Learning is not a superfluity; and utility must, after all, be the object of your studies. The theologian, like Paley, who makes truth intelligible to the humblest; the preacher, like Fenelon, who imparts the divine warmth of his own soul to the souls of his readers; the moralist, like Johnson, who "gives ardour to virtue and confidence to truth;" the jurist, like Mansfield, who contributes to the perfect administration of justice; the statesman, who stems

the torrent of corruption, and directs the rising virtue of an indignant people; the philosopher, who leaves in his writings the pregnant germs of future discoveries; the historian, and the poet, who not only preserve the names of the great, but, in words that burn, inflame us with the love of their excellence, are of more value to the community, than a whole cabinet of *dilettanti*, and more worthy of your imitation than Magliabechi, reposing on the ponderous tomes of his library, a mere *corpus literarum*.

You, too, who are about to enter upon the business of manly life, should know, that literature, whether it be her pride, or her misfortune, will disdain to divide the empire of your heart. She scorns to enter into partnership with the love of money, or the ambition of noisy distinction, or with any other inordinate affection. Hardly will she submit to be encumbered with the common worldly anxieties, much less to follow in the train of lust and corruption. Genius, it is true, sometimes bursts though all these impediments; and in the midst of vice and dissipation, and even in the embarrassments of love, has been known to plant his standard on the top of Parnassus. But in general, and especially in our own country, nothing is more just than the remark of Quintilian: quod si agrorum nimia cura, et sollicitior rei familiaris diligentia, et venandi voluptas, et dati spectaculis dies, multum studiis auferunt, quid putamus facturas cupiditatem, avaritiam, invidiam? Quis inter haec literis, aut ulli bonae arti locus? Non, hercle, magis quam frugibus, in terra sentibus et rubis occupata.*

Indeed, my friends, it is time to have done with our short cuts to reputation. Let us no longer think of finding a royal road to learning. It is time that our libraries were better

* If a solicitous care of our estates, and the love of sporting, and a passion for the theatre, subtract so much from our studies, what can be expected from a mind engrossed with cupidity, avarice, and evil passions? In such a life what place is there for letters, or any honourable pursuit? Indeed, we might as well expect a harvest from a field overgrown with briars and brambles! Quinctilian. Inst. Orat. Lib. 12. cap. 1.

furnished, our presses less prolific, and we not so impatient of being unknown. If there is any thing which particularly distinguishes the literature of the seventeenth century from that of the present times, it is, that then the men of letters were willing to study, and now they are in haste to publish. That was the age of scholars; this of readers and of printers. The great men of that age were formed like the trees of a hundred years growth, by perpetually drawing nutriment from the soil, and at the same time drinking in the pure air of heaven; while we, like the ivy, slender and rapid in our growth, and full of leaves, are, I fear, of short continuance, except as we learn *to cling around them.*

I should be unfaithful to myself and to the subject, if I should leave it, without mentioning it as the most solemn of our obligations as scholars, to take care that we give no currency to errour or sanction to vice. Unfortunately, there is enough of corrupt literature in the world; and when the mind has once begun to make that its poison, which ought to be its medicine, I know not how the soul is to be recovered, except by the power of God in his word. Scholars! I dare not say, that the cause of religion *depends* upon the fidelity of the learned; but I do say, that gratitude and every motive of virtue demand of you a reverence for the gospel. Protestant christianity has in former times given learning such support, as learning never can repay.* The history of christendom bears witness to this. The names of Erasmus, of Grotius, of Bacon and a host of luminaries of science, who rise up like a wall of fire around the cause of christianity, will bear witness to this. They cry out in the language of Tully; O vitae dux! o virtutis indagatrix, expultrixque vitiorum! quid non modo nos, sed omnino vita hominum sine te esse potuisset.† Without this for the guide and termi-

* See Dr. Jortin's first charge, entitled "Christianity the preserver and supporter of Literature." Serm. vol. 7. p. 353.

† Tusc. Quaest. Lib. 5. § 2.

nus of your studies, you may "but go down to hell, with a great deal of wisdom." My friends, infidelity has had one triumph in our days; and we have seen learning, as well as virtue, trampled under the hoofs of its infuriated steeds, let loose by the hand of impiety. Fanaticism, too, has had more than one day of desolation; and its consequences have been such, as ought always to put learning on its guard. Remember, then, the place where we have been educated, and the pious bounty which has enriched it for our sakes! Think of the ancestors who have transmitted to us our christian liberties! Nay, hear the voice of posterity, pleading with you for her peace, and beseeching you not to send down your names, stained with profligacy and irreligion. Do you want examples of learned christians? I could not recount them all in an age. You need not to be told that

> Learning has borne *such* fruit in other days,
> On all her branches; piety has found
> Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
> Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.*

Yes, it has! We have known and loved such men, and, thank God, have been loved by them. There is now present to my mind the image of a scholar, whom some of you knew, (for he was one of us,) and those who knew him well will say with me, he was as pure a spirit as ever tasted the dew of Castalia!—How would WALTER have delighted in this anniversary! He would have heard me! me, who am now left to speak of him only, and ask for him the tribute, the passing tribute of your grateful recollection! He would have heard me! It may be, that he now hears me, and is pleased with this tribute.

> ——Manibus date lilia plenis;
> Purpureos spargam flores, animamque amici

* Cowper's Task, Book iii.

His saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani
Munere.*

It would be ungrateful to close this subject, without thinking of our Alma Mater! Scholars! let us never dishonour her. Let it always be ranked among the most urgent and honourable of our duties, to consult her interests, to watch over her renown, and to gain for her the patronage of the community. You, then, who are alive to the reputation of this ancient university, lend her your effectual influence. Go to the rich, and tell them of the substantial glory of literary patronage! Tell them of the Maecenases of former days! Tell them, that the spirit of commerce has always been propitious to the arts and sciences! show them the glories of the Medici of Florence; the republican renown of Holland, once studded with splendid universities, and fruitful in great men, fostered by the rich merchants of her cities! Show them that island of the blessed, where so many rich endowments of schools and of literary institutions have mingled for ever together the glories of commerce and of science! And, if this will not touch them, read the roll of the former benefactors of our university; of the Hollises and the Hancocks. These were merchants; and men too, whom posterity will never cease to honour; men, whom all the great and good spirits that have issued from this seat of learning will go and congratulate in heaven, as their benefactors!

There sit the sainted sage, the bard divine;
Rapt in celestial transport they;
Yet hither oft a glance from high
They send of tender sympathy
To bless the place, where on their op'ning soul
First the genuine ardour stole.†

* Aen. Lib. vi. 893.

Bring fragrant flowers, the whitest lilies bring,
With all the purple beauties of the spring;
On the dear youth, to please his shade below,
This unavailing gift at least I may bestow!

DRYDEN AND PITT.

† Gray's Ode for Music.

But I forbear.—The cause of truth and learning is the cause of God, and it will not be deserted. With our Alma Mater, then, we leave our filial valediction; and in the words of Virgil, where he speaks of Berecynthia, the mother of the Gods, we express our most ardent wishes that she may ever be

Felix prole virûm.....
Laeta deûm partu, centum complexa nepotes,
Omnes caelicolas, omnes supera alta tenentes†. ‡

AEN. LIB. vi. 783.

† Proud of her sons, she lifts her head on high;
Proud, as the mighty mother of the sky,
When, through the Phrygian towns, sublime in air
She rides triumphant in her golden car,
Crown'd with a nodding diadem of towers,
And counts her offspring, the celestial powers,
A shining train, who fill the blest abo
A hundred sons, and every son a god! PITT.

‡ The present state of the University of Cambridge is such, we believe, as must be highly gratifying to its friends. Within a few years the terms of admission have been considerably raised and a greater strictness of examination introduced. The number of books studied there is increased, and a spirit of application discovers itself, which promises much future excellence. The introduction of Dalzel's Collectanea Majora is a great step towards the improvement of Greek learning; and a Lord's day exercise will soon be required of the students in Grotius de veritate. The professorships of rhetoric and of natural history are noble instances of munificence; and there have been lately added adjunct professors in the two departments of chemistry and of anatomy. There is yet, however, much to be done, which calls for the patronage of the rich. A professorship of law, for which there is already a fund, might soon be put in operation with more ample endowments. The salaries of some of the officers require to be enlarged, to induce men of talents to fill these places for any length of time; and the number of tutors might be advantageously increased. But it is peculiarly desirable that a *theological school* should be established, where students for the ministry may be supported, and a professor or professors appointed, who shall devote themselves to the instruction of resident graduates in Biblical criticism, and in the qualifications for the pulpit.

It would be a very agreeable employment to some one acquainted with our academical annals, to collect and publish a history of this university, or an Athenae Harvardienses. In a few years it will become almost impracticable.

SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REVEREND JOSEPH S. BUCKMINSTER.

SERMONS

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SERMON I.

GAL. iv. 4.

BUT WHEN THE FULNESS OF TIME WAS COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON.

More than eighteen centuries ago there appeared in Judea an extraordinary personage called Jesus of Nazareth. The consequences of his life, death, resurrection and ascension have been such as no human foresight could anticipate, no human power control; and it is not now in man's imagination to trace them through the range of future generations. Even if it should be maintained, that there was nothing supernatural in this character, or these consequences, yet the event and its influences must for ever remain stupendous. The appearance of such a person in the world, and at such a period, with the consequent change in so large a portion of society, ought always to arrest the consideration of every thinking mind. It has made an era in the history of mankind, which must be eternally memorable. We, who believe that the birth of Christ was the birth of a Saviour for the world, who see in him the Son of the omnipotent God; we,---who believe that the purposes of his in-

carnation were such as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor has any mind yet perfectly explored, and who rest all our peace and hopes on him, and him alone, as the vicegerent of Jehovah,---cannot be surprised at the long established celebration of the supposed day of his birth, or withhold our concurrence from the honours, which so large a portion of the christian world are disposed to pay it, especially when it coincides, as at present, with our customary day of worship. And at other times also we are disposed to say with the apostle, he that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

It is certain that about eighteen hundred years ago, Jesus, this extraordinary person, appeared, whose birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension completed a series of astonishing and, as we believe, miraculous events. This Jesus claimed the character of the long expected Messiah, the light and salvation of the world; and under this character he is received by all who embrace his religion and acknowledge his divine authority. It will be our object in this discourse to show, that the time in which he appeared was, in every respect, the most proper for his appearance,—this is the first head of discourse,—yet that this fitness of the period lent no aid to the propagation of his religion, and diminished not in the least the necessity of miraculous interposition for its support,—this is our second division. In other words, the state of the world, when Christ was born, was such as to constitute, at the same moment, the most proper time for his appearance and the greatest impediment to the success of his religion.

1. When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son. The fitness of the moment appears in the first place from this undeniable fact, that there was, at that time, a general expectation throughout

the world of the advent of some illustrious prophet and deliverer, who should change the aspect of human affairs. The rumour seems to have advanced from the east, and to have even reached the ears of the Roman emperour. We shall omit the scriptural proofs of this general expectation, till we have produced some remarkable passages from three independent and unbiassed authors of that age. The first is from Josephus, the Jewish annalist of that tremendous war, which ended in the destruction of his nation; a man, all whose prejudices were against the Messiahship and religion of Jesus. He is speaking of the causes, which stimulated the Jews to revolt from the authority of the Romans. "But that which principally encouraged them to the war," says he, "was an ambiguous oracle, found also in our sacred writings, that about that time some one from Judea should obtain the empire of the world. This they understood to belong to themselves, and many of their wise men were mistaken in their judgment; for this oracle referred to the government of Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperour in Judea."* This you observe is the explanation of Josephus, in compliment to his imperial master. The second is from Suetonius, a Roman historian, who wrote, about the same time, the biography of the emperours. His words are these: "There had been for a long time all over the east, a notion firmly believed, that it was in the books of the fates, that some one from Judea was destined, about that time, to obtain the empire of the world."† The third passage is from Tacitus, an historian of veracity and universal credit. He has been relating the calamities of the Jews, which preceded the destruction of their city, and then observes: "that the mass of the people entertained a strong persuasion, that it was mentioned in the ancient writings of the priests, that at that very time

* Lardner i. p. 132. † Suet. Vesp. cap. iv.

the east should prevail, and some one from Judea obtain the empire of the world. These ambiguities," says Tacitus, like the rest, "predicted Vespasian and Titus; but the common people, according to the usual influence of human passions, having once appropriated to themselves this destined greatness, could not be brought to understand the true meaning by all their adversities."* There are other passages in heathen authors, which I think it unnecessary to mention, which prove that this expectation was prevalent at this time in the oriental world, and especially in Judea. These surely are remarkable attestations; and the many instances of persons, who appeared in Judea about this time, pretending to be the Messiah, and collecting vast numbers of deluded Jews around them—facts repeatedly mentioned by the historians of that day—are additional proofs of this general persuasion.

If we turn now to the New Testament, we shall find this state of things corroborated there by many incidental circumstances. The state of the publick mind in Judea is indicated by the anxiety of Herod upon hearing of the birth of a remarkable child in Bethlehem, and by the visit of the eastern Magi. Still more illustrative is the thronging of the multitude to John upon his first appearance, and the message of the Pharisees and priests to inquire, if he were the Christ. "And all the people mused in their hearts," says the evangelist, "whether he were the Christ, or not." We discover the same eager expectation of the Messiah, as a prophet as well as prince, in the conversation of the Samaritan woman, who belonged, you will observe, to a different and hostile nation. Observe too how the people pressed around Jesus, demanding the sign from heaven which they expected of the Messiah; observe how they caught at every appearance of extraordinary power; how,

* Tacit. Hist. l. v. c. 13.

after his performance of a miracle, they were ready to take him by force and make him a king; and with what acclamations and regal honours the multitude accompanied him into Jerusalem. His humble condition and ignominious death alone restrained and extinguished their enthusiasm. In a word, every thing in profane history and in the evangelical narrative proves, that the minds of the men of that age were wrought to a high pitch of expectation, that the great prophet and king would soon come into the world.

2. But what was the source of this universal expectation at this moment? I answer, that I can discover or imagine nothing, except what these historians themselves assign as the authority, the oracles of the Jewish scriptures. This was the fulness of time for the advent of the Messiah, because it was the time predicted in prophecy. To the prophets Christ and his apostles repeatedly refer, and to me it appears, that if every other prediction of a Messiah in the Old Testament were allowed to be ambiguous, the single prophecy in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah would be sufficient to mark out the person we have acknowledged. It is too long to be quoted here, but it may safely be asserted that the description contained in it applies, in the most remarkable manner, to Jesus of Nazareth, and to no other person within our knowledge, who ever lived. It is the prophecy, which engaged the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch, and which Philip explained to him in the only manner in which it can be appropriated by any ingenuous man, who has read the history of Jesus of Nazareth. But you will inquire, perhaps, what prediction so accurately marks the *time* of the Messiah's advent, as to have excited this extraordinary expectation at this precise period. I must acknowledge, that some of those passages which are commonly alleged, particularly the mention of Shiloh, in Genesis, and the desire of all nations, in Haggai, do not appear to me sufficiently

indubitable in any interpretation, which they have hitherto received. There is however a remarkable passage in Daniel—the celebrated prophecy of the seventy weeks—which, if there were no other, appears to me sufficient to have authorized the general expectation we have mentioned. There is not a shadow of reason for yielding to the suggestions of Porphyry, that this book was written after the events it predicts, and that it is only an ambiguous history of the times of Antiochus. Our Saviour himself appeals to a part of it, in describing the desolation of Jerusalem. Therefore it certainly existed in his time, and was applied to approaching events. Let it be remembered too, that Porphyry does not pretend to dispute the existence of the book before the time of Christ, but quarrels with the application of its prophecies to him. In this celebrated prediction, then, it clearly appears, that in about five hundred years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, after the captivity, the Messiah should appear. From whatever date the reckoning is made, or whatever length is assigned to the years, the variations are not, upon any supposition, so great as to prevent our acknowledging that such a prophecy, wherever it was read, must have excited the expectations, which we are sure prevailed, of the appearance of the Messiah about the very time that Jesus lived.

If you add to these considerations, that more than one intimation is given in the prophets, that the Messiah should come while the second temple was standing, that it was well understood that he should be born of the family of David, and of the tribe of Judah, you will instantly perceive that he must have appeared, if at all, before the destruction of Jerusalem. For who does not know, that since that unparalleled desolation, the Jews have been dispersed throughout the habitable globe, that they have not now the vestige of a temple, that their distinction of

tribes is confounded, that their families and genealogies are utterly lost, and that it became and has remained, from the hour of this overthow, utterly impossible to apply the distinctive marks of the Messiah to any future pretender? Christ, then, must have appeared at the period he did, or not at all; and in our controversy with the Jews this circumstance appears nearly decisive. It was the fulness of time, the consummation of prophecy, the closing period of the Jewish state.

3. In the third place the peculiar circumstances and character of the nation, when God sent forth his Son, render that period the fulness of time. Even from the time of Malachi, a period of several centuries, they had been favoured with no prophet, or authorized instructer. Their religion, which was introduced in the infancy of the world, only to answer God's design of exhibiting the providence, and preserving the knowledge of one supreme Deity, in the midst of an idolatrous world, had now accomplished its purpose. About two centuries before Christ, the sacred books of the Jews had been translated into Greek, which might then be called the language of the civilized world. They were thus made accessible to all the readers and thinkers of that polished age; and the language of many of the heathen philosophers discovers, that they were not unacquainted with Moses. At this period, too, the Jews, under the favour of the successors of Alexander, had established themselves in every considerable city in the Roman Empire. Their synagogues were every where tolerated, and they seem to have had proselytes all over the world. The world was indeed in such a situation, that the knowledge of any thing extraordinary in their fortunes would be instantly diffused.

The corruption of their manners and of their religion had, by this time, discovered the utter insufficiency of their economy, and demanded a thorough revolu-

tion. The traditions of the elders had completely nullified their law: it had lost all its moral, and retained only its ceremonial force; and an insane zeal for this narrow and superstitious religion had usurped, in their minds, the place of every virtue, human or divine. They were at once the most corrupt and bigoted of religionists, and God's mercy seemed to call for the abolition of this peculiarity, and the introduction of a more liberal and more spiritual dispensation. The common Jews were enslaved by a hierarchy, inconceivably odious, and yet they were never more furiously zealous for their rituals and their temple. Indeed *this private religious zeal*,* as it was called, appears to have been almost the only principle by which they were actuated; and this principle is not only consistent with, but encourages and justifies all the crimes of society, treachery, revolt, discord, revenge, secret conspiracies, assassinations and open murder. The testimony of Josephus, in numerous passages, corroborates that of the apostle Paul to the depravity of the Jews; and he somewhere observes, that never was there a time, from the beginning of the world, more fruitful in wickedness than that in which he lived, and that if the Romans had delayed to come against their city, it must have been swallowed up by an earthquake, or overwhelmed by a deluge. Surely, if ever the extreme corruption of a national religion could demand the interposition of Jehovah, this was the fulness of time for the appearance of his Son.

4. The moral and religious condition of the heathen world, at the period of Christ's birth, is another proof, that this was the most proper time for his appearance. In consequence of the progress of philosophy, and other causes, the polytheism of ancient times had lost all its influence, except with the lowest of the people, and there was nothing left to supply its

* See Lardner vol. I.

place in the minds of the great. The fear of the gods had vanished, and with it almost all sense of moral obligation. Power and wealth had introduced into the Roman nation the most effeminate and selfish corruption, and the early virtues of the commonwealth were no longer known. In Greece, the worship of the gods was the mode, and their temples were the theatres of inconceivable profligacy; and in truth, the remains of their idolatrous superstition seemed to exist only for the more public encouragement of every species of infamy. The glowing description, which Paul gives in the first chapter of Romans of the corruptions of that age, is confirmed by innumerable passages in pagan writers. To say all in one word, they had united the more dissolute vices of a luxurious age with the more sanguinary crimes of a ruder state of society.

5. Lastly, the intellectual progress, which the world had then made, was such as to demand the introduction of a revelation. The time of Christ was the age of refinement in literature, and of acuteness in philosophical investigation. The thinking part of the world had proceeded just far enough to discover the utter futility and absurdity of their idolatrous religion, and to reach the bounds of unassisted speculation, without finding any thing on which to rest. The result of the labours of philosophy appeared to be a total scepticism on the most important subjects of human duty and expectation. The irregular fears of a future state had been supplanted by the materialism of Epicurus; and this system—if system it may be called, which left them without a God, a providence, a morality, or a retribution—was the fashionable philosophy of the more cultivated classes. They had learnt just enough to believe, that religion and morals were entirely unconnected; that the old rites were to be kept up, only as the established religion of the state; and they had proceeded just far enough to

suppose, that it was the absurdest thing in the world to talk of religion, except as an old established folly for weak minds. In all the fine writings of the best sages of paganism, there is nothing to be found like a system of morals, which reaches to the heart, and regulates and sanctifies the affections. They had attained glimpses of some great truths, but their knowledge was like the occasional flashes of the lights in the north, a knowledge, which, in their best men, only excited a more ardent desire for the full light of intellectual day. In this state of the human understanding, in the fulness of time, the Sun of righteousness arose.

There are other circumstances in the state of the world at that time, which sufficiently prove the fitness of the moment when God chose to send his Son into the world; but I forbear to enlarge on this head.

My second proposition was, that the very facts, which show the fitness of the time for the introduction of christianity, are *the very circumstances* which show, that it would have been impossible to establish it in the world without supernatural aid. This state of the world not only lent our religion no aid in its promulgation, but is *the very state of things* which leaves us no other method of accounting for the unexampled progress of christianity, but the belief that the power of God was exerted in its origin and propagation.

If I should be so fortunate as to make this appear, you will acknowledge, with me, the wonderful foresight of God in this singular juncture of human affairs: that the very circumstances, which most showed the necessity and demanded the introduction of a new religion, should also prove that it could not have made its way in the world, except by supernatural means, and of consequence unless it had been true. You will cry out with the apostle, how unsearchable,

O God, are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out!

1. In the first place, that universal expectation among the Jews of the appearance of their Messiah, was the very circumstance which led to his almost universal rejection by his nation. Do you ask, how this could be? I answer, because, with the earnest expectation of a great prophet and priest, who should appear among them, they had inseparably connected the idea of a temporal deliverer, a national head, and the splendour of external royalty. Hence, whenever they began to collect around Jesus, and to show him marks of devotedness and attachment, it always happened that some proof of his humility, or of his peaceable and unwarlike character appeared and disgusted them, and turned the whole current of their feelings. Hence, as soon as he was arrested, and their worldly hopes were blasted, the crowd, who followed him with acclamations into Jerusalem, were the very populace, who cried, crucify him, crucify him, and followed him to the mount of crucifixion with shouts of insult and disdain. Their rulers and priests were wise enough, from the first, to know, that so poor, humble and unresisting a character could never be the Messiah they had expected. Hence the inquiry, have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him? But the common people, who had from time to time caught at the manifestation of miraculous power in Jesus, were indescribably vexed and disappointed when they found their expectations false, and Jesus quietly submitting to crucifixion. Nothing, you know, is so violent as the rage of a mob, when completely disappointed in a favourite project or channel. Hence we find, that the true and insuperable objection to the reception of the gospel in the Jewish nation was the ignominious death of its author. The cross of Christ was their great stumbling block. "This man cannot be the Messiah, for

he has died like a malefactor." I may safely conclude, then, that the previous universal expectation of the Jews, which was so completely overthrown by the manner of our Lord's death, was the first obstacle to the reception of his religion, of which the first and fundamental article is, Jesus the Messiah.

2. In the second place, the prophecies, which appeared to have their completion in Jesus, did not probably lend any aid to his claims, when they were announced to the Gentiles. For, as the Jews became more known in the world, and their sacred writings read by reading men, they were thought a credulous and superstitious race, and it could have been no recommendation to any personage to pretend, that he was predicted in their prophecies. It appears to me, that no circumstance would have been more likely to excite a sneer in the wise men of Greece and Rome, than to be invited to embrace the religion of a man, who had been pointed out in Jewish prophecy. They would have said, like Horace, let the credulous Jew believe this. Their prophets are of no more authority with us, than our own Sybilline books; and we all know that augur cannot look at augur without laughing. You will acknowledge, then, I think, with me, that to assert that Jesus was the consummation of Jewish prophecy, would have only excited a greater prejudice against him in the minds of the majority of Greeks and Romans. A Jewish Messiah was the last whom *they* would have chosen for the founder of a universal faith, after they had heard of such men among themselves, as Numa, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato.

3. In the third place, the very situation of the Jewish nation, which rendered the necessity of a new dispensation most evident, presented the very circumstances most hostile to the propagation of christianity. The corruption of their religion inflamed them with a most bigoted attachment to it, because at that state

it most favoured their private vices and national pride. Thus we find, that the contempt which Jesus discovered for their traditions, the generous views of God and virtue which he opened, and the internal purity which he recommended, were the very things which awakened their suspicions, and excited against him their most inveterate hostility. This single character of our Lord, without any other revolting circumstance, would have most effectually suppressed his cause, if it had been the cause of man only.

Again, the circumstance of the very general dispersion of the Jews throughout the Roman empire, at this period, which, to a superficial observer, appears favourable to the propagation of christianity, presented on the whole a serious obstacle. It is true, the knowledge of our Saviour's life was thus sooner communicated and farther spread. But to counterbalance this, let it be remembered, that the same national prejudices, the same corruptions of principle and practice, which impelled the ruler and priest at Jerusalem to reject and crucify Jesus, were diffused through the whole Jewish people in every part of the world, and that they exerted every where the same malignity towards Jesus and his church. Wherever Jews were found, there too were found enemies of the new religion. Had it not been for the tumults and opposition, which, as we learn from the Acts, they every where excited, the new doctrine might have been received among the Gentiles peaceably enough, though perhaps slowly, and not without contempt. But the apostles always and every where found among the Jews the indefatigable opponents of the great truth they preached, that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Still further; the Jews, wherever they were known, were odious to the Romans, and their more extensive intercourse with foreigners served only to increase the general contempt and hatred which existed

against their nation. Hence it was a prejudice, almost insurmountable in the mind of a Greek or a Roman, that the apostles, the first preachers of the new faith, were of so detestable an origin. "Are not these men that speak, Galileans, and can any good come out of such a country of rebels," must have been the first thought in the mind of a listening heathen. Can you imagine any thing, my friends, more unfavourable to the promulgation of christianity in the world, than this very state of the Jews at home and abroad, which seemed to you at first so favourable to its progress?

4. The corrupt morals of the pagan world, which demanded the introduction of a purer system, were also extremely unfavourable to the cordial reception of any thing so pure as the gospel. The apostles of Christ preached a purity of heart, of which the world had then hardly a faint conception. The new religion condemned, as odious in the sight of God, the vices to which the Gentiles were most enslaved, and threatened the punishment of hell to the very practices which they had consecrated, by making them a part of their worship, and the best recommendations to the favour of their deities. Wherever the gospel was received, it banished all their pompous sacrifices, their idol feasts, their dissolute worship; wherever it was received, their favourite fights of gladiators, their theatrical shows, and all the sanguinary amusements of the populace, which long habit had made necessary, disappeared. In the midst of a luxurious, relaxed, selfish and sensual age, it demanded a degree of mortification and self denial, which must at any time have appeared intolerable; and not only so, but it exposed its professors to contempt, persecution, the loss of former friends, the dissolution of established habits, to poverty, ignominy, and not seldom to death itself.

This was the prospect it opened to the mass of the Gentile world. And how, think you, was it likely to

be received among the luxurious senators, the vain literati, the tyrannical prefects, the military governours and generals, the consulars decked out with honours, the licentious favourites of the men of power—a religion which preached the vanity of temporal honours, the folly of pagan wisdom, the dangers of station and influence, in one word, which preached a poverty of spirit, which must have appeared to men, whose sentiments were so depraved, the height of fanatic absurdity. If then the corruptions of the world called for the introduction of the gospel, as soon as it was preached, these very corruptions, from the emperour on his throne down to his dissolute slaves, were arrayed against it in all the hardihood of the grossest depravity.

5. Lastly, the intellectual refinement of that period, which may be thought to have prepared the minds of men for some of the sublime instructions of revelation, was perhaps still more unfavourable to its progress. It enabled men indeed to understand the gospel, but it encouraged them at the same time to despise it. Do you ask, how was this? I will attempt to show you. The men of that age, who had thought at all upon the subject of religion, had, as I before mentioned, proceeded far enough to know, that the established idolatry was nothing but a creature of the state, and therefore they easily consented to support, while they believed it utterly false. They thought it the duty of every man not to neglect the religion of his country; and could see no possible harm in countenancing a system which they did not believe. How extraordinary, nay, how unacceptable must the new religion have appeared to these men, a religion which declared their idolatrous conformity a crime, which was utterly irreconcileable with the notion, that all religions were equally indifferent, or equally good, and which seemed even to suspend the favour of God and their eternal happiness or misery on

their reception of this new system. Surely nothing could be more hostile to their latitudinarian philosophy.

Again, though some of their sages had discovered much solicitude respecting a future existence, and many of them eagerly wished for instruction, yet the manner in which immortality was brought to light in the christian revelation, coupled as it was with the resurrection of the dead, and rested even on the resurrection of a crucified man, seemed to them a most contemptible, if not impious absurdity. We see plainly enough, in the reception of Paul's discourses at Athens and Corinth, and the expressions of king Agrippa at his trial, that the christian doctrine of a future life was no recommendation of the new religion to the wits and philosophers of that disputatious period.

But there is one circumstance resulting from the very refinement of that age, which it is impossible the christian revelation could have surmounted, had not the hand of God been engaged to establish it. It is this. The Greek language was at that time spoken in the utmost purity all over the empire. Eloquence was every where cultivated, and immoderately valued: and nothing could command the attention of men that did not come recommended with the graces of elocution and style. What now can be imagined more unfavourable to the success of the apostles, who were rude in speech and utterly unacquainted with the arts of popular addresses, than such a polished period? What! those men to overturn the systems of the world, whose language was so idiomatical that Peter was betrayed by it even to one of his own countrywomen—men who were Galileans, without any of the fashionable science of the times—men humble in their aspect, poor in condition, fishermen by occupation, persecuted in every step of their progress, and recommending themselves to the Greeks

and Romans by professing to be the followers of one, who was crucified as a malefactor! These, then, were the circumstances under which christianity made such progress in the world, as that in three hundred years a christian emperour was on the throne of the Cæsars.

My friends, if you have viewed this subject in the light that I do, you will contemplate, with ever increasing amazement, the establishment of christianity, and adore the power of God. How wonderful, that the state of the world was such as to make that the *fittest* time for the birth of Christ, and yet the most unfavourable, in all human probability, to the success of his religion! Every circumstance, which goes to prove the necessity of revelation at that moment, proves also the utter impossibility of establishing it by merely human means. Nothing but facts which could not be denied, miracles which could not be resisted, and a supernatural power in the teachers of the religion, could have made this astonishing change in the world.—I know not whether the reasoning in this discourse be new, but of this I am sure, that if this counsel or this work had been of men, it would have come to nought. Of this I am sure, that the foolishness of God is wiser, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. I see not only the fulness of time in the period when Jesus appeared, but I am sure, from the unexampled success of his religion, that it was God who sent him forth, and that he sent forth his Son. He asks us, my friends, whom think ye that I am? I answer with Peter, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

SERMON II.

JOHN vii. 46.

NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.

THE excellence of the gospel is so distinguishing, and the evidences of its divine original are so various, that a constant study of it, instead of diminishing our interest, or shaking our faith, tends rather to astonish us by the constant increase of its proofs, and the inexhaustible abundance of its motives. True it is, that a mind, which comes fresh to the examination of christianity, and, if such a thing is possible, with perfect impartiality, ought first to ascertain what is called the external evidence of the gospel, or, in other words, the credibility and authenticity of the historical testimony on which it rests. But when his conviction from this source is sufficiently established, and in this regular way, let the inquirer direct his attention to what is called its internal evidence, such as the character of Christ and his apostles, the nature of his instructions, and what we understand in general by the spirit of the gospel. In this way, if he is an inquirer of an ingenuous disposition, and of a heart warmed with the love of virtue, he will love the gospel too well to suffer any relicks of doubt to disturb him; he will be unable

to reject what appears so divine, and what he finds so powerful, or to think it to be any thing else than what he wishes it to be,—the word of God.

There is something in the character of Jesus Christ, which, to an attentive reader of his history, is of more force than all the weight of external evidence to prove him divine. If we attempt to persuade ourselves, that there is *nothing super-terrestrial* in the picture, which, with so much simplicity and unlaboured consistency, the evangelists have given of our Lord, this question rushes upon the mind, and demands an answer: How was it, that in the common course of nature, in one of the most corrupt ages of the world, and in an obscure corner of an obscure country, a perfect personage or model of the moral class should all at once start up before the admiration of mankind, and now, after the lapse of many centuries, as well as then, remain unrivalled, and almost unapproached? This is a phenomenon, which must be explained before any man can be satisfied with the rejection of divine interposition.

If, to relieve ourselves from this difficulty, which no man who thinks will fail to feel, we choose, with an absurd distrust of all history, to doubt that such a personage as our Lord existed, a greater difficulty meets us: How, if the original did not exist, did four writers like the evangelists acquire, *without inspiration*, the idea of such a character, and transmit, with such harmonious and lively colours, the picture we have of Jesus Christ. The imagination of any man can form a singular combination of qualities, a character merely extraordinary; but if four men conceived, at the same time, and without any adequate prototype, such a character as is confessedly drawn of the blessed Jesus, I scruple not to say it was such a miracle of genius, as neither before nor since had a parallel in the recorded history of the human mind.

In order that you may feel the argument, which I wish now to set before you, let me transport you back to Judea, and place you in the audience that were listening to the discourses of our Saviour, recorded in that chapter of St. John from which our text is taken.

The Pharisees and chief priests, enraged at the boldness of our Saviour's discourses, and jealous of the attention which he appeared to excite, order some of their officers to apprehend him. The officers go forth determined, as we may suppose, to obey their superiours, as usual. They advance toward the Son of God, then in the midst of his discourse. They behold a man standing in all the conscious dignity of independent virtue, full of grave and impressive wisdom, which he delivers and enforces with the authority of divine power. As they approach, no secret anxiety betrays itself in his countenance. In his manner they discover none of the reserve and cunning of imposture, no arts to gain attention, no solicitude to provoke wonder or catch applause, none of the extravagancies of the head of a sect, no absurdities, and no symptoms of concern for family interest, or personal fame. All about Jesus of Nazareth is as fair, and grand, and unaffected, as the sun in his course through a cloudless sky. He appears to be the delegate of Him, who sits at the head of the creation, proposing messages of love, and expressing, in his own manner, the benevolent designs of his Father in heaven towards this perverse nation. They behold him affectionate in his adddress, sublime in his conceptions, yet fearless in his manner, meekly conscious that God was with him, and that his unbelieving hearers were a wicked and cruel race, who would bring upon themselves the vengeance of the Most High, whose prophet they rejected.

The rude officers are arrested at the sight of this inexplicable dignity, and an unaccountable awe spreads itself over their consciences. They feel, as if they were about to lay unhallowed hands on the Son of God, or the inhabitant of some other world. They stand at a distance, dwelling on his looks and language, fixed in amazement. They return to their employers without their prey. Why have ye not brought him? say the impatient priests. Never man spake like this man, was all their reply. And who is this wonderful teacher, my friends? The Son of the humble Mary of the village of Nazareth.

If, christians, there should be produced in your minds a true sense of the dignity of him, whose words and appearance arrested these officers in their design, and if you should feel too, that such a character cannot be the unaided invention of the four evangelists, but demands a real original, the purpose of this discourse will be answered, and the truth of the character of Jesus will be substantiated.

We begin with this preliminary, if the history of Jesus Christ, as it is recorded in the four evangelists, is substantially true, then his claims to divine authority must be admitted, for God was with him.

Now there are four remarkable circumstances in the description of our Saviour, as it is left us in the gospels, which sufficiently show the reality of the delineation, and, of consequence, as we think, the divinity of the original; and these are the *unexpectedness*, the *originality*, the *sublimity*, and the *consistency* of the character.

1. The unexpectedness of the character, which Jesus assumed. You will understand the force of this consideration, when you recollect, and bear in mind, what the Jews had long, perhaps always, expected in their Messiah, and what they found in Jesus. They were impatiently looking out for a temporal deliverer; they had figured to themselves

a leader of magnanimous spirit and celestial power; they hoped to find erected on the hill of Zion, a standard of revolt from the oppression of the Romans, under the imagined king, whom they had clothed in robes of royalty, and to whom they had given ensigns of power. Thus the Magi, at the birth of Jesus, came with regal presents, and the populace too were afterwards ready to conduct him, in regal triumph, into the holy city, and crown him king of the Jews. Besides this general impatience to be led on, under the banners of the Christ, to national independence, and ultimately to universal empire, they were continually demanding some sign in the heavens, which they expected. To this notion of the Messiah, which was unquestionably the prevailing one, they were led by a too literal interpretation of some of the passages in their sacred books, as well as by a national sentiment of oppression. Nor was the expectation of some mighty deliverer, about that time to appear, confined to Judea. The rumour was prevalent in the east. It was certainly known to the classical historians of that age, and there are strong reasons for believing, that it had reached the Roman emperour.*

Now, this being the state of the Jewish minds with regard to the Messiah, let us not forget, that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were Jews, who, in addition to the prejudices of their nation, were exposed to contracted views from the lowness of their origin and condition in life. These men, however, undertake, without any previous advantage that we can imagine, to give us the history and show the character of a Messiah in every respect a contrast to the expectations of their nation, and, as they tell us with much simplicity, long irreconcileable to their own wishes and previous opinion. They have put us indeed in full possession of the state of their

* See Sermon I.

own minds on this subject, and relate without artifice, the great events of the death and resurrection of our Lord, which alone succeeded at last to correct their worldly mistakes.

Now, my hearers, I do not ask, whether their history is true; but I do ask, how it could ever enter the heads of four bigoted Jews to claim for Jesus, of all persons in the world, the office of the Messiah, if such a person had not existed and made pretensions to the character, and, by wonderful evidence, which they found it impossible to resist, substantiated his claim to this singular dignity.

If any one will suppose the gospels to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, a supposition to which unbelievers sometimes resort, to avoid the evidence of divinity arising from our Saviour's predictions, our reasoning remains unaffected. For it is still more unaccountable, that these Jewish authors of the gospels should represent *him* as the Messiah, whom they make to predict the very overthrow, which it was thought he would prevent. Whatever *other* title or character he might, on account of his prophecies, have deserved, still to declare him the *Messiah*, that proud and cherished name among Jews, was such an anomaly in the history of a Jew's mind, as must have appeared little short of madness to one of his own nation; and is a phenomenon, which we have a right to have explained by those, who seriously doubt the reality of the character of Jesus.

You perceive then, that to suppose the falsity of the gospel story, or the fictitiousness of the character of Jesus Christ, involves an unaccountable phenomenon in the Jewish historians. Allow the character to have existed as described, and the difficulty vanishes, for the evangelists themselves tell us of all their previous mistakes, wishes and prejudices, and the events which produced their change of character and views.

2. The second mark of reality and truth, and consequently of something supernatural, in the character of Jesus, is its confessed *originality*.

There had been before, in the Jewish history, a succession of prophets, who might have furnished the evangelists with models for a character, if they had been drawing an unreal, or imaginary portrait. The heathen world too had been favoured with eminent instructers: for the darkness of paganism is lighted up with the rare lustre of Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Socrates. But Jesus does not appear to have borrowed a ray from these lights. He travels across this galaxy of illustrious men, like the full moon in all the brightness of her course, with a lustre totally unborrowed from them, and casting their feeble and collected light into distant obscurity by the mild, yet overwhelming power of his rays.

Moses spake always like the mere interpreter of the Most High, diffident of his own power, and not without apprehensions from the unfaithfulness and inconstancy of the people. Jesus speaks always with the conscious and unhesitating dignity of one, who had the spirit without measure, who could say without doubt and without presumption, I and my father are one. The preceding prophets, and John too, the immediate precursor of our Lord, had passed off the stage without seeming to have imagined, that the Jewish peculiarity would ever cease, except by Judaism's becoming the religion of the world. Jesus, low and humble as he was, gentle and patient as he was, comes as if he knew that he was to consummate the dispensations of the Most High, as if he saw the innumerable prejudices, corruptions and superstitions of his nation sinking away before him, and the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, descending from on high. Pointed out, as he had been, by all that preceded him, he points to no one. Verily, I say unto

you, there hath not risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. He comes, as if he were conscious, that, after the accomplishment of his mission, he was to sit down on the right hand of the majesty of God; angels, and principalities, and powers being made subject to him.

His manner too is as original as his doctrine. Contrary to the example of all the founders of Jewish sects, he comes without austerity, and without any thing of that shade of reserve into which those instructers withdraw, who think themselves oracular. To the great astonishment of the Jews his manners are familiar, yet dignified; to the inexpressible offence of his friends, he associates promiscuously with every class of men; his conversations, while they delight and instruct his honest and humble followers, send away his inquisitors confounded and unable to reply. And with a still more extraordinary assumption of greatness and independence, this poor Jew from the village of Nazareth denounces, without fear, and in the very seat of their authority, the scribes, and priests, and Pharisees, all that was hypocritical, however sacred, and all that was iniquitous, however powerful. Still more striking, and, as it seems, unexampled, was the air of authority, which he assumed in his Sermon on the mount, and in the performance of his miracles. Who art thou? say they. His manner seems to have been grand, impressive, irresistible. "The multitude," says the evangelist, "were astonished, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

It is impossible for you to understand this wonderful originality in the character of Jesus of Nazareth, without at the same time calling to mind the character of the nation among whom he appeared.

They were a people, in one respect, like the Hindoos, all whose habits, opinions, and even movements, were scrupulously marked out by law or by tradition. For many centuries they had been the slaves of a rigid ritual, originally adapted indeed to their national circumstances and character, but now made narrower by traditionary interpretations, which were esteemed even more sacred than the text itself. The Jews of our Saviour's time were a priest-ridden, formal, and hypocritical nation, and proverbially odious to the rest of the world, who, though not wiser, were the slaves of a different superstition and of different national vices. If there ever was a community formed to reduce all minds to a common level of superstitious imbecility, it was that of the Jews. The best proof of this assertion is to be found, I think, in the remaining works of the Jewish authors of that age. The reveries of the Talmud, which are a collection of Jewish traditionary interpolations, are unrivalled in the regions of absurdity. The works of Philo, who flourished about the same time, are only made tolerable by their occasional mysticism after the fashion of Plato, whom he followed. Josephus, who was rather a Roman than a Jew, is a sensible historian, and by no means a fair standard of the state of Jewish cultivation, for he was familiar with Greek literature. The evangelists, though, except Luke, uncultivated men, all write with great simplicity, and, what is truly remarkable, without any mysticism or affectation. But such being the state of Jewish cultivation, think only how extraordinary, in such a nation as that, must a character like Jesus have appeared; sitting down to meat without washing, where the ablutions were perpetual, and of religious obligation; mingling without reserve, and even eating, with tax gatherers and gentiles, whose touch the Jews considered as polluting; and in all his discourses

preferring mercy to sacrifice, and obedience of the moral law of God before all the ceremonials of external sanctity, and all this singularity too under the character of the Messiah, the darling object of national expectation!

Now, my hearers, I again ask, how, if the original did not exist, could such a character as this have entered into the imagination of a Jew of that day? For let it be constantly remembered, that the historians of Christ are Jews, by birth, by education, by interest; and that such persons should portray, and with commendation too, such a character as Jesus, if it did not exist, is more wonderful than the existence of the true, the divine original. Would not the bare conception of such a character, in any age, have been enough to immortalize the mind that formed it?—But to draw such a character, and at the same to give no intimation of any effort or art in the work; to devise it, and discover no desire to attract attention, or awaken admiration of the writer or of the hero, but to leave it undecorated to make its own impression—here, here appear the power and ingenuousness of truth! My friends, I see the seal of God, and cannot refuse to exclaim with awe, verily there is something more than mortal in this affair.

3. A third peculiarity in the character drawn of Jesus, in the gospels, is its wonderful *sublimity*. As this is rather a matter of taste and feeling than a point to be proved by facts, I shall not enter into a very copious illustration. Reading the gospels, as we do, from our childhood, and being so entirely familiarized to every circumstance in our Saviour's life, and every word recorded of him, we lose, I think, much too often, the full and fresh perception of those marks of moral grandeur of which his history is full. But to those, who can yet feel the sentiment of the sublime in character, we appeal.

What simplicity, what pathos, what greatness is there in the portrait of the Son of God! There seems to be at times a shade of melancholy thrown over his appearance by the fatal certainty of his approaching death, which heightens, astonishingly, the effect of his supernatural greatness; while, at the same time, his tender compassion for his countrymen, and his familiarity, flowing from his benevolence, seem to relieve the awe of his more than human endowments.

He controls nature, as God created the light, with a word. To the waves, he says, peace, be still—and to raise a dead man from his grave, he says only, Lazarus, come forth! He performs the most stupendous miracles without emotion. Every one who sees them is lost in amazement; but the Son of God, conscious of his greatness, and unconcerned about his fame, except to confine it, leaves the words which he uttered, and the miracles which he wrought, to produce their own proper impression on the mind: he deigns not to draw the genuine conclusions. The most sublime of all the portions of his life, is its closing hour. His greatness in his sufferings must be felt by every reader of sensibility, and no language can render it more impressive than the simple record of the evangelists.

And now, my friends, if the evangelists are not the conscientious relaters of facts, how have they attained to these touches of moral greatness? How, in that age of corrupt literature and taste, among such a race of babblers and triflers as the Jews, did these unlearned men construct such a story, and give such a moral image, sublime beyond the conception of former ages, clothed only in the unexaggerated language of facts? Here is no Plato to dress up the discourses of Jesus, like those of Socrates, on his dying bed; and yet the discourses of our Saviour with his disciples, and his prayer with them

just before his death, are the sublime of pathos and devotion. This part of the character of Jesus owes nothing to his historians. They do not carefully point us to any striking traits; they hardly make a reflection for us, or discover that they feel themselves a sentiment of admiration. If you feel, then, my hearers, this sublimity in the character, it is because it really existed, not because the evangelists have taken pains to display it; it is because you see, in their irregular and inartificial memoranda, the same person whom the centurion saw expiring on the cross, when he cried out, "This was a righteous man, this was the son of God!"

4. The fourth trait, which we proposed to contemplate in the character of Jesus, as it stands in the gospels, is its *consistency*.

To understand this, you must follow him, from the commencement of his ministry, through the various changes of his life. There is, throughout, the same devotedness to God, compassion for human misery, contempt of malediction, meekness, self denial, grandeur and solemn tranquillity. He is the same great and gracious being, when driven in fury from his native city, and when carried in triumph by the people; when giving his disciples his last adieu in private, and when surrendered by the baseness of a disciple to the violence of the rulers and the tumult of the people; when expiring on the cross, and when risen in all the plenitude of his power and glory. The great object of his life, and sufferings, and exaltation, seems never to have been absent from his mind. Not a syllable escapes him, in the most difficult and trying crisis of his life, unworthy of the majesty of the Son of God, or of the tenderness of one, who felt all our infirmities, and learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

The more we think of this subject, the more astonishing we shall find it, and the more difficult to

preserve the consistency we have mentioned. Here is a wonderful contrast of powers—divine greatness and mortal debility, ignominy and glory, suffering and triumph, the servant of all and the Lord of all, Jesus expiring and Jesus risen and triumphant. Who would undertake, without any adequate prototype, to describe a consistent character out of these incongruous elements? Who could advance a step in such a narrative without previous instruction?

Think how difficult it is to preserve, for any length of time, the consistency of a common fictitious delineation. Suppose the character is taken from the walks of every-day life, to make a natural portrait is a mark of considerable talent. But when the character is extraordinary, beyond the grasp of common minds, when the events are mighty and unexampled, and especially where supernatural agency makes a part of the narration, then the preservation of consistency discovers wonderful superiority of invention. Great geniuses have often attempted this and failed.

Now when you add to this, that the history of Jesus is the work not of one writer, but of four, and three of these obscure and illiterate, and one of them confessedly writing from the testimony of various witnesses; when you consider, that each of them contributes different portions of the history, and yet that they produce such an harmonious whole, as the character of Jesus Christ; if you suppose that they did not copy, and minutely too, from a real original, that they did not make use of undeniable facts, the work rises into a miracle of human genius. It is impossible, utterly impossible, in the nature of the human mind, that any thing but truth should have furnished the materials, the substance of the evangelical narrative. If you deny, or doubt this, you have a moral phenomenon, and an historical difficulty more unaccountable, more prodigious, more in-

credible, than all the miracles of the gospel, and at the same time utterly useless and absurdly anomalous; and he who chooses this side of the alternative, knows not what he doth, nor whereof he affirmeth.

What we have said on these four points, the unexpectedness, originality, sublimity and consistency of the delineation, is enough, we hope, to satisfy any man, who will meditate on the subject, that this is a real picture; and if Jesus Christ really existed, as the evangelists have drawn him, I leave you to judge of the truth of that declaration at the commencement of his ministry, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What remains then, but to exhort you to some practical use of these meditations.

I hope you are among those advanced christians, who, after having satisfied yourselves of the historical truth of the facts in christianity, because you thought it a duty which you owed to truth, are now able to repose on your original conviction; and that in this state your faith is continually strengthening itself, not merely by time and habit, but by those secret and irresistible influences, which flow from the frequent and diligent reading of that wonderful collection of documents relating to Jesus Christ, the New Testament. To dwell upon the character of Jesus, must be the delight of every christian who has any desire to grow in virtue; and surely he is no christian who makes no progress.

We have said, that the kind of character which Jesus exhibited as the Messiah, was entirely unexpected to his nation. Instead of using his miraculous power to place himself at the head of his nation, as their deliverer and the conqueror of the world, the Son of God chose rather to appear as the son of peace and consolation. The heart of man was the only realm which he aspired to rule; and it was as

grateful to him to convert the publicans and sinners, as it would have been to receive the proud submission of a prefect or an emperour, of Herod or Tiberius. He went about doing good, when the impatient Jews were tempting him to aspire to the throne of David. What a lesson of humility is this; and what can more clearly show the unambitious and holy spirit of the christian religion, than this character of Christ in these circumstances.

Again, what an original character was that of Jesus Christ. How little was it modified by the national character of the Jews, and how perfectly free was it from any of the debilitating and corrupting influence of general example. The Son of God, christians, did not fear the charge of singularity. He did not seek favour by accommodating himself to the manners and principles of the times in which he lived. He did not choose to conciliate hypocrites, nor did he attempt to secure the ruling authorities in aid of his designs by falling in with their purposes. He dared to neglect superstitions which he thought vain, and men whom he thought base, and to honour those whom the wicked priests and elders neglected or disdained. He felt that freedom from the common thraldom of prejudice, love of popularity, and inveterate custom, which the consciousness of pure views, of fervent and rational piety, and the continual anticipation of a better world will give you, my friends, even the most humble of you, if you will make the trial.

But is there any thing to be learned, you will say, from the sublimity of the character, which is so much a subject of taste? Yes, learn from this, that there is nothing truly great but what is simple and unaffected. Sublimity is completely destroyed by vanity and ostentation. Learn, that the moral grandeur of independent integrity is the sublimest thing in nature, before which the pomp of eastern magni-

ficence and the splendour of conquest are odious as well as perishable.

Again, from the consistency of the Saviour's character, learn, that the character of every christian must be a consistent, a uniform one. The heavenly spirit which pervades him discovers itself in all his visible actions. The true-bred pupil of Jesus Christ is the same in prosperity and adversity, in ignominy and in honour, in weal or wo, in the circle of admirers and friends and under the calumnies of enemies, in public and in his closet, in the full flow of his health and spirits and in the cold embraces of death.

To conclude—have you caught, my hearers, any glimpses of Jesus? If you believe in him as he was, if you love what you know of him, and imitate what you love, and study to know more and more of his character, you will see that he was in the Father, and the Father in him; for the more like God, the perfection of all excellence, you become, the more will you feel all that is godlike in his Son.

Yet this wondrous image of excellence was mutilated by men, and Jesus died by the hands of those whom he would have saved. My hearers, it was to bring us to that state of light and privilege which we now enjoy—nay more, it was to effect our recovery and pardon, and exalt us yet higher in the scale of being—that this divine character was humbled even unto the ignominy of crucifixion. Let it not be our accusation, that we have been insensible to this wonderful scene of majesty and infamy, of compassion and cruelty. Enough, enough, that we have ever wavered. Thee will we follow, blessed Jesus; and though all should be offended in thee, yet will we never be offended.

SERMON III.

PSALM CXIX. 71.

IT IS GOOD FOR ME, THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED.

THIS acknowledgment is from the pen of David, the monarch of Israel, whose life was chequered with all the varieties of prosperous and adverse fortune; and happy should we pronounce any man, whose sufferings, though less various and severe, have enabled him to repeat with equal sincerity, "it is good for me, that I have been afflicted."

Little did I imagine, my christian friends—when I last stood in this desk of sacred instruction, listening to the solemn counsels of those, who were convened to sanction our mutual relation, and joyfully accepting the proffered fellowship and tender congratulations of my elder brethren—little did I imagine, that the cold hand of disease would so soon chill the ardour of my expectations, and cripple the vigour with which I hoped to enter on the duties, in which I should need so much aid from Heaven and so much indulgence from you. But our times are in God's hand. The course of Providence cannot be hastened by our precipitancy; nor the decrees of Heaven explored by our curiosity, or accommodated to our wishes. But the religion we profess, my friends, forbids us to suffer disappointment to damp

the liveliness of our confidence in our Father who is in Heaven, or to awaken even a sentiment, much less to call forth an expression, of fretfulness, impatience, or distrust; and though it is not in the power of human nature to look at the beginning and the end of affliction with equal pleasure, and to feel the approach and the departure of pain with equal gratitude, still we can at least believe, and believing we shall confess, that the hand of God is guided in both by equal goodness: we can at least avoid despising the chastening, or fainting under the rebuke.

But this is not the place to talk of ourselves, or of our sufferings. Permit me only to observe, that I have been induced to defer to some future day the appropriate discourses, which are usually expected from a pastor newly inducted, that I may direct your present attention to a subject, which you will easily perceive my late confinement has suggested to my thoughts. And if, by seizing the moments when my own reflections are most copious and warm, and my own recollections most vivid, I should be able, by the blessing of God, to impress on the mind of a single hearer the benefits of pain or sickness, or teach him to endure with fortitude and advantage the chastisements of Heaven, I shall bless the present occasion, and say with additional pleasure, it is good for *you* also, that I have been afflicted.

The discipline of Providence is as various, as are the characters and circumstances of men. Every thing which occurs to us in this life is probationary. Calamities, though they may wear the guise of punishments, are never administered solely for the sake of punishment, but of correction; and what we call indiscriminately fortunate events, and thoughtlessly imagine to be blessings, are never dispensed merely as the recompense, but rather as the trials of our obedience.

Of all the various forms, which affliction assumes, the most common is that of sickness. The shafts of disease shoot across our path in such a variety of courses, that the atmosphere of human life is darkened by their number, and the escape of an individual becomes almost miraculous. Is there one in this assembly, who has reached even half the term of human life, and who has never yet trembled at the approaches of disease, who has never groaned under the anguish of pain, who has never sunk helpless under the secret and imperceptible operation of an enfeebling disorder; one on whose cheek the bloom of health has never faded, whose limbs the vigour of youth has at no time deserted, the energy of whose mind debility has at no time relaxed, or confinement wasted or disabled? If there be such an one, who of you will venture to say, I envy that man. Let us grant, indeed, that of all the temporal gifts of God, health is the most pure, valuable and desirable; the blessing most worthy of the petitions of the good, and least exposed to abuse by the corrupt. Still it is no paradox to assert, that the loss of blessings may itself prove a blessing, that the maladies of the body may prove medicines of the mind. Though that complacency, which is described as the attendant of a healthful and vigorous constitution, may be the maximum of corporeal enjoyment, yet we may venture to assert, without a play upon words, that such uniform freedom from the infirmities of humanity may gradually generate a selfish complacency and confidence in health, which are nearly allied to ignorance of our own frailty, and insensibility to the pains and sorrows of others. The man, who has never yet bowed to the power of disease, nor felt the restless and unmitigated irritations of pain, has not entered an important school of religious discipline, nor exercised himself in the ample field of passive virtues. Could he but know

his moral wants, he would even lament the absence of those personal trials, which are adapted to call forth the highest excellencies of the christian character. What then! Do we say, that he, whom God has blessed with the temperate luxury of uninterrupted health, has not reason for perpetual gratitude? By no means. We say only, that in the assemblage of graces, which compose the character of the christian, there are some which affliction may improve and sickness invigorate. We say only, that adversity must be mingled with prosperity, to form the most perfect character, not only in the view of God, but in the estimation of society. We say only, that for the present indeed, though no chastisement appeareth joyous but grievous, nevertheless it yieldeth afterwards the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them, who have been exercised thereby. Therefore, my brethren, lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees, if such there be among us, and let us see if we cannot discover some roses on the cheek of disease, some intelligence in the languid eye of decaying health, and hear a voice of instruction even from the still chamber of the sick.

1. In the first place, then, the secret and sudden attacks, especially of those acute diseases, whose approaches human foresight cannot discern, and whose immediate causes human wisdom cannot assign, call the attention directly and forcibly to God. Wherever we can discover second causes, to them we confine our reasonings with a kind of atheistical short-sightedness. This calamity we attribute to our own imprudence; and that to the negligence of others. In one instance we flatter ourselves, that our affliction comes forth from the dust; in another, that our trouble springs out of the ground. Here, we think, precaution would have secured us; and there retreat would have effectually removed us from danger. But when we are called to look in vain for the

origin of illness, when even the physician pauses and hesitates to assign a reason, when the malady which walks in darkness enters silent and noiseless, and the hand of pain strikes unseen a staggering blow—then it is, that experience gives no consolation, philosophy is confounded, art is baffled, presumption is abashed, security is alarmed, thoughtlessness awakes and ponders—then it is recollected, that there is a God in the earth, and the sufferer casts himself at the feet of Almighty power, saying, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

Hence, whenever we can discover the immediate instrument, the proximate cause of any event, on this the mind, occupied about material things, reposes with unthinking satisfaction, while the universal and Almighty agent is virtually degraded into a sluggish and Epicurean deity. From this slumber of the reflections, which is apt to creep at times upon the most pious and devout, it is the office of violent and sudden disease to awaken us; and if we could trace no further than this the advantages of occasional suffering, we should be warranted in concluding, that it is good for man to be thus afflicted.

But the immediate agency of God in whatever befalls us, is only one of many truths, which severe affliction revives and re-impresses.

2. A second benefit of sickness is, that by it we are reminded of the uncertainty of temporal enjoyments, and the consequent folly of indulging confident expectations, of framing magnificent plans, of uttering sanguine promises and cherishing extravagant desires. But this uncertainty, you will say, no man is so absurd as to deny: there needs no messenger of wrath to tell us this. But, believe me, there is a wide difference between believing, or even assenting to a truth in philosophy or morals, and being the subject of the experiment, which proves it; between gathering instruction, at leisure, from the

disappointments of others, and learning it, at a blow, from the calamities which fall upon ourselves. It is one thing to rise above the attractions of the world, in our chambers, by the aid of moralists and maxims, meditation and prayer; and another to be disciplined, by personal suffering, till we learn to look at its pleasures with an undazzled eye, and hear its promises with an incredulous ear.

There are some truths, whose force seems to be diminished by the very multitude and variety of the facts, by which they are proved. Thus the collected experience of successive generations, the observation of every living man, and the solemn and multiplied declarations of scripture have been conspiring, ever since the world was made, to show the precariousness of human enjoyments. The truth is so evident, that we admit and forget it in the same moment. We want some objection to awaken our consideration, some difficulty to call out our attention. Wearied by their repetition, and bewildered by their multitude, we feel not the force of such innumerable proofs. But when God in his mercy interposes, and blasts at once the confidence of our expectations, when a sickly wind is permitted to pass over our luxuriant hopes, and they are gone—then the sinews of our presumptuousness are cut in a moment, and the proud heart, which said, "I shall never be moved," drops with all its purposes and plans, promises and hopes; and what volumes failed to teach, what instructers repeated, and example exhibited in vain, is enstamped for ever on the mind, by one short, probing lesson of personal suffering.

3. But sickness teaches not only the uncertain tenure, but discovers, thirdly, the utter vanity and unsatisfactoriness of the dearest objects of human pursuit. Introduce into the chamber of the sick and dying man the whole pantheon of idols, which he

has vainly worshipped—fame, wealth, pleasure, beauty, power. What miserable comforters are they all! Bind that wreath of laurel round his brow, and see if it will assuage his aching temples. Spread before him the deeds and instruments, which prove him the lord of innumerable possessions, and see if you can beguile him of a moment's anguish; see if he will not give you up those barren parchments for one drop of cool water, one draught of pure air. Go, tell him, when a fever rages through his veins, that his table smokes with luxuries, and that the wine moveth itself aright and giveth its colour in the cup, and see if this will calm his throbbing pulse. Tell him, as he lies prostrate, helpless and sinking with debility, that the song and dance are ready to begin, and that all without him is life, alacrity and joy. Nay more, place in his motionless hand the sceptre of a mighty empire, and see if he will be eager to grasp it. The eye of Caesar could not gain its lustre by the recollection, that its "bend could awe the world," nor his shaking limbs be quieted by remembering, that his nod had commanded obedience from millions of slaves. This, my friends, this is the school, in which our desires must be disciplined, and our judgment corrected. The man, who from such dispensations learns nothing but perverseness, must be fearfully insensible. Let us then remember, that every man, at what he supposes his best estate, is altogether vanity. God grant that *we* may understand it, before others are called to learn it from our graves, or to read it upon our tombstones.

But if sickness puts to the proof these worthless objects of our confidence, it ought also to direct us to that staff which cannot be broken. Till we learn to lean on an Almighty arm, and to support a mind vigorous with trust, and warm with devotion, in the midst of a racked and decaying frame, the work of sickness is but half completed. To learn the empti-

ness of the world, is to learn but a lesson of misanthropy, if it do not generate and awaken that confidence, which gladly casts itself on God alone. When affliction has had her perfect work, we shall involuntarily adopt this language of a pious sufferer, be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will commit my soul unto thee, as unto a faithful Creator.

4. Violent diseases show us also our dependence upon one another. Man, unaided by his fellow man, is the most weak and helpless of animals. Placed beyond the reach of the kind, watchful, and sympathetic aid of others, his first malady would be his last; and the lord of this lower world would sink under the first blow, which should strike his brittle tenement. Take the most proud and fiery spirit, which ever animated a muscular and gigantic frame, one who disdains to be obliged, and spurns alike the control and the assistance of others. Stretch him on the bed of sickness, languishing, faint and motionless. Where now is that surly independence, that irritable haughtiness of soul? Nay, where now is that resistless strength of limb, that mighty bone and lofty step? Has it come to this?—that a child may lead so untractable a spirit; that a child may contend with that withered arm?

It is a common remark, that death is the universal leveller. The same is true, in its degree, of sickness. When we are reduced to such weakness that we cannot help ourselves, we find that many, whom we despised, can essentially help us. We find, that the meanest of our species can lay us under obligations, which we can never discharge. We find ourselves at the mercy of those, on whom, if we have ever bestowed a thought, we have been accustomed to look down with pity or contempt. But, from a

sick bed, it is impossible to look down on any one. On the contrary, I appeal to you who have ever suffered, whether you have not sometimes gazed with grateful admiration at the patient, condescending, untired offices of affectionate fidelity and tender watchfulness, which have at once ennobled in your esteem and endeared to your affections the humblest of your species.

But it is the tendency of sickness not only to reduce our extravagant self estimation, by exhibiting our solitary helplessness, but, by leading our friends to perform for us innumerable and nameless offices of affection, it confirms and fastens for ever those tender ties, which bind us to each other. Often, indeed, has a severe and tedious confinement added new strength to the attachments of consanguinity, and new delicacy to the bonds of friendship. Often, in the chamber of the sick, a stern temper has been melted to forgiveness, indifference has ripened into love, aversion has changed into regard, and regard mellowed into attachment.

5. It is the tendency of sickness to intenerate and soften the heart. It is impossible properly to commiserate afflictions, which we have never experienced, and cannot therefore estimate. Of course, every variety of suffering aids the general growth of compassion. A new affliction strings a new chord in the heart, which responds to some new note of complaint within the wide scale of human woe. Since the pains and weaknesses of the body constitute so large a portion of the afflictions, which besiege the path of human life, who of you is unwilling to acquire, even by personal suffering, a sympathy for the exercise of which your intercourse with mankind will present innumerable opportunities. Mark the delight, with which the afflicted communicate to each other the circumstances of their common woes. It is an enviable eloquence, which they only feel

and understand. See with what facility and advantage, one, who has endured pain, will anticipate the wants of a sick companion, and administer relief or whisper cheering consolations, while another is standing by, who, if not insensible, is at least dumb and useless, unable to comfort, because he knows not how to commiserate. Whatever he, who has grown callous through uninterrupted prosperity, and presumptuous by perpetual health, may think of his immunity from pain, there is a satisfaction, a luxury in being able to exclaim with Paul, that sympathetic apostle, who is weak and I am not weak, who is offended and I burn not?

6. Our sixth remark on the benefit of sickness, though the most common yet not the most unimportant, is, that sickness is sometimes necessary to teach us the value of health. In the present state of refined and luxurious society, there are two large and increasing descriptions of men, to whom it is of no little importance to understand the real value of health. The first is the numerous class of imaginary invalids, who, though subject only to the unavoidable infirmities of mortality, create to themselves a host of fancied ills, and waste a really healthful life in perpetual apprehensions, ungrateful complaints, idle precautions, and uninterrupted discontent. It is well known, that such men never felt the severity of serious and painful illness. A single rude and violent attack of real disorder would soon shake off this cluster of uneasiness, and put to flight the cowardly tribe of imaginary woes. It would be good for these men, to be afflicted indeed. There is, however, a precisely opposite class, composed of the presumptuous, thoughtless and adventurous; men, whom age has not yet made cautious, nor adversity wise. Ignorant of the value of a blessing, which to youth is so common, they delight rashly to expose it, and insensibly to waste it away After experience has counselled,

friendship entreated, and authority commanded in vain, disease comes at last and closes the presumptuous game; and teaches them, that health, strength and life, though they may be possessed without gratitude, cannot be sported with without loss, or won back again by dexterity or courage.

It is the distinguishing mark of habitual piety to be grateful for the most common and ordinary blessings. There is no man so insensible and vile, as not to feel a glow of thankfulness for distinguishing favours or wonderful interpositions. But sickness discovers the value of the usual and customary degree of health, and reminds the convalescent. that he has scarcely thanked God for a blessing, in the place of which nothing can be substituted, and for whose recovery every thing but innocence may justly be surrendered.

7. Lastly, the attacks of violent disease will teach us, if we are not absolutely insensible, a most solemn and salutary lesson, which, if not early acquired, may be useless, because the next experiment may be fatal. We shall then find, that the hours of torturing pain and languishing confinement are not the hours most favourable to quiet reflection and pious thoughts. We shall find, that the mind will sympathize so much with the anguish and debility of the body, that it will be too feeble to expatiate, or too distracted to fix itself in meditation. Religious contemplations and celestial visions do not necessarily throng around the pillow, which supports an aching head. In one word, confinement will not afford you that leisure, which you want and which you expect, to think at last of your future destination, to learn the truths you have neglected, to revive those you have forgotten, and to prepare for that world which now seems nearer to you than ever. The lessons, which affliction imparts, she leaves to be considered when health is returning, and to be practis-

ed when it is established. To have been afflicted is of little importance, if no time remains for the confirmation of our dispositions and the establishment of better habits. When the psalmist observes, it is good for me, that I have been afflicted, he does not mean, that the mere suffering of pain made him instantaneously better, that debility and distress prepared him immediately to leave the world, that affliction led him necessarily and directly to God. Suppose, what is not improbable, that during his distresses he was exercised with remorse, and melted with contrition. Still, unless his penitence had been so deep, that, if he had lived, it would have exhibited a permanent influence by confirming his piety into habit, and leading him to a sincere relinquishment of his former sins, the anguish of his mind would have been morally worth little more than the tortures of his body; and the royal criminal, if he had then been summoned from the world, would have rushed tarnished and impure into the presence of his God, though he might have gone thither from a bed of sickness, and even with the language of contrition and confession on his lips.

We beseech you, then, do not mistake us. When we discourse to you of the beneficial fruits of affliction, we talk of no secret and magical power, which sickness possesses, to make you necessarily and immediately wise and good; but we speak of *fruits*, which must form, and swell, and ripen—fruits, which time must mature and watchfulness preserve. We represent affliction as a discipline, which you must live to improve; a medicine, whose operation cannot be ascertained, if the patient dies in the experiment. O, defer not, then, I beseech you, defer not to the frantic hours of pain, to the feverish hours of disease, to the languishing hours of confinement—defer not an attention to the things which concern your everlasting peace. You think, they will be hours of leisure. Believe me, it will be the leisure of dis-

traction or of insensibility—it may be the leisure of death.

I have thus attempted to direct your attention to some of the numerous benefits, which follow from affliction; benefits, which may at least light up a smile on the pale and gloomy countenance of disease, if they cannot invest it with beauty and grace. Permit me now to suggest a few reflections naturally connected with the subject.

1. In the first place, then, if all the natural evils of life, pain, sickness, losses, sorrows, dangers and disappointments, are disciplinary and remedial, it follows, that nothing is really and ultimately calamitous but sin. Moral evil alone mars the intellectual works of God. While this remains, pain will wave over us her scourge in triumph, and disease will call exultingly upon her train of woes, and let them loose to prey on fallen man. And shall we willingly harbour this monster of the rational world? Shall we throw open our hearts, to give a hospitable shelter to this polluted and polluting tenant? Shall we roll this poison as a sweet morsel under our tongue, and then complain of the salutary sufferings, which are necessary to expel it from our system?

2. If the tendency of affliction is so beneficial, a stronger motive cannot be suggested to encourage us to support pain with fortitude and patience, and all kinds of suffering with resignation to the will of heaven. Other considerations indeed there are, which may have their weight on other minds, but I know of none at once so intelligible, so rational and so pious as these: by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better; and our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There may, indeed, be found minds so well disciplined in piety, and so far advanced in the career of holiness, as to acquiesce humbly in every dispensation, from the simple consideration, that it proceeds from the hand

of an Almighty disposer. But I conceive, that this temper of unalloyed submission must be grounded on a conviction, that this disposer is merciful, that his chastisements are parental, and his designs exclusively benevolent and pure; so that the perfection of resignation is nothing more than a principle ripened into a habit; a principle, which was originally suggested by an attention to the established tendency of affliction, and by conclusions thence formed of the character of the corrector, that he does not afflict willingly, nor for sorrow's sake alone grieve the children of men.

Others, however, submit unrepiningly to evils, merely because they are inevitable. This is a spirit, which is often dignified with the name of philosophical submission. But, whatever it may possess of philosophy, it has little of piety, for it is at best a spurious kind of resignation, a doubtful virtue, which might be recommended with equal propriety, and from the same considerations, under the government of a malignant as of a good being; and would, indeed, be peculiarly accommodated to the inhabitants of a world, if such there were, whose affairs were subject to the fluctuations of a blind chance, or bound down by an invincible and physical fatality.

But, my christian friends, in the enjoyment of that pure light, which our religion throws upon the character of God, we should be ashamed to recommend to you this Stoical principle. Leave such cold-blooded virtue to that chilling system of philosophy, which sees in the universe no design, in adversity no tendency to good, in futurity no gleams of hope, and in heaven no creator, benefactor, father or judge.

From the view of affliction, which we have attempted to give you, what duties result? Consideration. In the day of adversity consider. Prayer. Is any among you afflicted, let him pray: In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee. O God, for

thou wilt answer me. Fortitude. If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Patience. Patient in your tribulation, possess ye your souls, and let patience have her perfect work. And, to comprise all these virtues in a single word, Resignation. The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Not my will, O God, but thine be done.

The reflection, that if our affliction does not make us better, it will assuredly make us worse, is, to those who have recovered, solemn, and full of awful thought. To grow worse under the discipline of Providence, is the most deplorable and desperate state, into which a moral being can sink. In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz. Believe me, this is no chimerical danger. The fire, which does not melt, will harden; the stain, which is not purified by the furnace, will be more deeply engrained. If sickness, for instance, have not taught us the vanity of some of our dearest pleasures, we shall only return to them with appetites sharpened by abstinence, and desires rendered more ungovernable by temporary restraint. If it has not impressed upon us also the uncertainty of health, and prepared us better for the loss of life, it has probably increased our presumptuousness, and induced us to hope, that disease has now discharged his quiver of arrows, and that, as soon as our wounds are healed, we have little more to fear from this dreaded enemy in our passage through the troubled path of life. If we have not learned resignation, it is probable we have become more impatient, discontented and irritable. If we have learned no humility, we have probably learned perverseness, and—what is still more to be lamented, what we can hardly contemplate without horrour—it will require a harder blow to make us feel hereafter, a severer chastisement to make us submit. And who shall say, whether the next chastisement shall be inflicted in this world, or

in another? Who will be so hardy as to assure us, whether it shall be part of the discipline of this state of probation, or a portion of the sufferings in a state of punishment?

4. Lastly, if there is any one, who, despairing of the return of health and strength, labours under the gradual advances of an incurable disease, to such an one I would say, it may be good even for you, to be afflicted. There are advantages even in the long continuance of confinement, and in the prospect of inevitable and slowly approaching death. To him who knows, that he must soon close his eyes on this pleasant scene, it is no small preparation, that every morning's sun rises upon his sight with daily diminishing lustre, luxuries pall gradually upon his taste, sounds die away gently upon his ear, and the ties, which bind him to earth, weaken by degrees, and at last the silver cord is loosed with gentle hands, without painful or perceptible disruption.

Long confinement, also, brings with it the advantages of drawing us off from those partialities, which bind us to society in general; and, though it may strengthen our attachment to those, who watch immediately around our bed, and are the inmates of our decaying hours, yet even here the energy of the affections wastes with the energy of the body, and the dissolution of the ties of love and friendship is, by the kindness of Heaven, rendered as gentle as the dissolution of the soul and body. Lengthened illness, too, not only draws off our attention gradually from a world we must leave, but it seems to usher into view, by a similar and solemn gradation, the world which we are about to enter. It places us in an extended and narrow vista, in which the various objects on each side are excluded, and eternity, that vast object at the termination of the view, seems to enlarge, as we approach it, till it fills at last, and engrosses the conceptions.

SERMON IV.

LUKE xiv. 18.

AND THEY ALL WITH ONE CONSENT BEGAN TO MAKE EXCUSE.

THIS parable, of the invitation refused, who ever read without indignation at the contemptuous incivility and ingratitude of these men? A nobleman, we are told, on the marriage of his son, proclaims his intention of making a liberal entertainment. Many guests are invited. To some, we may suppose, he was a benefactor; to others, a friend; to all, a kind and condescending superiour. At the hour of supper his servants are again despatched to urge their coming, to inform them, that every thing is ready, and that he waits only their arrival. With one consent they begin to excuse themselves. Without any expression of regret, they all find other engagements of business or of pleasure, with which they cannot dispense. One must visit his farm, another must attend to his merchandize, and a third is detained at home by domestic cares.

It is unnecessary to inform you, that by this parable our Saviour represents the perverseness and prejudice, with which the Jews rejected the Messiah. But it is also true, that this parable, which with such gentle remonstrance exhibits their ingratitude, holds out a faithful picture of a numerous and increasing

class of men within the pale of christendom; and those upbraiding discourses, which ought to have belonged to Jews only, we find are not inapplicable to christians. Do you ask, if it be possible, that such contemptuous and frivolous excuses are still offered to extenuate neglect of religion, and to quiet an insulted conscience? Yes; they are yet offered, and yet admitted, not indeed by God; seldom indeed, and not without reluctance by our consciences; but easily and often by a thoughtless and indulgent age. In the time of our Saviour, they were offered to excuse the rejection of the Messiah; now, to excuse a neglect of the peculiar duties of his religion, even where its truth is acknowledged. The gospel feast is still open. Religion offers her repast of pleasures, unadulterated, inexhaustible and immortal. The master of the feast continues to send forth his servants to repeat his urgent invitations, to express his unabated good will, and even while he is waiting to welcome us to his presence, we still venture to return some one of these worthless excuses, which seem to have served even to the present day as a manual of apologies for irreligious negligence.

Let us then take a rapid review of the excuses, which are offered to palliate indifference to religion; let us see if their importance consists not rather in their number, than in their strength. The profligate and incorrigibly wicked seldom offer excuses; those of the professed infidel demand a longer and closer attention, than the limits of a discourse allow; the excuses of the christian world only, we propose now to examine.

1. First, then, it is often said, that time is wanted for the duties of religion. The calls of business, the press of occupation, the cares of life, will not suffer me, says one, to give that time to the duties of piety, which otherwise I would gladly bestow. Say you this without a blush? You have no time, then, for

the especial service of that great Being, whose goodness alone has drawn out to its present length your cobweb thread of life; whose care alone has continued you in possession of that unseen property, which you call your time. You have no time, then to devote to that great Being, on whose existence the existence of the universe depends; a Being so great, that if his attention could for an instant be diverted, you fall never again to rise; if his promise should fail, your hopes, your expectations vanish into air; if his power should be weakened, man, angel, nature perishes.

But, let me ask, by what right do you involve yourself in this multiplicity of cares? Why do you weave around you this web of occupation, and then complain, that you cannot break it? Will you say, that your time is your own, and that you have a right to employ it in the manner you please? Believe me, it is not your own. It belongs to God, to religion, to mankind. You possess not an hour, to which one of these puts not in a preferable claim; and are such claimants to be dismissed without allotting to them a moment?

But for what else can you find no leisure? Do you find none for amusement? Or is amusement itself your occupation? Perhaps pleasure is the pressing business of your life; perhaps pleasure stands waiting to catch your precious moments as they pass. Do you find none for the pursuit of curious and secular knowledge? If you find none then for religion, it is perhaps because you wish to find none; it would be, you think, a tasteless occupation, an insipid entertainment.

But this excuse is founded on a most erroneous conception of the nature of religion. It is supposed to be something, which interrupts business, which wastes time, and interferes with all the pleasant and profitable pursuits of life. It is supposed to be some-

thing which must be practised apart from every thing else, a distinct profession, a peculiar occupation. The means of religion, meditation, reading and prayer will, and ought, indeed, to occupy distinct portions of our time. But religion itself demands not distinct hours. Religion will attend you not as a troublesome, but as a pleasant and useful companion in every proper place, and every temperate occupation of life. It will follow you to the warehouse or to the office; it will retreat with you to the country, it will dwell with you in town; it will cross the seas, or travel over mountains, or remain with you at home. Without your consent, it will not desert you in prosperity, or forget you in adversity. It will grow up with you in youth, and grow old with you in age; it will attend you with peculiar pleasure to the hovels of the poor, or the chamber of the sick; it will retire with you to your closet, and watch by your bed, or walk with you in gladsome union to the house of God; it will follow you beyond the confines of the world, and dwell with you in heaven for ever, as its native residence.

2. It is said, am I not as good as others? Why is an attention to religion, an unpopular piety, a rigid virtue required of me, which cannot be found in the circle of my acquaintance, or in the world at large? Why am I urged to set up as a reformer, or expose myself to the scorn of mankind? But the majority of men are poor; does this however check the ardour of your pursuit of wealth; or do you avoid a new acquisition, because you fear it will expose you to the envy of your inferiours? The majority of mankind are ignorant; but is ignorance therefore honourable, or is learning contemptible or invidious? We have now supposed, that piety and unsullied virtue would sometimes be attended with scorn. But even this is an unwarranted supposition. Piety is venerated by the impious. Unyield-

ing virtue is admired by the corrupt, disinterested goodness by the selfish, temperance, chastity, humanity by the intemperate, unchaste, and ambitious. Consider, too, to what extravagances this excuse would lead. It places you loosely floating on the inconstant tide of popular manners. If this rises, you indeed are raised; if it falls, you descend, however imperceptibly, on its surface. It is an excuse, which might be offered with equal propriety by the corrupt inhabitant of Sodom, as by you.

3. Again, it is said, religion is dull, unsocial, uncharitable, enthusiastic, a damper of human joy, a morose intruder upon human pleasure. If this were true, nothing could be more incongruous than the parable, which represents it as an entertainment. But if this be the character of religion, it is surely the very reverse of what we should suppose it to be, and the reverse indeed of what it ought to be. Perhaps, in your distorted vision, you have mistaken sobriety for dulness, equanimity for moroseness, disinclination to bad company for aversion to society, abhorrence of vice for uncharitableness, and piety for enthusiasm. No doubt, at the table of boisterous intemperance, religion, if she were admitted as a guest, would wear a very dull countenance. In a revel of debauchery, and amidst the brisk interchange of profanity and folly, religion might appear indeed a dumb, unsocial intruder, ignorant of the rhetoric of oaths and the ornaments of obscenity. These are scenes, it must be acknowledged, of what is falsely called pleasure, in which religion, if embodied and introduced, would be as unwelcome a guest, as the emblematic coffin, which the Egyptians used to introduce in the midst of their entertainments. From such instances, however, to accuse religion of being unfriendly to the enjoyment of life, is as absurd as to interpret unfavourably the silence of a foreigner, who understands not a word of our language. But as

long as intemperance is not pleasure, as long as profaneness, impurity, or scandal is not wit, as long as excess is not the perfection of mirth, as long as selfishness is not the surest enjoyment, and as long as gratitude, love, reverence and resignation are not superstitious affections, so long religion lays not an icy hand on the true joys of life. Without her all other pleasures become tasteless, and at last painful. To explain to you, indeed, how much she exalts, purifies and prolongs the pleasures of sense and imagination, and what peculiar sources of consolation, cheerfulness and contentment she opens to herself, would lead us at present into too wide a range.

4. Excuses for irreligion are drawn from the failings and imperfections of christians. There, says the profligate, are your boasted saints. They have their faults, as well as those who make not so great pretensions to piety. Thus it happens, that some remains of imperfection, some constitutional infirmity, some unamiable weakness of good men, is brought forward and exhibited in all the triumph of illiberality to the gaze of a censorious world. The character of the mind is drawn from a single trait, from some casual wrinkle, some unlucky deformity. The point, in which a good man is as frail as others, is selected and contemplated with renewed pleasure, while those points, in which he is superiour to other men, are unobserved or unacknowledged. This is partial, unjust, uncharitable, iniquitous. But the excuse closes not here. Of what religion has failed to remove it is most absurdly called the cause. If apparently devout and pious habits are ever found associated with a temper, which is not open as day to melting charity, it is religion which hardens the heart, it is religion which locks the coffers. Whatever passion it has failed to subdue, or whatever fault it has been unable to prevent, it is impiously said to encourage. Equally absurd would it be, to

attribute the weakness of a broken bone to the kind attentions of the surgeon, the pain of a wound to the balmy hand which would assuage it.

But of all the faults of christians, from which excuses for irreligion are drawn, the occasional extravagances into which pious men have fallen afford the most plausible apologies. The history of religion is ransacked for instances of persecution, of austerities and enthusiastic irregularities, and when they are all collected, the cold-hearted, thoughtless irreligionist exclaims, these are the fruits of piety! But why is it never considered, that the same ardent temperament, the same energy of passions, if they had been united with any other subject, would have rushed into similar extremes? In a mind of such a mould, religion, as is often said, is the occasion only, not the cause of extravagance. When enthusiasm, however, is the result of mere ignorance, as it most commonly is, the excuse entirely fails. Ignorance is not devotion, nor the mother of devotion, zeal is not religion, enthusiasm is not piety, solitude is not purity, spiritual pride is not conscious innocence, and the preternatural heat of the passions is not the warmth of love to God or man. You would not judge of the usual moisture of any region from the occasional inundation of its rivers. The influence of true religion is mild, and soft, and noiseless, and constant as the descent of the evening dew on the tender herbage, nourishing and refreshing all the amiable and social virtues; but enthusiasm is violent, sudden, rattling as a summer shower, rooting up the fairest flowers, and washing away the richest mould in the pleasant garden of society.

5. Excuses for a neglect of religion are suggested by different seasons of life. Youth, in the fulness of its spirits, defers it to the sobriety of manhood: manhood, encumbered with cares, defers it to

the leisure of old age; old age, weak and hesitating, is unable to enter on an untried mode of life. The excuses of youth are those which are most frequently offered, and most easily admitted. The restrictions of religion, though proper enough for maturer age, are too severe, it is said, for this frolicsome and gladsome period. Its consolations, too, they do not want. Leave them to prop the feeble limbs of old age, or to cheer the sinking spirits of adversity. False and pernicious maxim! As if, at the end of a stated number of years, a man could become religious in a moment! As if the husbandman, at the end of summer, could call up a harvest from the soil which he had never tilled! As if manhood, too, would have no excuses! And what are they? That he has grown too old to amend. That his parents took no pains with his religious education, and therefore his ignorance is not his own fault. That he must be making provision for old age; and the pressure of cares will allow him no time to attend to the evidences, or learn the rules of religion. Thus life is spent in framing apologies, in making and breaking resolutions, and protracting amendment, till death places his cold hand on the mouth open to make its last excuse, and one more is added to the crowded congregation of the dead.

The excuses, which we have already considered, are trifling, however, compared with the following.

6. It is said, "it is by no means certain, that there is a future state of retribution beyond the limits of the world. Who has ever seen it? It is not certain, that the religion, which you urge us to embrace, comes from God. Many objections may be made to its evidences." Most of the irreligion, which prevails among the more informed classes of society, results from a lurking skepticism, which infests their thoughts, and, in relation to religion, leads

them to act in direct opposition to all the maxims, which usually govern the conduct of men.

It is indeed true, that the existence of a future world is not to us as certain as the existence of the present; neither can we ever have that intuitive assurance of the being of a God, that we necessarily possess of our own existence; neither can the facts of the gospel history, which happened two thousand years ago, be impressed on our belief with that undoubting conviction, which we have of the reality of scenes, which are passing immediately before our eyes. But the question is not, whether the gospel history can be demonstrated. Few subjects which occupy human contemplation admit strict and mathematical proof. The whole life of man is but a perpetual comparison of evidence, and balancing of probabilities. And upon the supposition that religious truths are only probable, the excuse we have mentioned will not relieve irreligion from the charge of presumptuous and consummate folly.

But it is said, many objections have been made to the evidences of revelation; and many of its difficulties remain yet unexplained. It is true, that objections have been often made and often answered, and not only answered, but refuted. But some difficulties, it is said, yet remain. It is true, they do remain; and the excuse shall be admitted, when any other subject of equal importance shall be produced, in which difficulties do not remain. The most plausible objections, which have been made to any truth within the circle of human knowledge, are those which have been offered against the existence of a material world; but did this ever check an operation in mechanics, or excuse from his daily task a single labourer. A man of ingenuity might offer a thousand objections against the probability of your living till the morrow, but would this rob you of a moment's rest, or frustrate a single plan, which you

had meditated for the approaching day? If we subtract from the difficulties, which attend revelation, those which have been created by the injudicious zeal of some of its friends in attempting to prove too much, we shall find, that, in the vast storehouse of facts which history presents, for none can there be produced a greater mass of evidence than for the birth, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—and upon the supposition of their truth, irreligion is nothing better than distraction.

Another excuse, however, is offered, which perhaps has greater secret influence in quieting the conscience than any other. We are desired to look at the list of great names, who have been adversaries of christianity. Can that evidence, it is asked, be satisfactory, which failed to convince such minds as these? If the probable truth of revelation is to be ascertained in this manner, the dispute will soon be at an end; for it would be no difficult task to produce, from among the friends of revelation, a greater number of greater names within the last hundred years, than all the hosts of infidelity can furnish in eighteen centuries since the birth of Christ. But I believe these instances are not alleged to disprove the truth, but only to weaken the importance of christianity. They are alleged only to excuse an inattention to religion, and show that it is not very dangerous to err with such great names on our side. Truths, it is said, which such understandings disbelieved, surely cannot be of infinite importance. Nothing would tend more to remove such apologies, than a fair, impartial, and full account of the education, the characters, the intellectual processes, and the dying moments of such men. Then it would be seen, that their virtues were the result of the very principles they had assailed, but from whose influence they were unable wholly to escape. Then it would be seen, that they have gained by their skep-

ticism no new pleasures, no tranquillity of mind, no peace of conscience during life, and no consolation in the hour of death.

Such are the excuses which irreligion offers. Could you have believed, that they were so empty, so unworthy, so hollow, so absurd? And shall such excuses be offered to the God of heaven and earth? By such apologies shall man insult his Creator? Shall he hope to flatter the ear of omnipotence, and beguile the observation of an omniscient spirit? Think you, that such excuses will gain new importance in their ascent to the throne of the Majesty on high? Will you trust the interests of eternity in the hands of these superficial advocates? You have pleaded your incessant occupation. Exhibit then the result of your employment. Have you nothing to produce but these bags of gold, these palaces, and farms, these bundles of cares, and heaps of vexations? Is the eye of Heaven to be dazzled by an exhibition of property, an ostentatious shew of treasures? You surely produce not all these wasted hours, to prove that you have had no time for religion. It is an insult to the Majesty of Heaven. Again, you have pleaded your youth, and you have pleaded your age. Which of these do you choose to maintain at the bar of Heaven? Such trifling would not be admitted in the intercourse of men, and do you think it will avail more with Almighty God?

It must however be acknowledged, that the case of the irreligious is not desperate, while excuses are thought proper and necessary. There is some glimmering of hope, that the man who apologizes is willing to amend. God preserve us from that obduracy of wickedness, which disdains to palliate a crime; from that hardihood of unbelief, which will not give even a weak reason, and which derides the offer of an excuse. But remember, my friends, the season of apologies is passing away. All our elo-

quent defences of ourselves must soon cease. Death stiffens the smooth tongue of flattery, and blots out, with one stroke, all the ingenious excuses, which we have spent our lives in framing. At the marriage supper, the places of those who refused to come, were soon filled by a multitude of delighted guests. The God of Heaven needs not our presence to adorn his table, for whether we accept, or whether we reject his gracious invitation, whether those who were bidden taste or not of his supper, his house shall be filled. Though many are called and few chosen, yet Christ has not died in vain, religion is not without its witnesses, or heaven without its inhabitants. Let us then remember, that one thing is needful, and that there is a better part than all the pleasures and selfish pursuits of this world, a part which we are encouraged to secure, and which can never be taken away.

SERMON V.

JOHN XII. 43.

FOR THEY LOVED THE PRAISE OF MEN MORE THAN THE PRAISE OF GOD.

It is one of the distinguishing traits in the christian scheme of morals, that it no where enjoins the love of human estimation as a principle of action. Very rarely is the approbation even of good men, much less the applause of the many, mentioned as a desirable reward of good deeds. But if we only turn from the discipline and the precepts of the gospel to the systems of ancient and of modern education, what prodigious importance is given to a motive, of which, in the precepts of our Saviour, there cannot be found the trace of commendation. By the hope of honour and the fear of shame is many a child governed, many a school regulated, many a capacity exercised, and many a mature character affected and modified. So little has the real value of this principle been fairly weighed, that the love of human estimation is tenderly fostered in the infant, as soon as it is capable of attending to the opinions of those about it; and the anxious parent never feels more delight, than upon perceiving the first pulse of ambition to beat in the heart of the child. The love of fame, thus early encouraged, has been called by one of the most sober of our satirists, the universal passion. By some

moralists it has been recommended generally, as the spring of all that is great and glorious in character; by others it is restricted to particular spheres of action, and cautiously directed to certain valuable objects; by others it is discountenanced only when it rises to a ridiculous excess; but by the great moralist of the gospel it is passed over in silence, or mentioned only to be depreciated.

Let us, then, look narrowly into this principle, which insinuates itself so early, and with such honourable pretensions, which spreads through such a variety of character, which domineers with such authority, always in the weak, sometimes in the wise, always in the worldly, and too often in the saint. In this discourse we propose to consider, first, the nature of this passion, and some of the varieties of its operation; secondly, we shall endeavour candidly to acknowledge all its real utility as a motive of action; thirdly, we shall mark out some of those limits within which it ought to be restrained; and fourthly, suggest some considerations, by which its influence on our own hearts may be diminished.

1. Let us attend to the nature of this passion, and the different modes in which it discovers itself. By the love of human estimation we mean every degree of regard to the opinion of the world, from the passion of glory, which mounts up into the fancy of the conqueror, to the dread of shame, which endeavours to hide itself in the heart of the coward. In some or other of its various modifications, it is perhaps inseparable from man as a social being. Besides the immense domain in which it exerts itself, its very entrance into the heart is the most insinuating and honourable. To know what others think of us, is one of the earliest employments of our curiosity. It is discovered in children, as soon as they begin to mix with their fellows. Then appear the little struggles for eminence, and the jealousy of attentions

paid to others. Presently, the heart, unsatisfied with love, looks out for applause; the eye begins to sparkle with the pride of dress, the ear is pampered with flatteries of foolish friends, and expressions of injudicious praise which fall even from the lips of the wise, so that the desire of admiration grows even under the caresses of the parent. Soon comes the age of instruction. At the lap of the mistress, the little pupil is almost taught to speak by the love of distinction; and from this time forward the whole system of education is constructed on the application of this equivocal principle. All our arts of discipline, and all our schemes of tuition are calculated to excite instead of regulating emulation. If we can but make this passion effervesce in the youthful breast, our hopes brighten and our care is rewarded. Presently it begins to break out in vanity, which we mistake for knowledge; in garrulity and impudence, which we indulge as the symptoms of a forward capacity. Soon after, it discovers itself in the young man in the shape of honour. It begins to affect an excessive delicacy of reputation, and explodes in a passion at the touch of insolence, or at the application of reproof. In some, it branches out in the love of show, and follows obsequiously the ever-changing dictates of fashion. Under the disguise of making what is called a good appearance in the world, it obtains its greatest triumph. Avarice is compelled sometimes to yield to the love of ostentation; and all our noble and ignoble propensities are sacrificed at the shrine of credit in the world.

It follows us also into all the professions and occupations of life. It labours with the artisan in his shop, and there polishes and perfects the productions of his industry; it retreats with the student to his closet, and there strikes out the scintillations of his genius. In our hours of relaxation this principle is busy. It discovers itself perpetually in common con-

versation, in our petty contests for victory, in our elevated voices, in our eager display of wit, in the quick retort and noisy and disputatious triumph. Go out into the forum, and you will hear it haranguing elaborately with the utmost appearance of disinterestedness; into the popular assembly, and you find it flourishing in declamation. In public life it shoots out into extravagances which are sometimes called greatness. In the conqueror, for instance, it towers into the love of glory. It displays itself in deeds, at which the multitude stands aghast with astonishment, the political moralist is bewildered and hesitates, deeds, about which the opinions of posterity may be divided according to their hereditary prejudices, but on which the christian in every age will dare to look down with horrour and contempt.

From this dazzling discovery of the love of human estimation in the conqueror, descend and mark its influence among mankind in the less observed character of the dread of shame. Here you may see it keeping men back from the ordinances of the gospel; and there suppressing the acknowledgments which they owe to God in their families and in their closets, disturbing us with perpetual fear of being singular, and bringing even serious men insensibly down to the level of corrupt manners, which they cannot approve.

Is it true, then, that a passion of such powerful and various operation, as that we have now been considering, is no where recommended in scripture as a motive of action? Are we no where referred to the opinion of the world, no where expostulated with from a regard to reputation? Are there no appeals made by any of the messengers of God's will to our sense of shame, to our pride, to our ambition, to our vanity? Certain it is, that such appeals are at least rarely to be met with. Our Saviour, indeed, appears to have thought it hazardous, in any degree,

to encourage a regard to the opinion of the world as a motive to action, because, however advantageous might be its operation in some instances, where a higher principle was wanting, still the most casual recommendation of a sentiment so natural, so seducing, and so universal, would have been liable to perpetual misconstruction and abuse.

Indeed, no man can read the discourses of our Saviour, or of his apostles, without observing how utterly they are at war with the spirit of self-aggrandizement. Perhaps, however, you may expect, that I should refer you to examples where this temper is clearly censured or punished. What think you, then, of the history of Herod Agrippa? On a set day, says the historian, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto the people. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. My friends, I make no comments on this story. It is too solemn. Think only, if such was the punishment of a man for *accepting* the idolatrous flattery offered him, can they be guiltless in the eyes of heaven, who cannot live but upon the honey of adulation, and whose whole life is but a continual series of contrivances to gain the favour of the multitude, a continual preference of the glory of themselves to the glory of their Creator? Is not this example of the requisitions of the gospel sufficient? Read then the dreadful woes denounced against the Jewish rulers, not merely because they did not receive our Saviour, nor merely because they were continually meditating his destruction; but because they did all their works to be seen of men.

But as nothing, perhaps, is gained in point of practical improvement by pushing these principles of indifference to the world to an extreme, or in de-

claiming indiscriminately against any prevailing sentiment of extensive influence, before we consider the restrictions under which the love of fame should be laid in the mind of a christian, we will, as we proposed, in the second place, endeavour to ascertain and candidly to allow all those advantages, which may result from this regard to the opinion of others, when more pure and evangelical motives are either wanting, or not sufficiently established.

Here, then, we will allow, that much of the real as well as fictitious excellence, which has adorned the world, may be traced in some degree to the principle of emulation. We allow, that it calls forth the energies of the young mind, that it matures in our colleges and schools some of the earliest products of youthful capacity, and that it offers incalculable aid to the lessons and to the discipline of instructers. When we look at our libraries, we can hardly find a volume, which does not, in a measure, owe its appearance to the love of fame. When we gaze on the ruins of ancient magnificence, on the rare remains of ancient skill, we are obliged to confess, that we owe these to the influence of emulation. Nay more, when we read the lives of great men, and are lost in wonder at their astonishing intellectual supremacy, we are compelled to acknowledge, that for this we are partly indebted to the love of fame. We acknowledge, also, that it often supplies successfully the place of nobler motives; and that, notwithstanding the evils which grow out of its abuse, the world would suffer from its utter extinction. For the weight of public opinion is sometimes thrown into the scale of truth. We know that the popular sentiment will sometimes control the tyranny of the powerful, and counteract the influence of wealth; that it restrains sometimes the madness of lust, and sometimes the cunning of malevolence. We are also sensible, that the influence of a regard to rep-

utation is often favourable to the improvement of social intercourse. To a deference to the world's opinion, and to a love of its good will, are we to attribute much of that politeness and propriety, which are discoverable in manners, and much of that courtesy, which, by habitual observance, sheds perhaps at length a favourable influence on the disposition. It is this, which brings down the haughty to condescension, and softens the rough into gentleness. It is this, which sometimes checks the offensiveness of vanity, and moderates the excess of selfishness. It causes thousands to appear kind, who would otherwise be rude, and honourable, who would otherwise be base.

These genial effects upon the intercourse of society are sufficient to induce us to retain the love of human estimation in the number of lawful motives. It was probably a view of some of these influences partially supplying the place of real benevolence, which induced the apostle sometimes to recommend a regard to human opinion. He advises the Roman converts to "provide things honourable in the sight of all men." To the Philippians, after recommending all things honest, just, pure, and lovely, he ventures also to add, whatsoever things are of good report. Nay more, he says, not only, if there be any virtue, but if there be any praise, think on these things. We believe this is the most decisive testimony of approbation, which can be gathered from the scripture. We will add, also, in favour of the useful operation of this universal passion, that it perhaps cannot be completely engaged, like all the other passions, on the side of vice. For the highest degree of moral depravity is consistent only with an utter insensibility to the opinion of the world; and we are willing to believe also, that were it not for this, the form and profession of christianity would be more frequently outraged, than it now is, by those, who secretly detest it.

And now, my friends, after all these acknowledgments, what new merit is conceded to your favourite passion? After it has done its utmost, it can only quicken the energies of the mind, restrain sometimes the other passions, afford occasional aid to the cause of order and propriety, soften some of the asperities of social intercourse, and perhaps keep the sinner from open and hardened profligacy. But it cannot purify the affections, melt the hardness of the heart, and break its selfishness, or elevate its desires to the region of purity and peace.

We proposed, in the third place, to mark out some of the limits, within which it ought to be restrained.

And, first, there can be no doubt, that regard to the opinion of the world must not become the predominant motive; that is, it must neither be the habitual idea in our fancies, nor must we dare ever to place it in competition with the plain commands of conscience and of God.

When we say, that a regard to the opinion of the world ought not to be the principal motive of our conduct, we are far from admitting, that there are any inferiour motives, by which this may be safely counteracted. No! If the question were about the relative value of the principles, which actuate the world at large, I should exclaim, give me the love of glory. There are motives, yes, and common ones too, in comparison with which, this is honourable, nay, sublime. The avarice of gold is baser than the avarice of applause. The love of sensual pleasure is brutal, when compared with the love of reputation. Excessive selfishness, or continual regard to personal comfort and convenience, are mean and worthless habits of mind, in comparison even with vanity, or with the love of praise, though pushed to ridiculousness. In short, when we say, that regard to human estimation must be restrained and kept in

subordination, we mean that it should be subjected only to principles of more than earthly energy; we mean that it should bow before the authority of religion; we mean that it should fall before the meek and silent influence of evangelical morality. It is true, as we have before acknowledged, that there are instances of men, who, if they should lose their respect for the opinion of the world, would lose all that preserved them from moral degradation and ruin. But we are not addressing such men. We call upon men, who are not insensible of the relation in which they stand to a higher tribunal than that of society; men, who recognize the authority of the gospel, who are not unacquainted with the spirit of its precepts; in fine, we call upon men, who are not entirely unaccustomed to consult their consciences, and to appeal to the approbation of an omniscient Judge. To such men we would say, beware of the imperceptible encroachments of the love of human estimation. If unrestrained, it will not fail to contaminate your best services. You perhaps have concluded within yourselves, that you will be governed by this regard to the world's opinion only in your manners, which you consider as an indifferent part of conduct; but believe me, the step is but short from manners to morals, nay, they are partly coincident; and from morals to religious duties the passage is easy. If you obey the laws of morality only as far as the world thinks necessary, when you pretend to piety also, you will probably consult its opinion, and be careful to be observed.

2. Another limit to the fondness for human estimation may be discerned in that distinction, which we believe to exist, between the desire of approbation and the desire of admiration. The former we rarely condemn; the latter, always. The former is often connected with a tender conscience; the latter, always with a vain imagination. The one relates

to our motives and to the heart; the other, to our manners and to the exteriour. Approbation is the reward of good intentions; admiration, of good appearances. The desire of being approved is a passion which may include God himself among the objects of its concern; and from a desire of his approbation the descent is easy to a lively regard for the good opinion of his children. But the desire of being admired can have no reference to God, for God cannot admire. Admiration is an emotion unknown to the mind of omnipotence. He, in whose sight all worldly glory is but a glimmering exhalation, low in its origin, transitory in its continuance, delusive in its effects, cannot be dazzled by splendour, or deceived by appearances. He, who wishes to be admired, must not look above the earth.

Again, the love of approbation is a gentle, moderate and equable affection; the love of admiration grows fast into excess: then it inflames the imagination, preys upon the spirits, and disturbs the whole frame of the soul. The lover of admiration disdains the cool commendations, which are bestowed upon moral qualities. He pants to be eminent, and makes haste to be known. He is willing to be hated, if he may but be feared; or censured, if he may but be wondered at. When he talks, he talks to be listened to; when he is silent, he sits to be observed; when he does good, he is disappointed if it be not known; when he does evil, he is willing it should be known, if it will gain respect to his talents, even at the expense of his disposition. On the contrary, he, who seeks only to be approved, receives with diffidence, as well as pleasure, the praises which he has not coveted, nor disdained. He is contented with the still and quiet commendation of the few, and suspects the noisy encomiums of the many. He waits for approbation from others, rather as a grateful echo of the whispers of his own conscience, than as a pre-

cursor and herald of his own self-complacency. The praise which he receives is, therefore, bestowed the more freely, because unsought; and he regards the good opinion of the good, as the annunciation provided by God on earth of the judgment already passed in Heaven.

We shall mention only one more restriction of this universal passion, a restriction which is the more definite as it is the more important, and more peculiarly conformable to the spirit of our religion. It is this. Human estimation should be valued as the means of usefulness, but should never be sought, as the end and ultimate reward of our exertions. Let us look round on some of the numberless examples of self-deception on this subject. Here you may see a man, whose bosom is just beginning to burn with sentiments of patriotism. Awakened by some accidental circumstance, he is full of ardour, seeks for popularity that he may obtain power, and for power, only that he may put in execution his long meditated plans of public utility. He soon finds, however, that popular favour is more easily retained by flattery and accommodation, than by the contrivance of public benefits; and he sits down in the easy chair of office inactive and useless, contented with believing, that the times are not yet ripe for his schemes of improvement.

Do you wish for another instance of one who deceives himself into the belief, that he seeks for human estimation only as an instrument of greater usefulness? Look at that man, who is so painfully solicitous to keep on good terms with all with whom he is acquainted, how different soever may be their characters, their principles, and their importance in society. If you ask him, why he is thus anxious to be thought well of by every one, he will answer you with apparent sincerity, "because I wish to be extensively useful. I would retain favour even with

the ignorant and the worthless, that I may have it in my power to throw all this influence into the scale of virtue and good principles, in cases of emergency, difficulty and tumult." When the long expected hour of his usefulness arrives, we find him neutral, sycophantic, and unworthy of trust. The universal reputation, which he has sought to obtain, is first replaced by universal indifference, and changes at last to universal contempt.

My friends, it is a noble triumph of evangelical morality, to make us willing to employ distinction as a means of others' good. You, then, whose names are the wonder and delight of your contemporaries, come, lend your reputation to the cause of religion. You, whose names are now highest in the list of honour, let us hear, that you have accomplished some service for mankind before your downfal. And you, who are now pressing forward in the career of distinction, before you triumph over another rival, consider whether you shall supply his place in all the beneficial extent of his influence; and when you take another step on the rough acclivity of fame, remember, that not only are the eyes of many more directed to you, but that, from a greater height, you may now scatter blessings more diffusively.

We proposed, lastly, to consider the means, by which this love of human estimation may be diminished in our own hearts. The following considerations are a few of the many, which may be suggested.

In the first place, consider what we all are, in the estimation of him who cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked. Think, you who are daily panting for acclamation and applause, are these shouts heard in heaven? And you, also, to whom the eyes of the world are raised, as to a lofty and portentous object of admiration, think from what an inconceivable distance the eye of omniscience looks down upon you, even at your highest elevation.

What! Is it man, the lowest, perhaps, in the order of rational intelligences—man, who at his best estate is altogether vanity, whose purest actions are polluted services, whose most mighty deeds are the varied struggles of a worm, whose most enviable reputation must at last be examined before the tribunal of all-searching justice—is it man who requires to be admonished not to be elated with the applause of creatures like himself? My friends, let us go and humble ourselves in prayer before the throne of God, and I think we cannot rise directly from our knees, and stretch ourselves out in the importance which the world may have given us.

The excessive value, which we may be inclined to put upon human estimation, must be diminished, whenever we seriously examine ourselves in the following manner. For what am I now most esteemed? Perhaps for the very quality, of which I know that I possess the least. The world sees me only in public, when I am all upon my guard, when I have put on my most showy and agreeable dress, when I have taken pains to conceal the deformities of my heart, and to patch up the imperfections of my understanding. But when I retire into my closet, I see at once, that I have been flattered. This man's attention I won by an affected complaisance; another's complacency I secured by luckily coinciding with his peculiar passion or prejudice. As to my talents, one man mistook my silence for wisdom; another, my fluency for knowledge; one was caught by some superficial display of my wit; another formed his conclusions of my powers from my accidental superiority to him in a particular instance. As to my disposition, no man knows, how many evil passions prey upon me in secret; how many contests are there going on between malevolence and fear, between hatred and politeness: no man can see the workings of my passions, or estimate the difficulty

which I find in preserving agreeable appearances. When I consider, too, how incompetent are many of the judges of my character, how subject are my friends to prejudice, and the multitude to blind admiration, I cannot but fear, lest I should appreciate too highly a reputation, which is built upon the ignorance of some, and the prejudice of others of my fellow creatures.

Another consideration, which ought to diminish our desire of human estimation, is the excessive uncertainty of the favour of the world. It is uncertain, because it may be lost by our own inadvertencies. The fair character, which years have been polishing and whitening, may be blasted in a moment of imprudence. The proud reputation of talents or of wit may be lost in an hour of forgetfulness, of weakness, or of low spirits. Nay more, the monument of our fame may tumble over in an instant, even by our rash endeavours to build it too high. How often has a trifling mistake, or a casual impropriety, precipitated a popular idol from his seat in the admiration of the multitude. We may lose our reputation by our ignorance, indeed, more easily than by our fault. But even if we were in no danger from ourselves, if we were sure of *always* deserving the credit, which we at any time possess, consider how fickle in itself is the opinion of mankind. They rush forever into opposite extremes. Let us, then, anticipate their changes. Let us become indifferent to them, before they become indifferent to us. The world cannot long endure to admire. Admiration is an exertion of the mind which fatigues; and even if it were as easy to continue to admire, as to love or to approve, the passion must at length be exhausted. What we look at for any length of time infallibly becomes familiar; and what has become familiar no longer excites admiration. No man appears great, says a severe moralist, no man appears great to his domes-

ties. But even if it were not the *natural* tendency of great worldly credit gradually to exhaust itself, yet when we consider, how many are envious of eminence, which they cannot reach, and how many hate the goodness, which they cannot imitate, when we consider that thousands, whose favourable opinion would not enhance our reputation, are yet able to blast it in a moment by falsehood, by treachery, or insinuation, let us sit loose to the opinion of the world, and seek the honour which cometh from God only.

We have seen, that this regard to human estimation, though a principle of universal, I had almost said, infinite influence, is confined to very narrow limits in the gospel of Christ. Is there nothing, then, provided to supply the place of so powerful an agent in the formation of the human character? Is there nothing left to awaken the ambition of the christian, to rouse him from sloth and universal indifference, to call forth the energies of his mind, and to urge him forward in the career of holiness? Yes; if we will listen to the language of an apostle, whose history proclaims, that his passions were not asleep, that his emulation was not quenched by the profession of christianity, and whose spirit ever glowed with a most divine enthusiasm—I say, if we listen to him, we shall find, that there is enough to stimulate all the faculties of the soul, and finally to satiate the most burning thirst of glory. Yes, my friends, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. Yes, my friends, our whole progress here, through all the varieties of honour and of dishonour, of evil report and good report, is a spectacle to angels and to men. We are coming into an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and

to God the judge of all. These have been the spectators of our course, and from such are we to receive glory, and honour, and immortality.

Wouldest thou, then, christian—allow me to quote an eloquent exhortation from a most pious writer, and to close this discourse—"wouldest thou indeed reduce this love of human estimation under just control! Rise on the wings of contemplation, until the praise and the censures of men die away upon the ear, and the still small voice of conscience is no longer drowned by the din of this nether world. Here the sight is apt to be occupied with earthly objects, and the hearing to be engrossed with earthly sounds; but there shalt thou come within the view of that resplendent and incorruptible crown, which is held forth to thy acceptance in the realms of light, and thine ear shall be regaled with heavenly melody. Here we dwell in a variable atmosphere—the prospect is at one time darkened by the gloom of disgrace, and at another the eye is dazzled by the gleamings of glory; but thou hast now ascended above this inconstant region; no storms agitate, no clouds obscure the air, and the lightnings play and the thunders roll beneath thee."*

* Wilberforce, p. 145.

SERMON VI.

PHILEMON.

The subject of the present discourse is the epistle of Paul to Philemon, which, as it will be repeated in the course of the sermon, I shall not now recite. This epistle, though the shortest, and in some respects the least important, which has reached us, of this apostle, is, notwithstanding, one of the most interesting. It is a private letter from one man to another, written on an occasion not very extraordinary: admitted, however, and retained in what is called the canon of the New Testament, in consequence of the apostolical character of the writer. It neither presents us with any summary of doctrines, nor statement of important facts; but it invites the attention of christians by the place where it is found, the well known character of the author, the characteristic merit of the letter itself, and, last of all, by the consequences, which, I think, may be deduced from it. Its brevity will allow us to consider it in a single discourse; and such is its plainness, that it does not call for a more close and critical examination, than may be given from the pulpit, or comprehended by a promiscuous assembly.

The apostle, when he wrote this letter, was in confinement at Rome, fastened, it is supposed, by a chain of a convenient length, to the soldier, who guarded him, and in the house which he had hired; so that his confinement was of such a nature as not to restrain him from preaching at home, and receiving converts to the faith of Jesus. Philemon, to whom he writes, was a rich, generous, and eminent christian at Colosse, in Phrygia, one of whose slaves, named Onesimus, had absconded, and, as was natural, had found his way to Rome, the metropolis of the empire. Here, it appears, he had by some means met with Paul, who converted him to the christian faith. The apostle seems to have discovered in him the best dispositions; not only a sincere repentance for his fault, but an honest disposition to return to his master. Accordingly, though Paul had become exceedingly attached to him in his confinement, he sends him back to Colosse, furnished with this letter, in which the apostle entreats Philemon, instead of punishing Onesimus with death, as the Roman law authorized him to do, to receive him again without taking notice of his crime, and, for his friend Paul's sake, to treat him in future as a penitent and faithful servant, and, what was more, as a convert to the same faith with himself, and peculiarly dear to the apostle. Such is the simple occasion of the epistle. I shall now recite it from the beginning, interweaving observations on the few expressions, which have in them any obscurity.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy, our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house, grace to you, and peace, from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."—The only remark to be made on this common christian salutation, is, that Paul forbears to style himself an apostle, as usual

in his epistles to societies, because he was now writing, not in the character of a minister to enjoin obedience, but in that of a friend, to solicit a favour. It may be added, that by the church in the house of Philemon it is not intended, that all the christians in Colosse assembled for worship under his roof, but rather, that all the members of his family were converts. This, at least, is the interpretation of some of the fathers, and is confirmed by similar expressions in other epistles.*

"I thank my God, (making mention of thee always in my prayers,) hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and toward all saints."—By a very common transposition, *faith* is to be referred to Christ, and *love* to the saints, that is, to the christians, who especially needed the kindness and hospitality of their richer brethren, in those days of poverty and persecution. The whole passage, beginning with this sentence, is an introductory civility, adapted to conciliate the favour of Philemon, and repress the first emotions of passion toward his slave.

The next clause is the only one in this letter, which remains obscure. "Making mention of thee always in my prayers, that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." —The apostle seems to express a wish, that the generous disposition and good offices of Philemon might produce in others a persuasion of the worth of the gospel, and an acknowledgment and imitation of its benevolent effects in this distinguished convert.

"For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints (i. e. the hearts, minds, spirits of the christians) are refreshed by thee, brother." This phraseology is common in

* Vide Col. iv. 15. Rom. xvi. 5. and Macknight ad locum.

scripture, and it is not without care, that Paul has introduced the engaging and endearing appellation of brother.

He now proceeds to the main object of his letter, the restoration of Onesimus. There is a mixture of tenderness and of authority, of affection and politeness, in this short letter, an earnestness of intercession, united with a care not to offend even by a word, a choice of phrases the least obnoxious, of arguments the most honourable, and of motives the most penetrating, which show the writer to have been a man of great address, as well as of strong affections, and master of a persuasion not easily resisted.

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee what is convenient, (or fit,) yet for love's sake I rather beseech; (being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ,) I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus."—This keeping the reader in suspense till the very close of the period, as to the name of the offender, has been often produced as a great rhetorical beauty in the apostle's style. But the crowd of motives, which he has contrived to collect in these few words, is yet more remarkable. He reminds Philemon of his reputation for kindness, of his friendship for the writer, of his respect for character, and especially for age, of his compassion for his bonds; and, with all this, lets fall an insinuation, that perhaps some deference was due to his wishes as an apostle. On the other hand, he presents before Philemon the repentance of Onesimus, and his return to virtue, his christian profession, and the consequent confidence and attachment of Paul, his spiritual father.

"(Onesimus) who in time past was to thee unprofitable, (a very mild expression indeed of his fault,) but now profitable (or rather of value) to thee and me, whom I have sent back again—do thou,

therefore, receive him, that is mine own bowels, (or as a part of myself,)—whom I wished to have retained with me, that, in thy stead, he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel, (i. e. during my confinement on account of preaching the gospel) but without thy mind, (or consent,) would I do nothing, (not even retain him an hour;) that thy benefit, (rather, thy goodness,) should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." The apostle means by this, that he chose, that Onesimus should first go and put himself in his master's power, so that the pardon might be perfectly voluntary on the part of Philemon. For, if the apostle had detained Onesimus, till, by his intercession, there had been obtained from his master a previous promise to receive him kindly, the act of goodness in Philemon would have been neither so free, nor so disinterested, as that which he had now an opportunity to exert.

Observe, in the next clause, the softness, with which the apostle mentions the offence of Onesimus, as if it were simply a providential separation of the master and slave, with a view to a future and superiour good. "For, perhaps, he therefore departed (or, as in the Greek, was separated) from thee for a season, that thou mightest have him forever; no longer as a servant, but above a servant, as a beloved brother; specially so to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord;" that is, in modern phrase, both as he is a man, and a christian.

The apostle continues his intercession by every mode of persuasion, which his ardour and generosity can suggest. "If thou count me therefore a partner, (or a friend,) receive him as myself. If he have wronged thee in any thing, or oweth thee aught, put that to my account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it; not to say to thee,

that thou owest to me even thine own self."—What a dexterous combination of appeals to interest, honour, duty and affection! "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord;—refresh my feelings in the Lord. Having confidence in thy compliance, I have thus written to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say."

He concludes with the following request. "And, at the same time, prepare me a lodging, for I trust, that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."—This discovers a singular familiarity between the apostle and Philemon, and a regard to the prayers of a good family, or a good friend. The salutations at the end of the epistle are from the companions of Paul, and need not be repeated.

1. From the recital of this epistle, and the occasional illustrations, which you have now had, you may, I think, in the first place, naturally conclude, that there is nothing peculiarly unintelligible in this apostle's mode of writing; and that on common subjects his meaning is as plain, as his language is familiar and unpretending. You may also be inclined to believe, that if we could as certainly ascertain the subjects of the other epistles, as of this; if we could know the character and circumstances of the churches, to whom they were written, as we understand the situation of Philemon and Onesimus, many passages, which now perplex us, would become clear, and innumerable difficulties, the source of endless theological discussions, would vanish into the simplest matters of fact. In an historical explication of the writings of the New Testament, such as we have now given of this short letter, would be found the most interesting and satisfactory mode of studying them. Instead of looking into every text, separated from its context, to find something which may bear upon a favourite system, we should be content to understand the apostles, as they meant to be un-

derstood by those to whom they wrote. We should learn, that they were not, on every occasion, delivering a system of dogmas for the instruction of all succeeding time; but that Paul, in particular, consulted the circumstances of his correspondents, reasoned with them sometimes on their own assumptions, and sometimes upon prevailing hypotheses, now according to their peculiar habits of interpretation, and then upon suppositions and accommodations of his own, never losing sight, however, of the grand object of his labours, the establishment of christianity, unincumbered with the burden, and unfettered with the trammels of Judaism.

2. By reflecting on the circumstance, that this letter is found in the canon of the New Testament, you may be led to form the most intelligible notion of what is called the inspiration of the book, and also to understand the most important use of the apostolical writings. You may thus ascertain, what it is that gives any ancient writing a place in your New Testaments. You will find, that it is not because this writing or that was dictated by divine inspiration; for the question still returns, what proof is there, that this or that writing was inspired? But the true reason is simply, because we have sufficient evidence to believe it to be the work of an apostle. If the apostles had written many more epistles, which had been transmitted to us, or if any should now be discovered, as unsuspiciously authentic as those we possess, they would, on *that account*, and that alone, make a part of the New Testament, and consequently of the rule and records of our faith. So, also, on the other hand, if the epistles, which we now have, had not by any means been preserved, the limits of what we call the word of God would have been reduced, and we should have been compelled to resort, perhaps, to the gospels only, for our information respecting the religion of Christ.

When we say, therefore, that the letter to Philemon, or any other part of the New Testament, is the word of God, we mean only, that it is the genuine production of one of those men, to whom God had communicated a miraculous knowledge of the truth as it was in Jesus. It is, in short, the real work of an authorized apostle of Jesus. We do not mean, that either the suggestion or the superintendence of the Divinity was necessary for the conception or the composition of a letter like this, addressed to an individual friend, without reference either to the churches or to posterity, on a subject of merely personal concern, and in a style of epistolary familiarity. No—we feel at once, that, in such a composition, there was no call for any thing more than the natural powers and common state of the understanding. But we receive even this, as the word of God, because it makes a part of the authentic writings of one of his inspired ministers; for it is fair to conclude, that the same God, who had illuminated and empowered them to preach the gospel, would not suffer them, in writing on any occasion in which his revelation was even remotely concerned, to give a false or mistaken statement of his truth, or incidentally to mislead in any important point. If it were possible that we should be so misled, it would imply, that God had made choice of incompetent witnesses. We receive this gift, therefore, however small, as a part of the records of christianity; and, without a servile credulity in the supernatural inspiration of every line, which at any time flowed from the pen of the apostle, we feel a confidence, that, wherever we understand his meaning, we are not mistaken in the views of the gospel which he presents. If the apostles were honest men, we are sure that they were inspired for every practical purpose; and where we have no reason to suspect the genuineness of their works, we place as complete a reli-

ance on the doctrines and facts, which they contain, as if we had received them directly from Jesus himself.

3. This little epistle instructs us, also, in the use of the apostolical writings. Not one of them appears to have been written to furnish us with a complete system of theology; nor were they originally contrived, as they now appear, to give us a series of disconnected axioms to serve for every occasion, and every generation. They were suggested, like other letters, by particular circumstances; and they are now of use to throw light upon the early history of the gospel, to enable us to enter into the character of the apostles and their converts, to assist us in judging of the probability of the principal facts mentioned in the evangelical narrative; in one word, they are documents, which awaken an interest in, and add confirmation to the wonderful history of Jesus and his apostles. It would, indeed, be a subject of curious inquiry to ascertain, if we could, what the apostles thought upon some subjects of modern speculation; but it is likely that few, perhaps none of them, ever once entered their minds. Their testimony to facts is all that is of indispensable importance; and besides this, we are enabled to acquire a lively idea of the leading doctrines and precepts and the animating spirit of christianity, as it existed in their minds, and among their churches. But they wrote in a popular style, influenced, no doubt, by the prevailing notions of their own age and nation; a style by no means nicely accommodated to the metaphysics of our times, or regulated by a strict regard to philosophical precision.

Of the uses even of this short letter, in confirmation and illustration of the gospel history, I will now attempt to give you a specimen.

You all know, that there is extant, in our volume of the New Testament, a history, called the Acts of

the apostles, commonly believed to have been written by Luke, a physician. Let us now suppose, that an inhabitant of Colosse, in the first century, the executor, for instance, of Philemon's estate, in looking over the papers of his deceased friend, finds a lettter, purporting to be an epistle from one Paul to Philemon, about the restoration of a runaway slave. If this man had formerly read, though without perfect satisfaction, the extraordinary narrative of Luke, the name of Paul, in this newly discovered letter, would instantly recal to his mind the remarkable history of a man of the same name, which he had read in the Acts. He soon perceives, also, that this letter, which he has just found, was written from Rome, while the writer was in confinement, as he expresses it, on account of Jesus. Upon turning to the conclusion of the history in the Acts, he finds, that the apostle, named Paul, was actually put in bonds at Rome, in consequence of an arrest in Judea, for preaching what he called the gospel of Jesus. The letter, then, would excite his attention, as a natural confirmation of the history, at least in that particular. Unacquainted, however, with all the Roman customs, as he reads on, he thinks it not a little extraordinary, that the apostle should have had an opportunity of converting Onesimus to the christian faith, while he was himself in close confinement. Upon reverting to the history, he discovers, that Paul lived all the while at Rome in his own hired house, with the soldier who guarded him, where he was allowed to receive the visits of his friends, and thus to discourse to them of Jesus. In this view of the apostle's imprisonment, the conversion of Onesimus, and the apostle's desire to retain him near his person, seem no longer extraordinary.

Again, let us suppose, that this friend of the deceased Philemon, at Colosse, should chance to find

some years after, in the records of the church of his native town, the epistle, which is styled, in our Bibles, that of Paul to the Colossians; or rather, let us suppose, that he heard it read then, for the first time, in the public congregation. If he recollected any thing of the private letter of Paul, which he had before discovered among Philemon's papers, he would not, for a moment, doubt of the authenticity of this public epistle to the Colossians. For he would instantly be struck with the coincidences between them, and observe the light and confirmation, which they communicate to each other, and to the history of the apostle. He would remark, that this epistle to the church was written about the same time, and from the same place, with the letter to Philemon; of course he would expect to find, what is repeatedly mentioned in the Colossians, the writer speaking of himself, as imprisoned. There is one coincidence, however, which would strike him with singular force. He remembers to have found in the letter, that the name of Philemon's slave, who had absconded, and returned to him penitent, was Onesimus, and he now finds, in the epistle to the Colossians, that it is mentioned by mere accident, that a convert, named Onesimus, was the bearer of this public epistle to the church; and that he is there also, as in the other, commended by Paul with singular affection, as a faithful and beloved brother. Could he suspect, for a moment, the authenticity of the epistle to the Colossians, after observing these and many more undesigned coincidences between this public correspondence with a church and this private letter to his deceased friend; a letter, which, for any thing that we know, might, but for some such circumstances as those we have imagined, have remained forever buried in the desk of Philemon?

Let us pursue this subject. What idea would the reader of this letter be apt to form of the character of

the writer? Would he not conclude him to be a man of the most affectionate dispositions, of the most glowing philanthropy, capable of strong sympathies, interested in the fortunes of his friends, and disposed to any exertions in their favour? Would he not set him down as a minister, devoted altogether to the cause which he had espoused, esteeming it his first and highest object, in defiance of every personal inconvenience, to communicate, in his bonds, the knowledge of the gospel; solicitous, even in such a situation, to save the soul of a poor slave, and unable to conceal his delight at the change of character even in the obscure Onesimus? Yes, and with all this interest in the minutest circumstances connected with the credit of the gospel, I think he might discover in the writer of this letter a consciousness of dignity, mingled with his condescension, and consummate prudence of address, united with expressions of undissembled friendship for Philemon. I think he would say, here is a man, who is sensible of the influence, which age and office should command, and yet is master of a politeness, which knows how to bring itself, without abasement, to a level with the place, the feelings, and the prejudices of every class of men. He would pronounce him familiar with all the avenues to the heart. He would say, this man is no stranger to the world, but he is raised above its common interests; and beneath all the graces of this insinuating style, you may discern the magnanimity and disinterestedness of an apostle of the Son of God, a preacher of sublime and everlasting truths.

It happens, by a singular coincidence, that there has come down to us a letter of Pliny, the courtier, the consul, the man of letters, who lived in the same age with the apostle;* a letter, addressed to one of

* Pliny, lib. ix. lit. 21.

his friends, upon an occasion precisely similar to this of Paul, interceding for the pardon of a runaway slave. The time and the occasion must excuse me from reciting it. In comparison with that of Paul, however, I hesitate not to say, that it is altogether inferiour, not merely in affection, in dignity, and the spirit of christianity, of which Pliny was ignorant, but also in the subordinate beauties of style, and in eloquence of persuasion. And yet Paul was a Jew of Tarsus, and Pliny, the ornament of an accomplished court and of a literary age. But to return.

If such, then, would be his conception of Paul's character, from the faint sketches, which appear in this letter, let him turn to the history in the Acts, and contemplate there a full-length portrait of this wonderful man, this sublime apostle, and say, whether he does not recognise the resemblance. *There*, he appears animated with a zeal, which nothing earthly could quench, and fearless of every thing which appals ordinary men; affectionate as a child, when taking his leave of the elders at Ephesus, bold as a lion, in the presence of corrupt Roman governours; in his speeches before the Areopagus and the Athenians, discovering a masterly address and a cultivated mind; in the hearing of Agrippa, eloquent as a practised rhetorician; in the presence of his enemies, the Jewish council, prudent, dexterous, and alert to seize every lawful advantage; yet, with all this, a most humiliating sense of his former sinfulness, on the one hand, attends, controls, attempers, and characterizes all his greatness; while, on the other, a sentiment of inexpressible gratitude to the Saviour, who had rescued and pardoned him, gives a kind of supernatural energy of love to all his exertions, sanctifies all his success, and seems to spiritualize all his consciousness of desert, all the glory of his triumphs. Yes, the penitent and the hero break out in his character, whether he preaches or

writes, whether he suffers, or is worshipped as a God. It is the same extraordinary man, who discovers himself in the familiarity of a private letter, and in the wonders of a miraculous history. The dress is altered, but the bold cast of countenance is the same. It is Paul's, and Paul's only. Truly, the conquest of such a mind was the first and the noblest of the triumphs of the cross.

Lastly, what ideas would the reader of this letter form of the nature and spirit of christianity? I think, that, even from this short epistle, he would learn to reverence and love the cause, which could form such men, and dictate such sentiments. Here he would see the distinctions of master and slave, of the chief apostle and his meanest convert, vanishing in their common relation to Jesus and his gospel. Love counts nothing humble, nothing mean. Here he would learn, that the soul, even of a fugitive slave, is not unworthy of being rescued from the tyranny and misery of sin; that the gift of eternal life, in the sight of Jesus and of Paul, is no less important to Onesimus, than to his master. Yet, in remarkable coincidence with the doctrine of the apostle in other epistles, he would find, that christianity made no alterations in the civil or political relations of the converts, for Paul demands not the emancipation of the slave, but, on the contrary, returns him to the service of his master.

In this epistle, too, he would see recommended that temper of forgiveness, which the gospel requires, and requires, too, without respect of persons, from a superiour justly incensed toward the most abject dependent. It acknowledges neither the pride of revenge, nor the haughtiness of office. We see, also, exemplified, the duty of reconciling those, who are at variance, however distant or unequal. We see a religion, in short, which takes an interest even in the continuance of the attachment of a master and

his domestics. How generous, how disinterested, and yet how practicable is all this! How conformable to the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and how unlike the customs and the spirit of modern society!

Besides all this, we are taught, by the example of Paul and Onesimus, not to turn away from any portion of the community, as irreparably wicked, or out of the reach of instruction and conversion. It gives a lesson to every christian minister, and not less, let me add, to every master of a family. It shows us, too, that the gospel was intended to find its way to the breast of a slave, as well as to the head of a philosopher; to form the characters of the lowest order of a community; to make a worthy man, where every other religion, which the world has yet seen, and all the lectures of the Lycæum besides, would have left a worthless, ignorant criminal.

To conclude, he who feels not the worth of this amiable, benevolent, unpretending epistle, may study mysteries till he is tired; he may talk of our holy religion, till he fancies himself its champion; but he understands not the nature of christianity. He has not imbibed that spirit of charity, without which the most confident faith and the most burning zeal are but a hypocritical show, or a ruinous delusion.

SERMON VII.

JOHN VI. 12.*

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN, THAT NOTHING BE LOST.

Of many virtues it may be remarked, that they are so nearly allied to particular vices, that, by minds unwilling or unaccustomed to make nice moral distinctions, they are continually confounded. Thus, on the one hand, what is called liberality in sentiment is sufficiently near to indifference, and devotional fervour, on the other, to enthusiasm, to deceive those, who are not disposed to distinguish them. What in one man is only caution, in another is thought nothing better than timidity; what in this mind is allowed to pass for generous emulation, in that is gross envy, or inordinate ambition. In the view of the undiscerning, generosity spreads itself out into waste and profusion, and prudence shrinks into parsimony.

Since, then, there is a great affinity between certain dispositions, which yet differ in moral character; and since some virtues stand, in fact, on the confines of certain vices; the more nearly any one of our characteristic qualities is allied to an unpop-

* In order to feel all the force of some passages of this discourse, the reader should be informed, that it was written at the commencement of our commercial restrictions, and pronounced at the quarterly charitable lecture in Boston.

ular or unamiable vice, the more careful ought we to be of the simplicity, and the more sure of the rectitude of our motives, because the easier is it for the world to misrepresent their nature and depreciate their value. Since, also, many of those feelings and habits, on which men rest their claims to superiour worth, are sometimes vices in disguise, and still oftener the product of doubtful dispositions, it becomes of especial importance to ascertain the true nature and real worth of those qualities, to which we find ourselves the most disposed, and which wear the form of virtues.

Among those moral qualities of close affinity, which occasion much perversion and mistake of judgment in the world, we may reckon the virtue of frugality, and the vice of avarice. On these every man feels competent to decide in the character of another. We propose now to consider the virtue of frugality, to relieve it from disesteem, and to guard it from perversion. In doing this, we shall attempt to draw the requisite distinctions between it and its unworthy counterfeits; to distinguish what in it is prudent from what is purely selfish, what in it is wise and honourable from what is childish and disgraceful; and what is useful to the individual, and good for society, from what is always useless to the one, and ultimately destructive to the other.

Among the considerations, which have induced me to make this virtue the subject of a discourse on this occasion, it is not one of the least, that nothing will more effectually enable us to preserve in all their vigour, and, in fact, to multiply and extend the charities of this place, than the revival or the preservation of frugality. We have been living in a period, and state of society, where the facilities of profit have been numerous beyond a parallel, and the frequent examples of sudden gain flattering and seductive. Temptations to extravagance have in-

creased daily. Thousands have been spending upon anticipation, and dissipating, not hereditary wealth—for of that we possessed little—not sure and tangible acquisitions, for these we have wanted patience to collect—but that airy and invisible representative of wealth, credit, which, of all possessions, it is most necessary to economize and guard from violation. The time seems to be approaching, if it have not already come, in which men are to learn, that they cannot, with impunity, despise this virtue of frugality; and we have begun to see, that uninterrupted profit is not the order of nature. We have found, that there are other enemies to rapid gains, besides the elements of nature, or the shoal which wrecks our vessels, or the indiscretion which mismanages our means, or the moth and rust which corrupt treasures long ago collected. We find, that there may be serious obstructions to usual channels of profit, which check in an instant the movements of the vast machine of acquisition; that the calculations of the aspiring man of business may be arrested, and every man in society compelled to pause, some to inquire into the sources of their prosperity, others into the security of their actual possessions. We find, that, in the ordinary course of human affairs, changes occur, against which nothing but habitual frugality can provide; and we are taught to feel the importance of establishing the habits of a rising community in that state of moderate expense, which can be easily maintained through all these changes. It is a time, in fact, to learn the great riches of frugality. Gather up, then, the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

Before we proceed further to recommend this virtue, let us attempt to distinguish it from that vice of avarice, to which some will persist in supposing it related. There is no man, whatever be his place, his means, or his character in life, who does not feel an-

thorized to decry the spirit of parsimony. Though he denies that he has ever felt it himself, it is the passion which he is always most sharp-sighted to detect in others. But, if we mistake not, economy differs from avarice, not merely in degree, but in kind. The utmost excess of frugality never sinks into avarice; nor does the lowest degree of avarice ever amount to frugality. They proceed from different propensities, they avail themselves of different means, they are directed to different ends. Avarice accumulates for the sake of accumulation: economy spares for the sake of use. Avarice becomes at last a disinterested passion; and money, the more it is gained, is loved and hoarded more solicitously, merely because it is money. Economy does not grow more saving, as the means of expense are multiplied: it lays by with a view to some future accommodation, but with less scrupulosity, the more it has to deposite. Avarice, even when it is cheated into bounty, reluctantly parts with the little that it yields; economy *never* gives merely on compulsion, and is often grieved that it dares not bestow a more ample favour. Avarice, always intent on minute savings, is frequently blind, and is sometimes betrayed by her rapacity into serious losses; economy, while she gathers up the fragments that remain, is never hurried, by a thirst of gain, into imprudent and destructive speculations. Avarice regards only money, or what it represents; economy is a branch of that comprehensive prudence, which knows how to be frugal of every thing; of time, opportunities, and talents, as well as wealth. An avaricious man feels like a unit in creation, and saves for himself alone; a frugal man considers himself one of a circle of creatures, mutually dependent, whose expectations and whose claims he consults, and in all his habits of frugality has reference to his relation to society and to posterity. The highest benevolence of character may consist with a

habit of regulated and moderate expenditure, and consists, indeed, with nothing else; but it is the curse of the avaricious man, to experience the miseries of pure selfishness, to be at once envious of the rising prosperity of others, and anxious about his own possessions, to be ever afraid of losing, and still more afraid to give, because he sees nothing in bounty but deliberate waste, and uncompensated diminution. In short, frugality will associate with any of the virtues, and becomes herself the parent of others, and not only of virtues, but of a thousand permanent comforts; avarice, in its very nature, defeats its own wishes, and encounters from others nothing but enmity and contempt. When mature, it sheds a blasting influence over the finest affections and sweetest comforts of mankind. Men spontaneously combine to detest it, and God, the most bountiful of beings, looks down with abhorrence on a spirit, which does nothing but counteract his benevolent designs.

This, you may say, however, is rather a rhetorical, than a precise description of the quality, which we mean to recommend under the name of frugality. To avoid, then, all cavil or subterfuge, all excuses from the plea, that you know not how far your expenses may be carried without profuseness, or how much economy you may observe without penuriousness, I would say, once for all, that I mean by the economical man, him who does not exceed his income, who does not spend upon anticipation, and who is not ashamed to gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost; and who, in the regulation of his expenses, always has regard to the claims of charity, and retrenches always, when he can, from his own personal gratifications, to do good to those who want what he can spare.

If, then, you ask for the reasons, why you should practise this virtue, I answer, in the *first place*, from the authority of the text. I have chosen it, as a re-

commendation to you as christians. Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. The precept is introduced at a time and in a place, which render it most extraordinary and remarkable. It was when the Son of God had been feeding five thousand men, by a miraculous multiplication of food. It was in the midst of this generosity and supernatural abundance, when they were all filled and satisfied, that our Saviour charges them to gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. What then! If the son of God, with whom there could be no apprehension of want, and who might have provided for his family of disciples by a daily miracle, chose that moment of plenty to give a precept of frugality, is this a virtue to be disdained by man, the most dependant of animals, who possesses nothing, which he has not received, and who knows not what shall be, even on the morrow?

2. The next reason, which I shall offer you for the practice of frugality, is, it seems also to be the practice of omnipotence itself. In those vast operations which are continually going on in nature, there appears no waste, no unnecessary profusion. Though he, who created this stupendous whole, might continually reproduce whatever might be lost, yet, amid the endless changes of matter, not a particle is annihilated. Magnificence every where displays itself without waste, and grandeur is every where made subservient to utility. Those vast orbs, which compose our planetary system, are all so nicely counterpoised, that we can discover no unnecessary exercise of power, no useless and unaccountable movements. Those bright bodies, which adorn the arch of heaven, modern discoveries make it probable, are *themselves* the residences of animated beings, while they diffuse light and heat to countless and habitable spheres. They are not placed above us merely to furnish us with some fee-

ble light; nor is all this profusion of magnificence expended to delight the eye of man by the decoration of the concave, which over-canopies him. Even the comet, which makes such wild and apparently extravagant excursions into the regions of boundless space, may be the messenger, and perhaps the agent of the most necessary purposes in creation. The air, which seems to be diffused with such wasteful generosity above, below, around us, fulfils a thousand beneficent designs, reflects the light, conveys sound, raises vapours, and sustains the life of all animal and vegetable nature. The wide expanse of waters, which seems, at first glance, a mere waste of surface on the globe, furnishes by copious evaporation the necessary recruit to those pure springs and navigable rivers, which, at once, refresh and accommodate the living creatures on the earth. Indeed, wherever nature appears to have been prodigal of her wealth, we find she has only been gathering stores for some future secret wants; and those countries, which exhibit, at first view, a superabundance of fertility, are destined, we find, to furnish articles in exchange for others, and thus a system of mutual compensation is provided, as population increases and the intercourses of society are multiplied and extended. If, then, in the arrangement of an omnipotent providence, where the fear of want cannot be known, such an economical distribution is every where observed, shall we, in our little spheres, in our precarious and contracted operations, be ashamed to imitate the prudence of the God of nature?

3. A *third* reason, which I shall offer for the practice of frugality, is this, that, in proportion to the mediocrity of its place in the scale of virtues, the more frequent are the opportunities for its practice. It is a virtue within every man's reach, neither confined to particular classes of men, or periods of life, nor demanding any singular circumstances, or

favourable situations, before it can be practised. It may be observed by the day labourer, who earns his bread from hour to hour, and not less by the hereditary proprietor of unreckoned millions; by the man who is not known beyond the light of his own fireside, and the man who is busy in the traffic of the world; by the head of a family, and the head of an empire; by the poor man, who lives upon his regular pittance, and by him, who has the lives and treasures of thousands at the disposal of his generosity. It may be practised silently and secretly, where it cannot be disdained; or in public, and without disguise, where the example may be of consequence. The habit, though not congenial with the dispositions of the young, may be formed before the value of property is understood; and it may be preserved without difficulty in age, when time has increased our original attachments to human possessions. As it is a virtue, which neither excites much attention, nor challenges loud commendation, it may be cultivated without exposure, without fear, without embarrassment, without reproach. Few men have opportunities of great gain; but to save with discretion, is within every one's power. Few can make themselves distinguished by splendid profuseness; but all, in a country like this, may keep themselves from want by silent and blameless economy. In fine, it is a virtue, which may be practised in all times, countries, ranks, ages, relations, and capacities; and this, perhaps, is the very circumstance which has made some men despise it, who, though ashamed to practise a humble virtue, have not been afraid of great and splendid crimes.

4. A *fourth* reason for economy is to be found in the mournful effects of prodigality; for the prodigal, in the full career of his profligate generosity, is fast approaching a state of dependence. At this word dependence we all revolt, and we ought to revolt. It

is this, which constitutes the worst evil of poverty. Poverty not only makes us destitute, and abridges the number of our pleasures, but its greatest hardship is, that it places us in the power of those whom wealth has set above us; and, while it exposes us to severe and unexpected trials, it too often reconciles the mind to abject compliances and humiliating artifices, at which the spirit of virtue would once have indignantly revolted. To this wretched condition how suddenly may the prodigal be reduced! Ages of toil and prudence may be employed in the acquisition of a fortune, which the cast of a die may dissipate in an instant; as the showers of rain, which descend in a moment by their own gravity to the earth, have been slowly and successively raised, particle by particle, from a wide expanse of waters. The profuse man, who is possessed with the pitiable vanity of making a show, which he finds it difficult to maintain, experiences all the miseries of dependence long before he is reduced to circumstances of real and absolute want. He is continually employed in contrivances to raise mistaken admiration, and he gains nothing by profusion but the contempt of those, who are not weak enough to envy him. Even in the days of his most abundant means, he is, in a thousand ways, the prey of the multitude of creatures, that are necessary to his ostentation. He must seem to care nothing about expense, while he knows that he cannot long support his mode of life, in which every new instance of profusion leads only to another more extravagant, and in which he resembles a descending meteor, which grows more brilliant and dazzling just before it bursts. He is condemned, also, to see a crowd of imitators treading close upon his heels and aping his prodigalities. He is miserable with the thought, that he is engaged in a career in which he cannot relax without mortification, for, if he should fail, the

whole crowd of his retainers and imitators, as soon as his inability is suspected, will be changed into his despisers, his calumniators, or, what he more fears, perhaps, his proud superiours in the arts of expense. He bears about with him the painful conviction, that those who flattered him when his purse was full, those miserable instigators of his follies, who were willing to run with him into the same excess of riot, will begin to avoid him in his mediocrity, or to insult him in his poverty.

It is also the fate of prodigality, when it does not destroy, to be continually defeating itself. As the same gains will not always satisfy a rapacious spirit of avarice, so the same expenses will but for a little while content the profuse. What was at first only convenient, becomes at last necessary; what was once superfluous, becomes convenient; what was formerly acknowledged to be vain and ostentatious, becomes, at last, a part of the habits, and therefore indispensable. Thus the well known curse of avarice, that it is never satisfied with what it has accumulated, is transferred to prodigality; and it is ultimately found as painful for the prodigal to retrench, as for the miser to expend.

5. Another reason, which may be offered for a prudent management of wealth, is its excessive uncertainty. How often is this consideration neglected! Instead of saving, as we ought, something from the waves of peril and change, men are always calculating upon anticipated profits. We flatter ourselves, that to-morrow shall be as this day, and yet more abundant. We are influenced by examples of sudden success, instead of being warned by examples of sudden downfal. We think, that, where others have succeeded, we cannot fail; and, however limited our means, there is unfortunately no limit to our hopes. The insecurity of what we actually possess would be enough, as one might think, to keep us

from waste; but, instead of this, men spend upon expectation; and he that is prodigal of what he only expects, will hardly feel the uncertainty of what he actually holds. To such men I would repeat the serious admonition of St. James: Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and buy, and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is even your life? Is it not a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away? Whereas ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But ye have lived in pleasure on the earth; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be *ye* also patient, and trust not in uncertain riches.

6. The last reason, which I shall offer, for the practice of frugality, is one which I wish you to feel, particularly on the present occasion. It is found in the purposes, for which wealth has been bestowed upon you by God, purposes, which prodigality utterly defeats. Do you ask, what are these purposes? We answer, that no man is born for himself alone, or for the short period in which he lives. You are related to the age which has preceded, and to the posterity which is to succeed you. If your present wealth is hereditary, those who bequeathed it lay their commands on you their heirs. Your ancestors cry to you from their tombs, that you have their riches in keeping; and beseech you to expend, with wise liberality, what they collected with toil. Is your wealth the product of your own exertions and of your own opportunities, the next generation puts in its claims, and avows its expectations. It tells you to look into futurity, and see descendants impoverished by your imprudences.

entering into life bearing the burden and reproach of your prodigality, and perhaps driven to crimes and despair by the want you have entailed upon them. Your contemporaries, also, rise up around you, and inquire by what right you waste that portion of the wealth of the world, which has been assigned you by the tacit conventions and guaranteed by the laws of society. We have a claim upon you, they cry, for all the good which your possessions may be made to produce, and you have not the right to place them out of your control by such rapid dissipation, or to reduce yourself to want which we must relieve, and then plead your incapacity to be useful.

Do you ask, why I have chosen this subject for such an occasion. I can only answer by saying, be frugal, that you may be charitable. Nothing exhausts the spirit of charity, as well as the sources of bounty, so surely as selfish and indiscriminate prodigality; and no man is so unwilling to give, as he who is accustomed to spend profusely upon himself. His wealth, which would have made many comfortable, is often expended upon one, without increasing the name, but merely the show of enjoyment. The young and vain are tempted by our ambitious extravagances to expenses, which they cannot support, while the riches of the community are wasted away, and the cries of the poor are unregarded.

By prodigality the encroachments of luxury are silently extended through all the classes of the community. The discontentment of your inferiours is excited by demonstrations of splendour, which they cannot imitate; and the spendthrift, when he finds that his revenues will no longer support his poor attempts at extravagance, is driven to crimes, at which he would once have revolted, and a hard-heartedness, of which he would once have been ashamed. He is forced by very shame to petty frauds, to

frequent breaches of promise, to injurious oppression, and various means of supply, which deprave all the finest sentiments of benevolence and virtue.

Be frugal, then, that you may be charitable. In these days of increasing luxury, and of increasing want, how shall our beneficence keep pace with the demands of charity, unless we learn to retrench for the sake of beneficence? It is not my object, in this discourse, to produce in you, at this time, any extraordinary degree of munificence, but to recommend to you a virtue, which if you can be persuaded to practise, I shall feel secure of your future bounty. I shall fear no diminution in your charities, and the poor, for whom I am called to plead this evening, will bless me much more, than if I could now empty your purses in one profuse contribution. They value the man, who, in all his expenditures, has a regard to their perpetual claims; they prize that constant and well-principled bounty, which is nourished by frugality, much more than they esteem the occasional charity of the spendthrift, who is moved by some accidental feelings of compassion, but who forgets them as soon as his purse is emptied, and, at the next call of charity, has nothing to give.

To conclude, I have said, be frugal, that you may be charitable. Let me add, that charity is the truest frugality. As God lives, no man ever has lost, or can lose, by well-directed bounty. There is no waste in charity. Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it again. He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Abound, therefore, in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON VIII.

HEB. XI. 1.

NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

AMONG the terms of theology, which have given rise to much useless controversy, and many differences of explanation, the word faith is not the least considerable. As, in different passages, it is used in different connexions, according to the object of the writer, and the subject of his reasoning, it is not surprising, that it should not always admit of an uniform interpretation, and that no particular definition of it should be found completely to explain its meaning in every passage in which it is used in the New Testament. The sense, however, in which it is employed in the celebrated chapter from which our text is taken, is one of the most extensive, and perhaps the most natural and intelligible of any; and this meaning of the word we propose, in the following discourses, to illustrate.

Faith, says the apostle, is the substance of things hoped for, and an evidence, or rather a conviction, of things not seen. Faith, therefore, is a principle, which naturally results from the constitution of the human mind; and the general import of the word is well understood, though it may not be well defined,

by the most ordinary understanding, because it is of necessity exercised by all. It is not opposed to reason, which is its only just foundation, nor, except in a peculiar, theological sense, to works; but, properly, philosophically, and universally, it is opposed to knowledge. This principle is precisely the same, when exercised on other truths, as on those of religion. There is no peculiar strangeness in the faith of a christian, no especial mysteriousness in the nature of religious faith in general. The same constitution of the human mind, which enables us to believe, upon sufficient testimony, that there was such a person as Alexander, will not allow us to doubt, that there was such a teacher as Jesus. It is the same principle, which leads us to believe in the conquests of the one and the miracles of the other. With respect, also, to future events, the act of faith is of a similar nature, whether the event belong to this world, or to another. The same principle, which would lead us to look confidently for an eclipse, predicted by a man of science, will not suffer us to doubt the authorized messenger of God, who declares, that the day is coming, when all they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of man, and shall come forth. Religious faith is especially employed about every thing which relates to the will, the providence, and the character of God; and the faith of a christian is distinguished, from all other kinds of religious faith, only by its superiour extent, purity and influence. It embraces doctrines, of which, if true, it is infinitely dangerous for us to be ignorant; and it is supported on evidence, which gives it a stability, and inspires it with an interest, which cannot properly belong to any other description of belief.

In the following discourses we propose to enumerate some of the OBJECTS, to explain the REASONABLENESS, and to urge the IMPORTANCE of faith. These are the three divisions of our subject.

We might, with the greatest ease, and perhaps with some profit, fill this discourse with remarks upon the numerous and different instances of faith, which the apostle has collected in this chapter. You would discover, from a particular examination of each instance here recorded, that the leading idea in this much disputed word, is reliance upon the authority, or confidence in the testimony of another. You would find, that the objects, which faith embraces, are more or less numerous, according to the previous cultivation and present circumstances of the believer, and according to the plans of Providence with respect to him. The faith of Abel, or of Noah was not less real or valuable, than is that of the greatest saint, who lives under the dispensation of the gospel, though the faith of the christian embraces a much greater variety of objects, and is suited to a much more enlarged comprehension. In general, with respect to God, it embraces whatever he has been pleased to communicate of himself in the age in which the believer happens to live.

If I should attempt to enumerate to you some of the more important truths, which you now receive by the aid of this all operating principle, I should first carry your imaginations back to that memorable point of time, when God said, Let there be light, and there was light; and I would ask you, upon what do you rest the assurance you feel, that this charming scene of nature is the product of the hand of God? Wert thou present, when the foundations of the earth were fastened? Wert thou in the joyous circle, when the morning stars sang together, and all the new born sons of God shouted for joy? Knowest thou this, because thou wast then born, or because the number of thy days is great? No, my friends. By faith, says the apostle, we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that the things which are seen were not made of any

thing which now appears. Though the surest deductions of reason confirm the opinion, that this universe is the product of a great and intelligent author, yet it was not reasoning which discovered this truth. It *was* to the Jewish nation—it *is* still to those, who are not able to comprehend the demonstration, by which it is sometime ssupported—and, universally, I may add, to the early capacity, it *must ever be* an article of faith, received upon authority.

By faith we dwell upon those events, which are far beyond the reach of our sensible experience. In profane history we receive such facts with unhesitating confidence, and reason from them without suspicion. Why, then, should we not exercise the same confidence, when we contemplate events in the history of God's especial dealings, events, which have also the additional support of prophecy and miracle? By religious faith we are introduced into the counsels of omniscience, and see the hand of almighty power guiding, with unvaried wisdom, the wonderful vicissitudes of the world. Faith transports us back to that event, which, in the history of the revolutions of our globe, stands next in dignity to the wondrous work of creation. We see the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the waters bursting the bounds within which the hand of omnipotence had hitherto circumscribed them, and rising to overtake the retreating wickedness of the antediluvian age. We see the wide waste of waters successively submerging the shores, the trees, the towers, the eminences to which the affrighted inhabitants had climbed, and, at length, the original and everlasting mountains of the globe, until all the features of this ball of earth are no longer to be discerned in the one vast expanse of fluid. The world, just now so gay with vegetation, so fruitful in life, and so tumultuous with pleasure and corruption, disappears with its astonished inhabitants; and

nought is left, of all this scene of things, but God and his faithful servants. Noah and his family are alone preserved of all the intelligent creatures of his power, and they float securely over the ruins and desolation of a drowning world. Faith opens to us the door of the ark, and we enter, and look out upon the consternation which surrounds us. Men, beasts, birds, and all living beings on the earth successively disappear, while within, this man of piety serenely collects around him his beloved family, and waits, without alarm, for the accomplishment of the purposes of heaven, buoyed up by the elastic energy of his faith in the promises of his maker.

By faith we follow the dispensations of Heaven towards the descendants of Noah. We see Abraham, that venerable father of the faithful, leaving his native land. Not knowing whither to direct his aged steps, he is led by the unseen hand of his ever kind and ever faithful God. From this gray-headed and feeble patriarch, "already as good as dead," behold generations innumerable issuing forth to people the newly restored earth, and multiplying as the stars of heaven. Isaac is born, and already his father anticipates the fulfilment of the magnificent promise he had received from God; but, in the midst of his expectations, he is commanded to sacrifice this solitary descendant. He is bound to the altar, the knife is taken, and the father's hand is uplifted to slay him. God interposes, and he lives again; and with him revive generations yet to come; and future nations, starting into life, are again blessed in his seed.

By faith we follow the rapidly increasing posterity of Jacob through the interesting narrative of their family history. What occurrences, what changes in the drama of Joseph's life, all proclaiming the wisdom of heaven! What calamities, what sorrows,

what reverses of fortune, what joys, what unexpected disclosures, and what a touching catastrophe! Here are the descendants of Joseph and his brethren, who, after the death of their protector, are depressed into the lowest condition of Egyptian slaves. Yet this is the germ of a nation, whom God has chosen to be the depositaries of the sublimest truths which can interest mankind, and whom he has also chosen to transmit to future ages the knowledge of his wonders and providence. By faith we are interested in the history of this extraordinary race. We trace their improvements and their declensions, their dangers and their security, their revolt and their return. By faith we see them rising, under Solomon, into consequence and power. Jerusalem becomes the metropolis of the east, Solomon the most splendid monarch of his age, and every individual Jew feels something of the importance, which naturally belongs to a citizen of the most favoured nation of the earth. A few years pass over, and this proud people are diminished to a little band of exiles, who are driven, downcast and humbled, into a foreign realm. The vain Hebrew, who once shone in the glittering court of Solomon's successors, and worshipped in the gorgeous temple at Jerusalem, is sitting under the willows, a poor captive, by the streams of Babylon, and singing the Lord's song in a strange land, accompanied by the notes of his melancholy harp. But they are not to become extinct. The promise of God standeth sure. They are yet reserved for great distinctions. Prophecy has pointed steadily, though obscurely, to a wonderful personage, who is to appear among them, and set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. They return to their native land, guided by the same providence which dispersed them; and through years of revolution, and subsequent subjection, present to the eye of faith the wondrous spectacle of a

great people, once so faithless, so fickle, so obstinate as they had been, now awaiting patiently, with a kind of miraculous expectation, which had seized every breast in Judea, for the appearance of a predicted deliverer.

Faith now transports us to the little town of Bethlehem, which is to give birth to the Messiah. We see the bright host of angels illuminating the fields around this favoured village, and, amid the stillness of the night, we hear them praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will towards men, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!

It is faith, which discloses to us the supernatural character, and teaches us the marvellous history of Jesus. It leads us through the miraculous tissue of his short and suffering life on earth. It places us at the foot of his cross, and we see this life of the world, this joy of nations, the hope of Israel, and the light of unborn and unnumbered generations, expiring in the pangs of an accursed crucifixion. We follow the body to the tomb. Faith shows us the faithful women, coming with their spices and ointments to embalm the precious remains of their friend. There is Mary, and Martha, and Mary Magdalene, weeping at the sepulchre. They enter and look, but Jesus is not there. They call to us, christians, Come, see the place where the Lord lay. He is not there, but he has risen. We follow them, with impatience, to the plains of Bethany. There Jesus meets them, and behold, while he is spreading forth his arms and blessing them, a bright cloud receives him out of their sight. But why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go up into heaven.

Faith shows us the infant church struggling with persecution, interests us in all its changes, its depressions and its power, its declension and its reformation, till we see at length, from the handful of disciples, who stood gazing in astonishment at their master ascending into heaven, there is sprung an innumerable multitude of christians, of all people, and nations, and languages; and the religion, which once found shelter in the breasts of only a few unlettered Jews, is now the religion of the civilized world.

These are some of the past events in the dispensations of God's providence, to which faith transports us back through the long vista of a thousand years. How great and interesting are they, when compared with the ordinary occurrences of history! But the invisible things of the passing moment are presented to us, by faith, in a clear and affecting light. We learn, habitually, to see God, the father of all, sitting undisturbed at the head of his works, where nothing escapes his notice, or surprises his precaution. The hairs of our heads, we believe, are numbered by his omniscience; and not a sparrow falls to the ground, but he discovers it; not a lily spreads its solitary beauties to the sun, but he clothes it in its colours; not a blade of grass withers unperceived on the field.

What though, in our times, empires are daily blotted out of being, and the constitution of society seems labouring with convulsions; though the long established boundaries of nations are changing with the changes of the moon, and the records of human transactions present nothing but unexpected elevations and depressions, triumphs and defeats; though the astonishing march of events baffles all your calculations, and sets at nought your sagacity; now, *now* is the moment, when faith will bear you away to the secret place of the Most High, and cover you with the shadow of the Almighty. She assures us,

there is one being, to whom all this mysterious and complicated system of vicissitudes is plain, and who, by the simple motions of his will, guides the conflicting movements of matter and mind steadily to the conclusions he desires: and who comprehends the grand catastrophes of national and imperial contests with the same facility that he discerns the natural termination of an individual's life. To the counsels of such a being as this faith admits us; and where she cannot make us comprehend, she gives us confidence. We trust, and we are safe; for though we see no further than to assure us, that God's views are unobscured by distance, and his throne unshaken by revolutions, it is enough.

But the future realities, which faith discloses, are yet more interesting, more inspiriting, more awakening and awful. Some of them contain consolations, which ages of sorrow would not be able to exhaust, and others bring with them terrors, which ages of security in vice could never entirely efface.

Faith discloses to our view the future condition of society, and cherishes the delightful hope, that the time is approaching, when the mild influences of the gospel of Jesus shall subdue the passions of men, soften the rudeness of the uncivilized, assuage the resentments of the powerful, break the rod of the oppressor, and lift the lowly from the dust; when the lamb shall lie down by the side of the lion, and a little child shall lead them together; when knowledge shall enlighten, virtue ennoble, prosperity cease to corrupt, and peace to enervate the human race.

Faith transports us, also, beyond the successive generations, which now people this portion of the world, to the day, when the caverns of the earth are breaking up, and the tombs are pouring forth their inhabitants, when the sea renders up the dead that are in her vast repositories, and the races of men, who have slept for ages in forgetfulness,

awake to appear before God. Faith places us in the midst of this vast assembly of the reanimated. Small and great are there. The books are opened, and the world are judged, and pass off on each hand towards the region of their final destination. Beyond, we see an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant; and, throned in light inaccessible, we dare even to lift our thoughts to the seat of Jehovah. To the eye of faith hell, also, is open, and destruction hath no covering. But further faith fears to carry us; and we find, too soon for our impatient spirits, that the provinces of faith and imagination are distinct, and that it is too great temerity to venture to confound them.

Thus, my friends, I have attempted to enumerate some of the most remarkable facts, which faith presents to our conceptions. You see, it is the province of this principle of our minds to impress us with the reality of things invisible, whether in past scenes, in present transactions, or in the fathomless abyss of futurity. It is truly the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

If the human mind had been constructed without a principle like this, it would have been always employed about the mere objects of the senses, and the present consciousness of its own existence. The human faculties could never have been improved, and the capacity of intelligence would have been for ever shrunk up within boundaries as narrow as those, which limit the brutal creation. Let us bless God, then, that he has, to the capabilities of the human mind, added all the advantages of religious faith, so that we can live as if we saw things which are invisible, that we can reap delight from the contemplation of his character, triumph in the past displays of his wisdom, trust unreservedly in the present operations of his hand, and enjoy the delights

of religious anticipation. By this principle eternity links itself to time, and there is no chasm in our existence. Heaven joins itself to earth; and God, the grandest existence, about which our faculties can employ themselves, is no longer the subject of our bewildered reasoning, or the unknown object of our fears, but the hope, the trust, the joy, the salvation of his faithful people.

SERMON IX.

HEB. XI. 1.

NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

THE next point we are to consider, according to our proposed division of the subject, is the REASONABLENESS of religious faith.

It is a common artifice of those, who wish to depreciate the value of this essential principle of a christian's life, to represent faith as something opposed to reason. So far is this from being true, that faith is, in fact, the most reasonable thing in the world; and, wherever religion is not concerned, the universal practice of mankind evinces, that such a principle is indispensable to the most common exercise of the understanding, and to the daily conduct of life. Faith is reasonable, because it is the involuntary homage which the mind pays to the preponderance of evidence. Faith, that is not founded on testimony, is no longer faith.

You, for example, believe that you have been supernaturally furnished with the sentiments you entertain, but if you cannot explain to others the evidence on which you rest this assurance, be not surprised, if they continue incredulous. You *may* have been instructed in dreams, or been favoured with happy

visions of a disordered fancy, which have impressed you with many interesting, and even rational convictions, beyond the reach of ordinary minds; but as you offer no external testimony in support of your imagined consciousness, you must not expect to impart your confidence, however just it may be, to those who have not been favoured with like illuminations, and perhaps you will not avoid the imputation of enthusiasm.

You may imagine also, that, by the special grace of God, a living principle of faith has been at some former time communicated to your mind, previously to which, all the evidence and reasoning in the world was ineffectual to your conversion. This may be; but it is not the faith of which we are discoursing, and which it is our province to recommend and corroborate. As such faith does not *originate* in the evidence of testimony, we could not increase it by the usual increase of probability. Far be it from us to deny, that you may cherish some of the most valuable truths in religion, and even feel their sanctifying influence upon your temper, without being able to exhibit any proper evidence on which you receive them. A historian, provided with a few data, might, in some obscure portion of his annals, imagine and construct a narrative not very remote from the truth of facts, but as this is not the *usual* way of writing history, so it would not be the most effectual method of enlightening the reader, nor of obtaining confidence and credit.

As it is *sufficient evidence* only, on which a rational faith can be supported, so if the whole of this evidence is intelligibly presented to a sound understanding, it will not fail to command belief. An eye, not affected by disease, easily distinguishes colours; and we unavoidably believe the existence of the objects within the sphere of its vision. Now the laws of moral probability are just as sure as the laws of

vision. That the same exhibition of facts, or the same process of reasoning, does not produce equal conviction on different minds, is not more surprising than that the same glasses will not make objects equally distinct to eyes differently affected. But to conclude, from this variety of effect, that the objects presented do not exist, or that the laws of vision are ill-founded and absurd, would be no more unreasonable than to assume the folly of religious faith, or to doubt the rational conviction of a pious and impartial inquirer, merely because the whole world are not believers. All the glasses in the universe will not make objects discernible by an eye over which a film has grown; and all the evidence in the world will sometimes fail to subdue the prejudices of the corrupt, or to arrest the attention of the heedless. Who sees not, that on subjects of politics, of literature, of common speculation, and even of common prudence, some men are feebly affected by what appears to us palpable proof. Facts are nothing in the march of party spirit. Probability is less than nothing in the encounter with passion and prejudice. Surely, then, it is not extraordinary, that the truths of religion are rejected by one man with contempt, while they are embraced by another with enthusiasm.

We cannot wonder, that the evidences, on which our christian faith is built, do not produce universal conviction, when we remember, that this is a religion, which contradicts many of the selfish propensities of the heart, and is at war with all the lusts to which we are habitually enslaved. It is a religion, which condemns many of our habits, and requires us to moderate our growing attachment to a world we cannot bear to leave; a religion, which often opposes our passions, which shows us the folly of our fondest expectations, which alarms our sleeping fears, undervalues the objects of our estimation, requires the surrender of our prejudices, and makes it necessary for

us to be in readiness to yield up even our comforts and our life. Astonishing would it be, indeed, if a system like this should command universal belief, if prejudice should have nothing to object, captiousness nothing to cavil at, and indifference no excuses. Astonishing, indeed, would it be, if the evidences of such a revelation should be received, with equal facility, by the worldly and the spiritual, the careless and the inquisitive, the proud and the humble, the ambitious and the unaspiring, the man immersed in pleasure and dissipation, and the man who has been long disciplined in the school of disappointment and affliction.

Neither is religious faith unreasonable, because it includes miraculous events, nor because it embraces a series of truths, which no individual reason could have ascertained, or of which it may not, even now, see the necessity. It is on this account, however, that we so often hear faith opposed to reason; but, on the same principle, faith in any extraordinary occurrence would be opposed to reason. The only objection to the credibility of miracles is, that they are contrary to general experience; for to say, that they are contrary to universal experience, is to assume the very fact in question. Because they are supernatural, no testimony, it is maintained, can make it reasonable to believe them. This would not be just, even if the miracles which religious faith embraces were separate, insulated facts, which had no connexions with any other interesting truths; much less when they make part of a grand system, altogether worthy the interposition of God to establish.

The extraordinary nature of miraculous facts, considered by themselves, is, it is true, a presumption against them, but a presumption, which sufficient testimony ought as fairly to remove, as it does remove the previous improbability of ordinary facts, not supernatural. A man, born and living within the

tropics, who had never seen water congealed, would no doubt think it a very strange story, if a traveller from the north should assure him, that the same substance, which he had always seen liquid, was every year, in other countries, converted into a solid mass capable of sustaining the greatest weights. What could more decisively contradict all the experience of the tropical inhabitant, and even the experience of those with whom he had always been connected? Yet should we not think it very unreasonable, if he should, in this case, persist in discrediting the testimony even of a single man, whose veracity he had no reason to suspect, and much more, if he should persist in opposition to the concurrent and continually increasing testimony of numbers? Let this be an illustration of the reasonableness of your faith in miracles.

As it respects the credibility of revelation, you have this alternative. Will you believe, that the pure system of christian faith, which appeared eighteen hundred years ago, in one of the obscurest regions of the Roman empire, at the moment of the highest mental cultivation and of the lowest moral degeneracy, which superseded at once all the curious fabrics of pagan philosophy, which spread almost instantaneously through the civilized world in opposition to the prejudices, the pride and the persecution of the times, which has already had the most beneficial influence on society, and been the source of almost all the melioration of the human character, and which is now the chief support of the harmony, the domestic happiness, the morals and the intellectual improvement of the best part of the world—will you believe, I say, that this system originated in the unaided reflections of twelve Jewish fishermen on the sea of Galilee, with the son of a carpenter at their head? Or will you admit a supposition, which solves all the wonders of this case.

which accounts at once for the perfection of the system, and the miracle of its propagation,—that Jesus was, as he professed to be, the prophet of God, and that his apostles were, as they declared, empowered to perform the miracles, which subdued the incredulity of the world. I appeal to you, ye departed masters of pagan wisdom, Plato, Socrates, Cicero, which of these alternatives is the most rational, the most worthy of a philosophical assent? Your systems have passed away, like the light clouds, which chase one another over the hemisphere; but the gospel of Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, pursues its equal and luminous career, uninterrupted and unobscured. Surely, if a miracle of the New Testament is incredible, what will you say of the enormous faith of a man, who believes in that monster of improbability, which we have described, the simply human origin and progress of christianity?

Neither is religious faith unreasonable, because it brings us acquainted with truths, which our individual reasonings would not have ascertained, or which far transcend the previous conceptions of our minds. Indeed, it is absurd to suppose, that God has interrupted the order of nature to inform us of nothing but what we knew before, or might as well have known without his interference. Besides, if these truths were attainable to the few who think, by a long process of inquiry, and even to the many, after some slow advances in the intellectual condition of society, still it would be worthy of God to anticipate this gradual discovery, because, from the condition of humanity, truths interesting to thousands, but within the actual reach of few, must, in order to be effectual, be received upon authority.

But, because you, in your solitary reasonings, have not been able to attain to those conclusions, which others have long since embraced by religious faith, will you, on this account, maintain, that the faith

of the other is irrational? Would it not be presumptuous in an ignorant man to deny, in opposition to the authority of those instructed observers, whose knowledge he has reason to admit, that Saturn is surrounded with a ring, merely because, with his naked eye, he has in vain tried to discover such an appearance? Though it is not improbable, that this man, in some future and far remote stage of his existence, may be transported to this distant sphere, and actually observe this circle, which he will not now credit on the testimony of the astronomer, yet can he be justified in continuing incredulous, because he hopes for this enlargement of his powers? Further, if this man should invariably neglect every opportunity, which was presented to him, of looking through a telescope, or should obstinately persist in his incredulity, after the laws of vision, the operation of glasses, and nature of the planetary system had been sufficiently explained to him, should we hesitate to pronounce him presumptuous or mad? Should we not leave him to his ignorance and self-sufficiency; and smile to find such a man undertaking to pour contempt upon the credulous astronomer, who believes in the gross absurdity of a circle round a planet, which, this skeptic might safely say, nobody had ever seen?

Thus we may fairly conclude, that it is one of the highest acts of reason to believe, upon proper authority, many truths, which we cannot directly deduce from our former knowledge, or which we find it difficult to connect with any of our customary conclusions. It is to be expected, that revelation should furnish us with many propositions, of which we had not before conceived, for revelation is to the world at large, what education is to the individual. A child must receive a thousand truths upon authority, which may be the subject of future explanation, or which may answer their purpose, even without

any explanation. He sees not, it is true, the necessity of learning rules, of which he cannot understand the reason; but the instructer well knows, that, in order to make any progress in his studies, he must receive, at first, certain statements implicitly, and wait for higher advances in knowledge, before the reason and importance of this elementary faith can be discovered to his understanding. And what are we, my friends, in view of the comprehensive wisdom of God, but children in the earliest stages of being? What is the great community of christians, but one of the innumerable schools in the vast plan, which God has instituted for the education of various intelligences? The law of Moses, we are told by the apostle, was but a schoolmaster to teach a single nation the alphabet of religious knowledge; and what is christianity, but another, though a more advanced elementary system, adapted to the comprehension and improvement of the whole human race? Faith alone gains us admission to its advantages; and though there are doctrines in its pages, which at present baffle much of the inquisitiveness of an active mind, and appear extraordinary to an intellect, proud of its partial discoveries, yet beware of rejecting them, lest those very portions of your religion, which now most excruciate your understanding, and exercise your faith, should prove essential to your improvement in the higher courses of spiritual and intellectual instruction. Jesus is not a master, who requires you to believe any thing, of which you see clearly the absurdity; though his candid disciples receive much, of which they know not the reason, and of which, at first, they did not see all the applications, the tendencies, and the importance.

Having thus seen, that faith is a principle, on which we act in all the affairs of common prudence, a principle, which lies at the root of every species of

education, scientific, moral and religious, a principle, without which the business of human life could not go on for a single day, we will now venture to assert, that, of every species of incredulity, *religious* unbelief is infinitely the most irrational. And why? Because the stake is so immense. Between the two propositions, that the gospel is true, and that it is false, what a fearful chasm! The unsettled reason hovers over it in dismay. I say, that religious faith is infinitely reasonable, because the objects it embraces are of such unparalleled grandeur and consequence. Whenever, in the course of your business, a prospect of extraordinary gain presents itself, you are fairly authorized to make immediate provision to avail yourself of it, upon a degree of probability, which, in common cases, and for common profits, would be called, at least, uncertainty. Here, however, your faith would be wise in verging strongly towards presumption. Again, if you had received a hint of the possible approach of some dreadful evil, would you not think yourself justified in using the utmost care and labour to avoid it, upon a degree of information and assurance, which, in ordinary cases, you would hardly think worthy of your consideration? What think you, then, of the loss of an immortal soul? And what think you of the gain of eternity? Is it impossible, is it incredible, nay, is it improbable? If it is even supposable, that there is any thing beyond these objects of our senses—if our faith has led us so far as to conclude, that there is a God, and waits to believe, that this God has interposed to assure us, that the relation of accountableness to him shall never be dissolved, not even by a change, dreadful as death itself,—if it is supposable, that a world, which is now invisible, may one day burst upon our vision, and if in that world our ultimate happiness or misery are to be found, surely it is an act of the highest reason, as well as of the most

ordinary prudence, to determine, in relation to a world of such inconceivable interest, even upon much less evidence than we usually require in those ordinary transactions, whose consequences terminate in this life. For we have already shown you, that the principle of faith, on which we frame our conduct, with reference to the futurities of this earthly scene, is, in its nature, the same with that on which we would persuade you to act, with respect to the grand futurities of a life to come. If, indeed, your belief or unbelief could, for a moment, affect the sublime truths and these approaching events, it would perhaps be lawful to hesitate long and ponder deeply; but, standing as we do, on the brink of eternity, if there is any evidence of facts and doctrines relating to it, it is madness to continue to reject the system, which contains them, merely because they have not the evidence of sense and consciousness, when the very nature of the case admits nothing but probability and faith.

SERMON X.

HEB. XI. 1.

NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

HAVING considered the objects, and the reasonableness of religious faith, it now remains to say something of its IMPORTANCE.

The value of religious faith principally results from two circumstances—from the fears it excites, and from the consolations it affords.

In the ordinary conduct of government, and to the well-being of society, some kind of faith is essential. Belief in the superintendence of invisible powers is not peculiar to religion. It is found in every man, who conscientiously submits to the government under which he lives; for how few of the subjects of any extensive empire have ever seen their rulers? Their authority, their edicts, their measures, nay, their very existence, are almost exclusively objects of faith. Suppose the assassin were to fear nothing but the instrument of punishment, or the thief were permitted to demand a strict demonstration of the authority of the officer who arrested him, think you society would long sustain the consequences of so great incredulity? Every man would become his own avenger, and we should revert to the barbarous independence of uni-

versal democracy. If, too, the sober part only of the community should require, that every law should be promulgated in their hearing, or that their rulers should constantly live under their ocular inspection, it is easy to foresee, that the affairs of human society would fall into the utmost confusion. We must, therefore, in the ordinary state of society, live, as seeing those that are invisible.

The fear, which faith awakens, is the foundation of the most necessary prudence. It is faith, which warns us of the invisible and approaching misfortunes, to which we are daily exposed; it is faith, which keeps up a continual, and sometimes painful interest in the dangers, which threaten the community. Without this we should rush as inconsiderately into the abode of foreign pestilence, as we now walk the streets of our own city; and be as unprepared for an approaching war, as for an impending earthquake. If we were to wait, till we could satisfy our own personal experience, in regard to some of the most common evils of life, we should find, that our ruin was accomplished, ere the remedy was provided. The life of children is a continual exercise of faith. The prudence of parents is employed in foreseeing dangers, which the short-sightedness of the child must believe upon authority. Without filial confidence, which is only another name for faith, not one of the generations of men could hardly have reached the maturity of manhood; each successive race would profit nothing from the experience of its predecessors; and even if it were possible to continue the human species without a principle of faith, the world would have remained, to the present day, in a state of infantile ignorance, exposure and imbecility. What then! is it of so much importance, that the years of minority should be so carefully provided with this principle to secure it against the evils of present inexperience; and is it of none, that the full-grown

understanding should be admonished of the alarming disclosures, which another world will make of a retributive power? Is it of no importance, that the conscience of the wicked should be awakened, before his senses tell him, that he is in anguish? Shall the narrow policy of civil government, and the feebleness of temporal punishments, be left to maintain, unsupported, the order of society? Is it of so much consequence, that, while he lives here, man should be aware of his mortality, and be provided against death, the inevitable and universal lot of mortal creatures; and of none, that he should suspect his immortality, and extend his views to the tribunal of his Judge? Shall man tremble so much at the thought of dying; and know nothing of the dread of punishment? Is it of no importance for the selfish man to know, that, by the interested pleasures in which he is absorbed, he is surely defeating his own aims, however successful they may have been? Shall the indolent, the luxurious, the dead in sensuality, the avaricious, the hard-hearted, go on accumulating wrath, and hardening their consciences by unbelief? Because we cannot be transported to the regions of future suffering, and witness the intensity of the torment, shall we rush, with all our sins upon our head, into that community of woe, and learn first by experience what we would not receive upon credit? Thank God! that such is the want, which individuals and society feel of a principle like this, that the imagination supplies it, where the reason cannot attain to undoubting conviction. Legislators have always invented something, like what revelation discloses; and the barbarous faith of the early ages has supplied, in almost every country, something, which has served the purposes of providence, till the cultivated mind was ready for the fulness of God's communications.

In the second place, the value of faith may be estimated from the consolations it affords.

Who would look back upon the history of the world with the eye of incredulity, after having once read it with the eye of faith? To the man of faith it is the story of God's operations. To the unbeliever it is only the record of the strange sports of a race of agents, as uncontrolled, as they are unaccountable. To the man of faith every portion of history is part of a vast plan, conceived, ages ago, in the mind of omnipotence, which has been fitted precisely to the period it was intended to occupy. The whole series of events forms a magnificent and symmetrical fabric to the eye of pious contemplation; and though the dome be in the clouds, and the top, from its loftiness, be indiscernible to mortal vision, yet the foundations are so deep and solid, that we are sure they are intended to support something permanent and grand. To the skeptic all the events of all the ages of the world are but a scattered crowd of useless and indigested materials. In his mind all is darkness, all is incomprehensible. The light of prophecy illuminates not to him the obscurity of ancient annals. He sees in them neither design nor operation, neither tendencies nor conclusions. To him the wonderful knowledge of one people is just as interesting, as the desperate ignorance of another. In the deliverance, which God has sometimes wrought for the oppressed, he sees nothing but the fact; and in the oppression and decline of haughty empires, nothing but the common accidents of national fortune. Going about to account for events, according to what he calls general laws, he never for a moment considers, that all laws, whether physical, political, or moral, imply a legislator, and are contrived to serve some purpose. Because he cannot always, by his short-sighted vision, discover the tendencies of the mighty events, of which this earth

has been the theatre, he looks on the drama of existence around him as proceeding without a plan. Is that principle, then, of no importance, which raises man above what his eyes see, or his ears hear, or his touch feels, at present, and shows him the vast chain of human events, fastened eternally to the throne of God, and returning, after embracing the universe, again to link itself to the footstool of omnipotence?

Would you know the value of this principle of faith to the bereaved? Go, and follow a corpse to the grave. See the body deposited there, and hear the earth thrown in upon all that remains of your friend. Return now, if you will, and brood over the lesson, which your senses have given you, and derive from it what consolation you can. You have learned nothing but an unconsoling fact. No voice of comfort issues from the tomb. All is still there, and blank and lifeless, and has been so for ages. You see nothing but bodies dissolving and successively mingling with the clods, which cover them, the grass growing over the spot, and the trees waving in sullen majesty over this region of eternal silence. And what is there more? Nothing—Come, faith, and people these deserts! Come, and reanimate these regions of forgetfulness! Mothers! take again your children to your arms, for they are living. Sons! your aged parents are coming forth in the vigour of regenerated years. Friends! behold, your dearest connexions are waiting to embrace you. The tombs are burst. Generations, long since lost in slumbers, are awaking. They are coming from the east and the west, from the north and from the south, to constitute the community of the blessed.

But it is not in the loss of friends alone, that faith furnishes consolations, which are inestimable. With a man of faith not an affliction is lost, not a change is unimproved. He studies even his own history with

pleasure, and finds it full of instruction. The dark passages of his life are illuminated with hope; and he sees, that, although he has passed through many dreary defiles, yet they have opened at last into brighter regions of existence. He recals, with a species of wondering gratitude, periods of his life, when all its events seemed to conspire against him. Hemmed in by straitened circumstances, wearied with repeated blows of unexpected misfortune, and exhausted with the painful anticipation of more, he recollects years, when the ordinary love of life could not have retained him in the world. Many a time he might have wished to lay down his being in disgust, had not something more than the senses provide us with kept up the elasticity of his mind. He yet lives, and has found, that light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The man of faith discovers some gracious purpose in every combination of circumstances. Wherever he finds himself, he knows that he has a destination—he has, therefore, a duty. Every event has, in his eye, a tendency and an aim. Nothing is accidental, nothing without a purpose, nothing unattended with benevolent consequences. Every thing on earth is probationary, nothing ultimate. He is poor—perhaps his plans have been defeated—he finds it difficult to provide for the exigencies of life—sickness is permitted to invade the quiet of his household—long confinement imprisons his activity, and cuts short the exertions, on which so many depend—something apparently unlucky mars his best plans—new failures and embarrassments among his friends present themselves, and throw additional obstructions in his way—the world look on, and say, all these things are against him. Some wait coolly for the hour, when he shall sink under the complicated embarrassments of his cruel fortune. Others, of a kinder spirit, regard him with compassion, and wonder how he can sustain such a variety

of woe. A few there are, a very few I fear, who can understand something of the serenity of his mind, and comprehend something of the nature of his fortitude. There are those, whose sympathetic piety can read and interpret the characters of resignation on his brow. There are those, in fine, who have felt the influence of faith.

In this influence there is nothing mysterious, nothing romantic, nothing of which the highest reason may be ashamed. It shows the christian his God, in all the mild majesty of his parental character. It shows you God, disposing in still and benevolent wisdom the events of every individual's life, pressing the pious spirit with the weight of calamity to increase the elasticity of the mind, producing characters of unexpected worth by unexpected misfortune, invigorating certain virtues by peculiar probations, thus breaking the fetters which bind us to temporal things, and

> From seeming evil still educing good,
> And better thence again, and better still,
> In infinite progression.

When the sun of the believer's hopes, according to common calculations, is set, to the eye of faith it is still visible. When much of the rest of the world is in darkness, the high ground of faith is illuminated with the brightness of religious consolation.

Come, now, my incredulous friends, and follow me to the bed of the dying believer. Would you see, in what peace a christian can die? Watch the last gleams of thought, which stream from his dying eyes. Do you see any thing like apprehension? The world, it is true, begins to shut in. The shadows of evening collect around his senses. A dark mist thickens and rests upon the objects, which have hitherto engaged his observation. The countenances of his friends become more and more indistinct. The sweet expressions of love and friendship are no

longer intelligible. His ear wakes no more at the well-known voice of his children, and the soothing accents of tender affection die away, unheard, upon his decaying senses. To him the spectacle of human life is drawing to its close, and the curtain is descending, which shuts out this earth, its actors, and its scenes. He is no longer interested in all that is done under the sun. O! that I could now open to you the recesses of his soul; that I could reveal to you the light, which darts into the chambers of his understanding. He approaches the world, which he has so long seen in faith. The imagination now collects its diminished strength, and the eye of faith opens wide. Friends! do not stand, thus fixed in sorrow, around this bed of death. Why are you so still and silent? Fear not to move—you cannot disturb the last visions, which entrance this holy spirit. Your lamentations break not in upon the songs of seraphs, which enwrap his hearing in ecstasy. Crowd, if you choose, around his couch—he heeds you not—already he sees the spirits of the just advancing together to receive a kindred soul. Press him not with importunities; urge him not with alleviations. Think you he wants now these tones of mortal voices—these material, these gross consolations? No! He is going to add another to the myriads of the just, that are every moment crowding into the portals of heaven! He is entering on a nobler life. He leaves you—he leaves *you*, weeping children of mortality, to grope about a little longer among the miseries and sensualities of a worldly life. Already he cries to you from the regions of bliss. Will you not join him there? Will you not taste the sublime joys of faith? There are your predecessors in virtue; there, too, are places left for your contemporaries. There are seats for you in the assembly of the just made perfect, in the innumerable company of angels, where is Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and God, the judge of all.

SERMON XI.

2 PETER III. 15, 16.

EVEN AS OUR BELOVED BROTHER PAUL, ALSO, ACCORDING TO THE WISDOM GIVEN UNTO HIM, HATH WRITTEN UNTO YOU, AS ALSO IN ALL HIS EPISTLES, SPEAKING IN THEM OF THESE THINGS, IN WHICH ARE SOME THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD, WHICH THEY THAT ARE UNLEARNED AND UNSTABLE WREST, AS THEY DO ALSO THE OTHER SCRIPTURES, UNTO THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION.

THIS passage is a remarkable testimony of one apostle to the character and writings of another. It proves, that, at the time Peter wrote, some epistles of Paul existed; and intimates, that they were written according to a kind of wisdom, which he had supernaturally received. It proves, also, that they were considered of so much authority, as to be dignified with the name of scriptures, which is a title equivalent to that of sacred writing. This passage declares, also, that, from some cause, either in the writer or the subject, there were some things in these epistles hard to be understood, and likely to be perverted.

In order to understand the unconnected writings of any person, written at a remote period, and in a foreign language, the character of the writer, the opinions that prevailed in his time, his object in writing, and every circumstance peculiar to his situation, must be taken into consideration, before we can be sure of

having reached the whole of his meaning. This is more especially necessary in reading the epistles of Paul, from circumstances, which shall be presently mentioned. It is my present design to give you, in the first place, the history and character of this apostle, and then to consider the causes of that obscurity in his writings, of which Peter complains.

His history, after his conversion, is more detailed than that of any other apostle, and this, too, by the pen of his companion, Luke, an excellent narrator. This part of Paul's life, which is so minutely recorded in the Acts, we shall not include in our present survey, as it may be so easily read, and in so orderly a narrative. Those portions of his life, which tend most to illustrate his character, are his conduct before his conversion, and the consequences of that remarkable event. We shall intersperse the narrative with occasional remarks.

In the history of Paul we have two different men to describe, the persecutor and the apostle. Nothing can be imagined more complete, than the change of views in this apostle, yet he preserves, through the whole of his life, what may be called the original stamina of his character. He was born at Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a place by no means obscure, but rather distinguished for the pure and flourishing condition of Greek literature, among its citizens. Paul's parents were Jews, who had probably obtained, by the favour of Augustus, the freedom of the city of Rome. Hence Paul, though a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, declares, that he was born a Roman citizen. His father was a Pharisee, the most rigid of the Jewish sects; and he seems to have taken care, that his son should be educated in all the severity of the order, and furnished with that kind of learning, which then abounded among the Jews, consisting in a knowledge of the traditions of the law, and a thousand false and superstitious notions, which it

was then thought the perfection of science to understand, and of which we have some specimens remaining in the Jewish writings of that age. Every thing in Paul's education was calculated to foster a strong prejudice against Jesus and christianity, for if there was any system on earth, to which Christ's religion was particularly opposed, it was the pharisaism of that period. He was placed under the instruction of Gamaliel, a celebrated Jewish doctor, from whom Paul might have learned moderation, at least as far as his temper would have admitted moderation in any thing; but, as soon as the persecution of the christians commenced, we find him among the foremost of those, who were engaged in exterminating the followers of Jesus. His early prejudices in favour of his own sect, the pride of his learning, the consciousness of talents, his reverence for the rabbis, whom he called his masters, and especially a mistaken zeal for God, actuated this young scholar; and he comes from the feet of Gamaliel to assist at the stoning of Stephen, and is afterwards busily engaged in the arrest, trial and punishment of christians, wherever he could find them. The ground of opposition to the christians, in this early age, was, that they maintained Jesus to be the Messiah, a person, who, in the opinion of every Jew, was yet dead, after suffering the fate of a malefactor. It was regarded as a species of blasphemy, to maintain the claims of such a person to such a character; and Paul, no doubt, thought himself acting an honourable, or at least a conscientious part, in seizing and punishing, wherever he could find them, those who dared to profess such an offensive belief. His zeal for every thing, connected with the honour of his sect and nation, and with the glory of God, transported him to these extremes of fanaticism. There is nothing in Paul's character before his conversion, which can lead us to suppose, that he was either

habitually cruel, selfish, artful, ambitious, or corrupt. There is nothing, which impeaches his integrity, or which ought to render us suspicious of his moral character. He was only actuated by a species of mistaken zeal, which has been common enough in every age. There is no sufficient reason for supposing, that he had ever seen our Lord, or his miracles; nor that he was acquainted with the apostles, or their preaching, before he engaged in this violent career. If, before this time, he had been at the school of Gamaliel, from the retired life of the Jewish scholar, there is very little reason to suppose, that he could have known much of the new religion. He had come from the schools full of Jewish learning and Jewish pride. When he entered into public life, he had taken up the common reports and prejudices respecting Jesus and his followers; and, without much inquiry into the subject, he thought he should signalize himself and his order, and gratify the Pharisees, by the persecution of the christians.

But God, whose purposes are far beyond our ken, and whose means are infinitely various, had marked out this young man for the most eminent apostle of the faith, which he was now intent upon exterminating. If we suppose Paul's character such as I have represented it to be, uncorrupt, disinterested, and void of malice, his heart warmed by a zeal for what he imagined to be God's truth, and his head heated by religious prejudices, there wanted nothing but to show to this young man, by the irresistible evidence of his senses, that this very Jesus, whom he regarded as a crucified, detestable malefactor, was really alive in power, and risen from the dead, to turn the whole current of his conduct, sentiments and character. This mercy God granted him, and at a time, too, when his mind was yet open to conviction, and his heart not yet hardened by the pride of system, or by a long life of persecuting habits. As he was going

down to Damascus, with a commission from the rulers of his nation, to seize and bring to Jerusalem all whom he could find bearing the name of christians, Jesus appears to him. In a moment truth bursts upon his mind, and he sinks to the earth in all the humility and terrour of irresistible conviction. His senses are overpowered, his purpose fails, his situation appears to him, as it would to any honest and religious man, upon the discovery of such a fact, and oppresses him with inconceivable remorse. Trembling and astonished, he says, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? In an instant his views are all changed; and, from this hour, nothing can exceed his sense of his former unworthiness, and his ardour in the cause of that Jesus, whom he before thought to be dead, and whose disciples he considered it an honour to exterminate. This miracle alone was wanting to convert a man of Paul's age and temperament, a man open to conviction, eager in embracing any new sentiment, which he thought to be truth, and who now obtained, by God's mercy, that conviction which he needed. From this hour, the darling object of his life was to repair, if possible, the injuries, which he had committed against Jesus and his cause. The memory of his former conduct, and his sense of God's mercy, never deserted him; but he sacredly devotes a long and laborious life to propagate that faith, which he had been destroying. Well might he extol the unsearchable riches of God's mercy. Last of all, says he, Jesus was seen by me, also, as by one born out of due time; for I am the least of the apostles, and am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

I cannot now pursue the reflections, which this remarkable case suggests. You are sensible, that it is an argument for the truth of our religion, which is not to be resisted. It is proper to remind you, however, that it was an indispensable requisite of an apostle,

that he should have seen our Saviour in person, after his resurrection, and have received his commission immediately from him. This appears to be the distinguishing qualification of the apostolical office. Paul, now possessing it, takes the place in the number of the twelve, which was left vacant by the death of Judas. The manner, then, of Paul's conversion, by the personal appearance of our Saviour, thus appears peculiarly proper, and even necessary. A thousand other means might have been used, merely to convert him, but this appears to have been chosen with a view to that office, for which God especially designed him, the apostleship of the Gentiles. It has been suggested, and, perhaps, with some appearance of truth, that, when the eleven judged it necessary to supply the place of Judas, and chose Matthias by lot, they did not act by the direction of the Holy Spirit, which was not yet given, but merely by dictates of human prudence, which, on that occasion, seems to have carried them too far. No man, or body of men, could, by their designation, confer an office of such authority as this, which was to bind the consciences of others. It was necessary, that the candidate should receive his commission and supernatural powers from Jesus himself. Thus our Lord seems to have superseded the election of Matthias, and, with a view to the conversion of the Gentiles, to have appointed Paul, the person, perhaps, of all others in Jerusalem, best qualified by his learning, resolution and the circumstances of his former life, for this arduous employment.

Paul proceeds to Damascus; but enters it, how different a man!—humble, penitent, teachable, hardly daring to lift up his eyes to heaven. Here he is kindly received by Ananias, a disciple of Jesus, who restores to him his sight, which he had lost by the brightness of the vision of Jesus, and baptizes him into the profession of christianity. He does not re-

turn to Jerusalem, where he would have been in the utmost danger from the resentment of his employers; but retires into Arabia, where he probably was employed in gaining a more comprehensive knowledge of the christian faith, by successive revelations, and by a more diligent study of the Jewish scriptures, with reference to the proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus. He afterwards returns; and I need not recount to you the number of his services, the dangers he encountered, the success he obtained, or the death to which he at last submitted in the cause of Christ. The Acts, written by his companion Luke, and his own epistles, give us an exact and interesting detail of his life; and surely no man, after reading his history and his letters, but must exclaim, this was a man born for great purposes! The conversion and history of Paul are not to be accounted for but by the interposition of God.

In summing up the traits of Paul's character, you will observe, how singularly he was qualified for that office, to which he was especially destined, the apostleship of the Gentiles throughout the Roman empire. He was the only one of the apostles, who appears to have had what may be called a liberal education, or, at least, who had any tincture of the literature and philosophy of the Greeks. But his mind, naturally powerful, was not only furnished with the Jewish learning of the age, but discovers, also, an intimate acquaintance with the genius and science of the Gentiles. He appears, also, more than any other of the apostles, to be fond of argumentation, and powerfully eloquent; two qualities, which could not fail to arrest the attention of those to whom he was sent. The mission, which was given him, demanded not only a strength of genius like his, but an ardour, which no discouragement should quench, a resolution, which no dangers should overthrow, a spirit of laborious perseverance, and indefatigable activity, which should

keep him almost perpetually in motion, and carry him over an immense tract of country, and in addition to this a spirit of disinterestedness, which should never appear to be mingled with considerations of personal convenience or indulgence. With these qualities he united a prudence, which has seldom been equalled, a prudence absolutely necessary to a teacher, who had so many conflicting interests to unite, so many different tempers to conciliate, so many churches to collect, advise and regulate, so many unforeseen difficulties to provide for, so many artifices to escape or to defeat. The warmth of his private affections were also necessary to secure to him personal friends, whose hospitality he needed in the course of his travels; and the publicity of his former character, as a persecutor, was of importance, to give every possible weight to his testimony respecting the great fact, which caused his conversion. If there ever was a man calculated, at the same time, to manage the opposite prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, if there was ever a man made for a difficult service, in the most difficult of times, it was Paul. Every thing in Jewish tradition, scripture history, and Gentile philosophy, was at his command. He was perfectly acquainted with the state and genius of his own nation, at the same time that he discovered a quick and thorough comprehension of the characters of individuals. In short, he was a man, of whom any nation, or any cause might have been proud. But what was his opinion of himself? To me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace of apostleship given, to me, who am not worthy to be called one of the apostles, because I persecuted the church. This was the man, to whom the inhabitants of Lystra were about to offer sacrifices, as to a God.

I will close this division of my subject with two reflections.

1. In the first place, notwithstanding the extreme ardour of this apostle's imagination, nothing, which he has left us, discovers any thing of fanatical delusion. So far from possessing that pride, and spiritual self-sufficiency, which are almost invariably the characteristics of fanatics, he speaks of the communications, which had been made to him, in the most unassuming terms, and even with manifest reluctance. He is induced only by the vaunting of one of his Corinthian opponents to say any thing of the visions, with which he had been favoured, and he dwells only on that miraculous part of his conversion, on which every thing in his preaching depended. It is yet more remarkable, that he does not appeal for the proof of his apostolical authority to any visions, trances, or even divine communications, which must be believed only on his own testimony, but to the actual and sensible miracles, which he had wrought, and of which any impartial person could judge as well as himself. Has this been the mode of modern enthusiasts? Your own reading and observation will answer for me.

Though he was a man of such a spiritual and devotional taste, yet his head seems never to be inflamed with any impracticable notions of holiness. His morality is perfectly sound, rational, and practicable, without any of the austerities, to which, from his education among the Pharisees, we should naturally have supposed him inclined. His determinations about doubts of conscience discover the most sensible and discriminating liberality. His recommendations of prudence, and, indeed, all his admonitions respecting little matters, given to his superstitious countrymen, and adapted to the state of the churches, discover a mind infinitely removed from any thing like extravagance. When, too, was it ever known, that a fanatic would take the pains to make and point out such careful and honest distinctions,

as Paul has done, between the operations of his own mind and the suggestions of inspiration? Here I cannot resist transcribing some remarks of Lord Lyttleton, on the preference, which St. Paul gives to sincere rectitude of principle, above every other religious accomplishment. After quoting the passage in the thirteenth of Corinthians, where Paul prefers charity to every gift and miraculous quality, he adds: "Is this the language of enthusiasm? Did ever enthusiast prefer that universal benevolence, which comprehends all moral virtues, and which, as appears by the following verses, is meant by charity here—did ever enthusiast, I say, prefer that benevolence to faith and to miracles, to those religious opinions, which he had embraced, and to those supernatural graces and gifts, which he imagined he had acquired, nay, even to the merit of martyrdom? Is it not the genius of enthusiasm to set moral virtues infinitely below the merit of faith; and of all moral virtues to value that least, which is most particularly enforced by St. Paul, a spirit of candour, moderation and peace? Certainly, neither the temper, nor the opinions of a man, subject to fanatical delusions, are to be found in this passage."

2. The second reflection, which I make, is this. How important must that cause be, which such a man as Paul could maintain with such amazing exertions, such unwearied zeal, through a long life of such discouragements, privations, persecutions and indignities, even to the hour of his martyrdom. It was not the mere assertion of a fact, in which Paul was so engaged. It was not merely to make the world believe, that he had seen Jesus, who had been crucified. It was not the belief of the single, unconnected circumstance of the resurrection of a dead person, which he sacrificed every thing to propagate. Where is the man, who, to establish a mere fact of any kind, would undergo the loss of all that men value in life?

No, my friends, it was the consequences of this fact, which crowded upon his mind as soon as he knew, that Jesus was the Messiah, whom God raised from the dead, consequences, which unfolded themselves far beyond the comprehension of mortals. A sphere of usefulness opened itself to him, worthy of a minister of God. He saw the happiness of the world suspended on the reception of christianity. He found, that the dearest interest of the souls of men were entrusted to him. Loving, as he did, his own nation, the whole extent of their guilt in the crucifixion of Jesus overwhelmed his thoughts; and he appeals to God for the anguish of his mind, when he contemplates the consequences of their unbelief. He saw, too, a scheme of redemption, in which the eternal life of a world was involved. It was salvation, which he preached to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; and it was death, eternal death, which he saw awaiting those, who received not his testimony. Was not this a cause sufficient to awake all the powers of body, of mind, of acting, or of suffering, which he possessed? And, when he saw, too, the rewards, which, as Jesus lived, he would certainly bestow on his adherents, the privations, which he himself endured, shrunk into insignificance. Nothing appeared painful, nothing dangerous, nothing worthy for a moment to be mentioned, as a loss, in comparison of that glory, which awaited him hereafter. And can any man, who really believes the gospel of Jesus, consider it a subject, which admits of indifference? If it is true, it is to every thing else in the world, as much more important as heaven is high above earth, eternity above the present instant, God above man. It is a cause, which cannot be sincerely embraced with insensibility. It is enough to inflame the imagination of the stupid, and warm the heart of the most frigid selfishness. It is the cause of human happiness for ever and ever. In this view, Paul appears

the most rational of men. It is the consequences of that fact, the resurrection of Jesus, which save him from the imputation of madness. He was a martyr to a cause, in which you, and I, and every rational creature, is interested. If Paul was not mistaken, who would not cry out with him, I am persuaded, that the light afflictions of the present moment are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed. For neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The remarks, which have now been offered, will, I hope, furnish you with some general ideas of the character of Paul. If, however, you have carefully read his epistles, you will have a much more correct and lively idea of the man, than by only reading his history in the Acts; for there you have the narrative of another, but, in his epistles, he develops the leading features of his mind, without reserve, and with his own pen. But, from some cause or other, some of these epistles have always been considered more obscure than any other part of the New Testament, and, though many people read them with great piety, and find every thing easy to be understood, according to their own system, such persons, though they may be much edified by their reading, seldom wait to consider, whether their own sense of a passage is really the meaning of St. Paul. Hence it happens, that those men, who do not think much about religion, or who are not able or disposed to employ much time in understanding the scriptures, either utterly neglect the reading of this part of the volume, or turn away in disgust from the book itself, and conclude to take their faith, as they can gather it, from common report.

The difficulties, however, which exist in Paul's epistles, can arise only from our want of sufficient in-

formation as to the state of the times, or from something which is peculiar to his mode of composition. This, at least, is probable, that they do not result from a peculiar obscurity in his ideas, or from any peculiar system of philosophy or religion, which he had adopted. His discourses in the book of Acts, before Felix, and Agrippa, and the Gentile audiences, are perfectly intelligible. From what, then, does this difference arise? Surely only from the difference of our previous information as to the circumstances of the writer, and the subject of his discourse.

In the following remarks, I shall proceed, as was proposed, to state, and, if possible, to illustrate the sources of the obscurity, which particularly attends the apostolical parts of the New Testament. If these remarks should awaken in you an inclination to examine the scriptures with more care, and read them with more impartiality, my purpose will be answered.

1. The first source of obscurity is, that they are private letters, addressed to particular societies, or individuals, upon particular occasions. It is impossible, completely to understand a composition of this epistolary kind, without knowing the occasion, on which it was written, the peculiar circumstances of the writer, and of those to whom it was addressed; and still further, without being acquainted with a thousand little incidents well known to the parties, to which there must be perpetual reference in a familiar correspondence. If, in looking over the papers of some deceased friend, you were to take up, by chance, a letter addressed to him by some correspondent abroad; or, to make a supposition more like the present case, if you were to sit down to read one of the letters of Cicero, without intimately knowing his history, and that of his correspondent, I will venture to say, that you would hardly make sense or meaning of many passages, and perhaps be utterly at a loss as to the whole subject of the commu-

nication. Just so it is with the letters of Paul. From the very nature of this kind of composition, it cannot be so intelligible, as an elementary discourse on any given subject, or a regular narrative of any particular events. Hence I will venture to lay it down as a maxim, that the epistles of Paul cannot be thoroughly understood, without knowing something of the history of the times, the character of the writer, the prevailing prejudices of the age, and the particular purpose, which the writer meant to effect. In the epistles of Paul, he is sometimes answering some question, which has been proposed to him, but without repeating the question; sometimes he refers to particular opponents, who are not mentioned by name; sometimes he lays down propositions, true only as applied to the circumstances of his correspondent; he is sometimes making concessions, dropping hints, suggesting reproofs, and referring to events, all which were perfectly understood by those to whom he wrote, but which, at this distance of time, necessarily appear unintelligible to a careless and uninformed reader. This is not an imperfection in the revelation, because every thing, absolutely necessary to our religious improvement, is too plain to be mistaken; nor is it a reproach to the character of epistolary writing.

2. Another cause of the obscurity of Paul's epistles is, the peculiar genius of the man. His imagination was easily inflamed with the subject, on which he was writing. The motions of his mind were exceedingly rapid, his thoughts crowded one upon another, and, in the heat of composition, he is carried away from the subject he is treating, by some collateral discussion, so that an inattentive reader will not easily discern, where he resumes the thread of his discourse. He sometimes leaves his subject, and breaks out into the most devout and rapturous admiration of the mercy and wisdom of God in the gospel of his Son.

He discovers an ardour of gratitude and joy, which a man must have something of his spirit, in order perfectly to understand. He frequently changes the person, in which he speaks, sometimes using the singular, and then, unexpectedly, the plural; sometimes he adopts, without previous warning, the person and arguments of a Jew, and sometimes of a Gentile, and reasons upon their suppositions, without meaning to adopt them as his own, or to vouch for their truth. His sentences are often encumbered with long parentheses; and nothing can be more inartificial than his mode of writing. He appears to have disregarded, by design, the rules of the orators and rhetoricians of his age, and to have trusted to the importance of his subject, and the energy of his address, rather than to any eloquence of style, or artifice of composition. These difficulties are by no means insuperable. They are rather calculated to stimulate every man, who is really interested in the knowledge of christianity, to study them with more assiduity, impartiality, and prayer for the assistance of God's spirit of wisdom and improvement. Of this, at least, I am sure, that it is one of the rewards, with which God favours the sincere inquirers for his will, that they gain every day some new insight into his records, that they read them with more real satisfaction, and rejoice continually in new discoveries, however trifling they may appear, discoveries relating to the doctrine of eternal life.

3. But the education and peculiar circumstances of Paul contribute, also, to the obscurity of his epistles. Paul was a man, whose head was filled with the Jewish learning of his age; and he, no doubt, writes often like one, whose early notions were formed in the school of Gamaliel. Hence he uses many words in a signification, which it is now extremely difficult to settle. The word, justification, is a remarkable instance of this. It is doubtful, in some

instances, whether he means by it a benefit relating only to this life, or extending to our eternal condition; whether he means only a present privilege, which every man obtained, who made a profession of christianity, or a pardon from God, reaching backward to every preceding offence, and forward to our future acceptance in the world to come. The term, law, is another of similar ambiguity; and it is only by careful attention, that we can determine, in particular passages, whether the apostle means by it the whole Jewish dispensation, or the ceremonial part of it, or that moral law, which is equally obligatory on every rational creature. The terms, faith, death, and many others, might be enumerated, which are undoubtedly used in various acceptations, more or less modified by the peculiar notions of the age, and therefore more or less different from the meaning we assign to them in modern times. There was one controversy, however, in the apostolical age, in which Paul was especially interested, which we must keep in mind during the perusal of his writings, or we shall never attain to a just understanding of his epistles, especially of those to the Romans and Galatians. It was this. The Jews, you well know, were, at first, the only converts to christianity. They embraced it with all their native prejudices in favour of the perpetuity of their economy, and bigoted in the presumption, that they were the peculiar people of God. In their opinion, all the rest of the world was out of the pale of salvation. They received christianity merely as a supplement to their own religion; and it was long before it was considered by them in any other light, than as a modification of Judaism. Hence, retaining, as they did, these Jewish notions, they had no other idea than that the converts to christianity, among the heathen, must submit to circumcision, and, in fact, become Jews in every sense of the word, in order to be entitled to the favour of God, or any of the final

benefits of the gospel. Hence, too, we find, that they were not only extremely surprised, but indignant at the apostle's intercourse with the Gentiles, and at his communication of the gospel to the pagan world. Let it now be considered, that, in all the places where the apostles preached and collected churches, in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus and Galatia, the earliest believers, and frequently the majority of the converts, were rigid Jews, accustomed, from their infancy, to regard the Gentiles as excluded from the favour of God, and reciprocally regarded, by the Gentiles, as a superstitious and hateful race. Of course, as soon as a Gentile convert appeared among them, they considered him a Jew, and expected him to submit to all their impositions, observances, worship and peculiarities. This question, then, was the great controversy between Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, and the churches, which he had planted: Does the reception of christianity imply the reception of Judaism? You will instantly perceive, that it must have been a source of inextinguishable animosities, discords, schisms, complaints, and explanations. To establish this great truth against his bigoted countrymen, the possibility of salvation out of the pale of Judaism, and to settle in mutual amity, and by mutual accommodation, his yet unformed, and unconsolidated churches, was the great object of the apostle Paul. With what fidelity he maintains the generous spirit of the christian dispensation, his epistles every where discover. It was his continual purpose to fix it in the minds of his spiritual church, that now, under the gospel, men are, every where, justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. The condition of human salvation was not the observance of any external rites, like the Mosaic, not the belonging to any national church, like the Jewish, not the submission to circumcision and the burthensome obligations it entailed, and not even a course of unsinning obedience,

which was at all times impossible, but faith, and faith alone, or a principle of sincere, though imperfect obedience, a principle, beginning in belief, discovering itself in love, and proved and fortified by persevering obedience. It was his perpetual object to show the Jews, that Christ had redeemed them and the whole world from the curse of the law—which no man could perfectly fulfil, and which denounced death on those who broke it—and had placed them in the liberty of the sons of God. It was his glorious resistance to these Jewish impositions, which brought upon him the hostility of his nation, and involved him in perpetual controversy, and exposed him to perpetual suffering. In supporting the great doctrine of justification by faith, he continually reasons with them from their own history, their own prejudices, and their national principles, when uncorrupted. He shows, that Abraham himself, the father of their nation, on their descent from whom they so much valued themselves, obtained the favour of God in the same way, in which the Gentiles were to obtain it; and that a sincere principle of holiness, and not the terms of any written law, faith, and not legal perfection, were the conditions of salvation, from the beginning of the world. It is only by keeping in mind this controversy, and the state of the churches to which Paul wrote, made up of Jews and Gentiles, that we can understand the reasonings of the apostle.

4. The fourth and last source of mistakes and obscurities in the epistles, is to be found in a maxim of interpretation, which has too much prevailed, without authority, and without reason: "that we must expect to find, in the present circumstances of christianity, a meaning for, or something answering to, every appellation and expression, which occurs in scripture; or, in other words, the applying to the personal condition of christians, at this day, those titles, phrases, propositions and arguments, which belong solely to

the situation of christianity, at its first institution." The instances, which might be brought in illustration of this, are numerous, but I shall confine myself chiefly to two; and in the remarks, which I shall make, I shall avail myself of the language and authority of Paley, a popular and unanswerable advocate for the truth of the gospel.*

If, my christian friends, by what I have said in this discourse, I have excited a stronger desire in you to read and study these oracles, which alone reveal the method of salvation by Jesus Christ; if I have given you any new conceptions of the worth of that religion, which such a man as Paul was labouring to support; if I have been able to remove any prejudices against any portion of his writings, my purpose has been answered. May God open your hearts to understand his scriptures! The more you read, the more you will love them. Compared with the knowledge, which they contain, every other subject of human inquiry is vanity and emptiness. Politics, philosophy, poetry, and all the pursuits of the human mind, are, to this, the chattering and plays of children. Here search for the doctrine of salvation. Sanctify us, O God, by thy truth: thy word is truth.

* Here followed, in the original, several extracts from Paley's "Caution recommended in the use and application of scripture language," a sermon, which has been republished at Cambridge, and may also be found in Paley's Works, vol. IV. p. 29. Boston edition.

SERMON XII.

JER. XIII. 23.

CAN THE ETHIOPIAN CHANGE HIS SKIN, OR THE LEOPARD HIS SPOTS? THEN MAY YE ALSO DO GOOD, THAT ARE ACCUSTOMED TO DO EVIL.

THERE is no proverb more common, or better understood than this, that habit is a second nature. It is an observation, which the slightest knowledge of the human mind enables us to make, and which the shortest life is long enough to verify. Habit is a law of our condition, of vast and indispensable advantage; but, like all other general laws, operates sometimes favourably, and sometimes unfavourably, to the happiness of men. Without it, there would be nothing established and permanent in the human character; and with it, much is rendered permanent, which we should rejoice to remove. Without it, all our virtue would consist of casual, and unconnected acts, on whose repetition we could never calculate; with it, our vices become firmly associated, mutually dependent, and hard to be subdued. Without it, our best dispositions would be nothing more than transitory feelings, our friendships and our loves fickle and momentary passions; with it, our lusts become inveterate, and the nascent propensities of a sensual and

selfish heart become, at length, its undisputed tyrants. Without it, first aversions would be unconquerable, grief would continue violent and excessive, and man could never be reconciled to any unwelcome change of circumstances, however unavoidable; but with it, the sharpness of remorse, too, is easily blunted, the horrour, which attends the first perpetration of a crime, is soon dissipated, and the effectual reformation of a vicious character often proves a desperate expectation. Without it, in fine, the characters of men would be indescribable, unstable and incapable of improvement; education would be vain; example, fruitless; and discipline, ineffectual cruelty; but with it, also, prejudices are rooted, and vice becomes inveterate, before the mind is sufficiently strong to examine the one or reject the other; and early impressions, together with painful and perpetual vigilance, are necessary to the security of virtue. Indeed, on this universal law, that habit renders stable, what was before fluctuating; pleasant, what was before painful; strong, what was before weak; easy, what was before difficult; and morally certain, what was before doubtful, depends the character of man here, and, consequently, his condition hereafter.

If it were not in some measure inconsistent with the dignity of public religious instruction, I could refer you to a multitude of familiar illustrations of the power of habit. But it is enough, that we have all observed, in general, that, what is at first disagreeable to any of our senses, becomes less unpleasant by repetition, so that we may be, at length, reconciled, as it is termed, to what was, at first, our aversion. On the contrary, impressions, in themselves originally pleasant, become, when often repeated, so necessary to our happiness, that, though every successive act of indulgence affords less absolute pleasure than the preceding, the general propensity is continually gaining strength; and, while the perception of pleasure,

in every particular instance, is lessening, desire, on the whole, increases, and the pain of deprivation becomes greater and greater.

It is our intention, at present, to consider this law of our nature in its influence on the moral character. We shall, first, say something of the ease, with which evil habits are formed; secondly, of those circumstances, which make it so difficult to subdue them; and, lastly, dwell on the consequences, which follow from our view of the subject.

1. To form a vicious habit, is one of the easiest processes in nature. Man comes into a world, where sin is, in many of its various forms, originally pleasant, and where evil propensities may be gratified at small expense. The necessary indulgence of appetite, and the first use of the senses would make us all sensual and selfish from our birth, if the kind provision, which heaven has made of suffering, of instruction and of various discipline, did not sometimes break the propensities, which we bring with us from the cradle. Nothing is required, but to leave man to what is called the state of nature, to make him the slave of habitual sensuality.

But even after the mind is, in some degree, fortified by education, and reason has acquired a degree of force, the ease, with which a bad habit can be acquired, is not less to be lamented. If, indeed, the conscience were to struggle with sin, in fair, open, and direct contest, it would not so often and so readily yield. But sin enters, not by breach or escalade, but by cunning or treachery .It presents itself, not as sin, but as innocence, when your watchfulness is hushed to sleep, or the eye of reason diverted. Vice gains its power by insinuation. It winds gently round the soul, without being felt, till its twines become so numerous, that the sinner, like the wretched Laocoon, writhes in vain to extricate himself, and his faculties are crushed, at length, in the folds of the serpent.

If the first entrance of vice is so easy, every successive act, which is to form the habit, is easier than the last. The taste of pleasure provokes the appetite. If conscience receive no aid, when the temptation returns, the victory will be easier, and the triumph more complete. If no evil consequences immediately follow, if the sentence of reproach, of infamy, or of natural punishment, be not speedily executed, conscience, thus unsupported, is not heard or not credited. If, however, reproach should follow, or infamy be apprehended, the culprit may either be driven to the society of the shameless, or attempt some new vice to conceal, or varnish, or vindicate the former.

This leads to observe further, that no evil habit can long exist alone. Vice is prolific. It is no solitary invader. Admit one of its train, and it immediately introduces, with an irresistible air of insinuation, the multitude of its fellows, who promise you liberty, but whose service is corruption, and whose wages is death. Enter not, then, into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

2. The effects of sinful indulgence, which make its relinquishment so difficult, are, that it perverts the moral discernment, benumbs the sensibility of conscience, destroys the sentiment of shame, and separates the sinner from the means and opportunities of conversion. The moral discernment is perverted. Where sin is practised, it must be excused. Passion is called in to make the apology; sophistry supplies the heads of the defence. Stern moral precepts are entangled by equivocations, subtile exceptions, and ingenious perplexities.

Again, by sinful indulgence, the sensibility of conscience is deadened. As the taste can be reconciled to the most nauseous and unpleasant impressions, the eye familiarized to a deformed object, the ear, to the most grating and discordant noises, and

the feeling, to the most rough and irritating garment, so the moral tact becomes insensible to the loathsomeness of vice. It is, perhaps, true, that, in the regular, smooth tenour of the life of a well-principled man, a single transgression or inconsiderate step may, sometimes, prove the means of awakening the vigour of conscience, and increasing, for a time, its sensibility. But it is not so with the young and immature. If in them passion, desire, or appetite be fed and gratified, while conscience is unenlightened and unfortified, the moral sense will always be imperfect, a neglected part of the mental constitution, and, like a contracted, shrunken limb, will be without feeling and without use. How many of those, who enter daily upon the intercourse of life, do we see destitute of any delicacy of moral feeling? Their senses, in the language of the apostle, have never been exercised by use to discern between good and evil. They call evil, good; and good, evil. They shudder, perhaps, at murder, perceive the guilt of robbery, and of the grosser offences against the peace and order of society; but of the nicer distinctions of virtue and vice, of interestedness and disinterestedness, of honour and disgrace, of holiness and impurity, they have few and imperfect notions. Hence they fall an easy prey to any indirect temptation. Conscience, blunt and unexercised, cannot discern the tendency of a first step. Taking no alarm, it offers no resistance. If, then, the conscience of the young can become thus dull, merely by neglect, how impenetrable and callous may it prove by repeated acts of deliberate iniquity, and a long course of profligacy and crime? In such a state, termed by divines a judicial hardness of heart, all the usual means of reformation are ineffectual. The gentle dews of instruction distil in vain on the close and clayey soil of a hardened heart. It imbibes nothing, it retains nothing, it produces nothing. The curse

of God seems to rest upon it, and man relinquishes it to perpetual sterility. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.

Another effect of habitual transgression is, to banish the sentiment of shame. Do not accuse me of repetition; for the sense of shame is not the same with the sense of right and wrong. The first refers to the opinion of man; the other, to that of God. These principles are often found in very unequal proportions in men of real estimation. In some men, a regard to the world's opinion is ever alive, while conscience is uninformed, or unexercised; in others, a sense of the guilt of an action, and of the abhorrence of heaven, seems to absorb the shame of it. Now it is the tendency of habit, to make a man regardless of observation, and, at length, of censure. He soon imagines, that others see nothing offensive in what no longer offends himself. After the commission of a sin, justly concluding, that repentance will not restore him to the same station in the world's esteem, which he held before his lapse, he draws another consequence, that, by a repetition of his offence, he has less of credit to lose than at first. Besides, a vicious man easily gathers round him a circle of his own. Though iniquity may not be unpunished, when hand joins in hand, yet is it often unabashed. It is not solitary crimes, which deceive the moral discernment, and obscure the perception of disgrace. It is the society of numbers, which gives hardihood to iniquity, when the sophistry of the united ingenuity of others comes in aid of our own, and when, in the presence of the shameless and unblushing, the young offender is ashamed to blush. It is painful, ah cruelly painful, to see the colour, which used to rush into the cheek of ingenuous youth at the suspicion of fraud, at the mention of indecency, or the sight of corruption, gradually retiring, and giving

place to the bold stare of riotous vice, or to the oppressive stupidity of habitual drunkenness.

The last effect of vicious habits, by which the reformation of the sinner is rendered almost desperate, is, to separate him from the means of grace. He, who indulges himself in any passion, lust, or custom, which openly or secretly offends against the laws of God or man, will find an insuperable reluctance to those places, persons, or principles, by which he is necessarily condemned. Can he, whose life is a perpetual insult to the authority of God, a well known scandal to the name of christian, enter, with any pleasure, a temple, consecrated to devotion, sanctified by prayer, hallowed by pure affections, where the oracles of God are announced, where you seem to approach nearer to the seat of Deity, and where the whole process of instruction and of worship crosses his propensities, and alarms his conscience? Will he dare, without doubting, to lift up his hands in prayer, who must exhibit them to the view of his fellow-worshippers, soiled with corruption and fraudulent gains, or, perhaps, stained with blood? Will he, who is burning with lust, or indulging in habitual excesses of refined voluptuousness, open at home that holy volume, where the utmost purity and chastity of affection is inculcated, if he can turn easily to pages written on purpose to debauch the imagination and sophisticate the judgment? Can it be expected, too, that he, who daily and nightly rushes into dissipation, to relieve a tedium, which uniformly recurs, whenever he is alone for a few hours, should voluntarily indulge in serious meditation, or dare to commune with his own heart? One means of recovery yet remains, the reproof and example of the good. But who will long bear the presence of another, whose very looks reprove him, whose words harrow up his conscience, and whose whole life is a severe, though silent admonition?

We cannot dwell long on the consideration of that dreadful condition of the habitual sinner, when, in the language of scripture, he is given up to hopelessness, hardness of heart, blindness of eyes, deafness of ears, or, in other words, to absolute moral insensibility. The thought is too painful. This is sometimes considered in the light of a punishment; and to vindicate the justice of such a dereliction by heaven, would neither be difficult, nor without its use. It is often said, that, as long as life lasts, hope remains. We are encouraged to believe, that the grave is the only place, where

> "Hope never comes,
> "That comes to all."

But every man's observation will furnish him with instances of characters, whose reformation from long habits of iniquity seems as morally impossible, whose consciences appear to be as impenetrable to the common methods of grace, as if they were really sunk in the sleep of death, and the clods had hardened and the weeds matted over their graves. Nothing in the general nature of God's moral government would lead us to conclude, that he is obliged to continue his methods of discipline beyond a certain limit; and who shall say, that this limit must coincide with the termination of life? The day of grace may be shorter than the day of nature. "Why should they be stricken any more, for they will only revolt more and more."

Thus have we attempted to explain the nature and effects of vicious habits. We have seen, that, by repetition, whatever of reluctance existed at first, is gradually removed, and whatever of desire existed, is increased, though the degree of pleasure, in each particular gratification, diminishes. These laws are common to all habits, as well as to those of vice. But, in addition to this, all sin is peculiarly deceit-

ful and insinuating, prolific and progressive. One vice associates multitudes with itself. The peculiar inveteracy of sinful habits, and the difficulty of reformation are increased, as we have also seen by the following attendant effects, the corruption of moral discernment, the dulness of moral feeling, the loss of the sense of shame, and an exclusion from the customary means of religious improvement. When the Ethiopian, then, shall whiten his skin, or the leopard wash out his spots, then may they also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.

3. There is nothing in the moral constitution of man, from which such interesting consequences follow, as from the nature of vicious habits, if it be such as we have represented it. If, also, it should be found, that there is no period in the life of man so early, that these habits may not be generated or confirmed, into what consequence does childhood, nay infancy, rise? Here, in the babes at the breast, may we see the generation, which shall succeed us. Here is the embryo character of the next age. The first reflection, then, which we shall at present deduce from this subject, is, that if the child is trained up in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it.

O, that I could open to you the little breasts of your offspring, and show you the gradual and certain process, which is carried on from the moment of birth! There might you see dispositions forming, passions generating, prejudices starting into life, and all the future character bound up in the narrow compass of an infant's mind. Do you ask, when education should commence? Believe me, it has begun. It began with the first idea they received—the insensible education of circumstances and example. While you are waiting for their understandings to gain strength, vice, folly, and pleasure have not waited your dilatory motions. While you are looking out for masters and

mistresses, the young immortals are under the tuition of innumerable instructers. Passion has been exciting, and idleness relaxing them, appetite tempting, and pleasure rewarding them, and example, example has long since entered them into her motley school. Already have they learned much, which will never be forgotten: the alphabet of vice is easily remembered. Wait, then, no longer, ere your instructions commence. The ground is already softened, the season has already far advanced, and, while you are either sleeping, or making arrangements, or waiting for greater maturity, thistles are sown in secret, tares are springing up in the night.

It is impossible to assign a time in the infant's life, in which something may not be done for its future disposition. If it have any original perversities of temper, do not wait till this perversity is made inflexible by habit. You would not delay to straiten a crooked limb, to correct an awkward position, to counteract a stuttering articulation, till the limbs were full grown, the gait fixed, and the organs conformed to an indistinct mode of utterance. If, however, the greater part of what are called original propensities be, in fact, acquired; if envy, malice, irritability, selfishness, and pride be, for the most part, mental habits, which, like opinions and practices, are rooted by repetition; if the colour of the soul be not original and engrained, but, like the varieties of complexion, dependent on the operation of external circumstances, how inexcusable is the delay of instruction, of persuasion, of impression, and of direction, of which the youngest hearts are most tenderly susceptible? Especially, remember, that their habits are soonest caught by example. These little vines, which wind round your trunk, and depend upon you for support, will extend themselves upon your branches, following out the direction, and conforming to the irregularities of the limbs, which they entwine.

And what is the first example, which fixes their attention? Is it not your own? Are not you the first props, to which these tendrils attach themselves? And is it not time to ask yourselves, whether you will consent, that they should follow you throughout the whole of your character? Is it not time to examine, whether there be not in you some vicious habit, which, notwithstanding your caution, frequently presents itself to their greedy observation, thus recommended by all the weight of parental authority?

But, though the doctrine of the early operation of habit be full of admonitions, which the affectionate parent can hardly hear without the liveliest anxiety, it presents consequences, also, full of consolation and pleasure. God hath set the evil and the good, one over against the other; and all his general laws are adapted to produce effects ultimately beneficial. If the love of sensual pleasure become inveterate by indulgence, the pure love of truth and goodness, also, may, by early instillation and careful example, become so natural and constant, that a violation of integrity, and offence against gratitude, a breach of purity, or of reverence toward God, may prove as painful as a wound. You know, how common are the promises of scripture to early piety. Now these promises are not arbitrary and partial annexations of reward to a quality, which is not really of more intrinsic worth at one period, than at another; but they express the security and perfection in virtue, which that character may attain, which is early hallowed in the service of God. Those, who seek God early, shall easily find him. Begin, then, now that they have no steps to retrace. Their hearts are now all alive to gratitude, their minds full of curiosity, ready to drink in instruction: selfishness has not yet monopolized all the avenues to their affections; you have no hard associations to break, no deep-rooted prejudices to clear away. Their only prejudice is one that will

assist your endeavours, that is, an unsuspecting reliance on your knowledge, wisdom, love and power. Associate, then, in their minds, the idea of God with the recollection of yourselves; and remember, that, if they have found you excessively indulgent, or habitually negligent, or unreasonably severe, or manifestly partial, or notoriously indifferent to their moral progress, you are not to wonder, if they transfer to the universal parent the character, which they have found to belong to their fathers after the flesh.

The second reflection, suggested by this survey of the moral constitution and condition of man, is, the folly and danger of delaying repentance. Look back, I entreat you, on your past lives, and number, if you can, the resolutions you have broken. And why is it, that we see so little of reformation, after a certain period, after the employments and mode of life are established? It is, because the time of repentance is perpetually procrastinated; because, when conscience, like an odious creditor, begins to expostulate with you, you find some excuse for dismissing her claims; you say, at every application, go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee. She retires unsatisfied; the debt accumulates, and your resources are daily diminishing, till the hour of death arrives, and completes the bankruptcy of the soul.

It has been most acutely and justly observed, that all resolutions to repent, at a future time, are necessarily insincere, and must be a mere deception; because they imply a preference of a man's present habits and conduct; they imply, that he is really unwilling to change them, and that nothing but necessity would lead him to make any attempt of the kind. But let us suppose the expected leisure for repentance to have arrived; the avaricious or fraudulent dealer to have attained that competency, which is to secure him from want; the profligate and debauched

to have passed the slippery season of youth, and to be established in life; the gamester, by one successful throw, to have recovered his desperate finances; the dissipated and luxurious to have secured a peaceful retreat for the remainder of his days—to each of these the long anticipated hour of amendment, the opportune leisure for religion has, at length, arrived; but where, alas, is the disposition, where the necessary strength of resolution! How rare, and, I had almost said, how miraculous, is the instance of a change!

The danger of delay, even if we suppose this uncertain leisure and inclination to be secured, is inconceivably heightened, when we consider, further, the nature of repentance. It is a settled change of the disposition from vice to virtue, discovered in the gradual improvement of the life. It is not a fleeting wish, a vapoury sigh, a lengthened groan. Neither is it a twinge of remorse, a flutter of fear, nor any temporary and partial resolution. The habits of a sinner have been long in forming. They have acquired a strength, which is not to be broken by a blow. The labour of a day will not build up a virtuous habit on the ruins of an old and vicious character. You, then, who have deferred, from year to year, the relinquishment of a vice; you, if such there be, who, while the wrinkles are gathering in your foreheads, are still dissatisfied with yourselves, remember, that amendment is a slow and laborious process. Can you be too assiduous, too fearful, when you consider, how short the opportunity, and how much is required, to complete the work of reformation, and to establish the dominion of virtue?

It is impossible to dismiss this subject, without considering a common topic, the inefficacy of a death-bed repentance. It is to be feared, that charity, which hopeth and believeth all things, has sometimes discovered more of generous credulity, than of

well-founded hope, when it has laid great stress, and built much consolation, on the casual expressions and faint sighs of dying men. Far be it from us to excite suspicion, or recal anxiety in the breast of surviving friendship, or to throw a new shade of terrour over the valley of death; but better, far better, were it for a thousand breasts to be pierced with temporary anguish, and a new horrour be added to the dreary passage of the grave, than that one soul be lost to heaven by the delusive expectation of effectual repentance in a dying hour. For, as we have repeatedly asked, what is effectual repentance? Can it be supposed, that, where the vigour of life has been spent in the establishment of vicious propensities, where all the vivacity of youth, all the soberness of manhood, and all the leisure of old age, have been given to the service of sin, where vice has been growing with the growth, and strengthening with the strength, where it has spread out with the limbs of the stripling, and become rigid with the fibres of the aged, can it, I say, be supposed, that the labours of such a life are to be overthrown by one last exertion of a mind, impaired with disease, by the convulsive exercise of an affrighted spirit, and by the inarticulate and feeble sounds of an expiring breath? Repentance consists not in one or more acts of contrition; it is a permanent change of the disposition. Those dispositions and habits of mind, which you bring to your dying bed, you will carry with you to another world. These habits are the dying dress of the soul. They are the grave-cloths, in which it must come forth, at the last, to meet the sentence of an impartial judge. If they were filthy, they will be filthy still. The washing of baptismal water will not, at that hour, cleanse the spots of the soul. The confession of sins, which have never been removed, will not furnish the conscience with an answer towards God. The reception of the elements will not

then infuse a principle of spiritual life, any more than unconsecrated bread and wine will infuse health into the limbs, on which the cold damps of death have already collected. Say not, that you have discarded such superstitious expectations. You have not discarded them, while you defer any thing to that hour, while you venture to rely on any thing but the mercy of God toward a heart, holy, sincere and sanctified, a heart, which loves Heaven for its purity, and God for his goodness. If, in this solemn hour, the soul of an habitual and inveterate offender be prepared for the residence of pure and spotless spirits, it can be only by a sovereign and miraculous interposition of omnipotence. His power we pretend not to limit. He can wash the sooty Ethiop white, and cause the spots on the leopard's skin to disappear. We presume not to fathom the counsels of his will; but this we will venture to assert, that if, at the last hour of the sinner's life, the power of God ever interposes to snatch him from his ruin, such interposition will never be disclosed to the curiosity of man. For, if it should once be believed, that the rewards of heaven can be obtained by such an instantaneous and miraculous change at the last hour of life, all our ideas of moral probation, and of the connexion between character here and condition hereafter, are loose, unstable, and groundless, the nature and the laws of God's moral government are made, at once, inexplicable, our exhortations are useless, our experience false, and the whole apparatus of gospel means and motives becomes a cumbrous and unnecessary provision.

What, then, is the great conclusion, which we should deduce from all that we have said of the nature of habit, and the difficulty of repentance? It is this. Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. If you are young, you cannot begin too soon; if you are old, you may begin too late.

Age, says the proverb, strips us of every thing, even of resolution. Tomorrow we shall be older; tomorrow, indeed, death may fix his seal for ever on our characters. It is a seal, which can never be broken, till the voice of the Son of man shall burst the tombs, which enclose us. If, then, we leave this place, sensible of a propensity, which ought to be restrained, of a lust, which ought to be exterminated, of a habit, which ought to be broken, and rashly defer the hour of amendment, consider, I beseech you, it may, perhaps, be merciful in God to refuse us another opportunity. It may be a gracious method of preventing an abuse, which will only aggravate the retribution, which awaits the impenitent. Make haste, then, and delay not to keep the commandments of God; of that God, who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.

SERMON XIII.

MATTHEW x. 32.

WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I ALSO CONFESS BEFORE MY FATHER, WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

No man can read the discourses of our Saviour with his disciples, without observing, how frequently he insists upon the necessity of courage and fortitude in his followers. Never was a leader less studious to conceal the difficulties and dangers of the service, in which his adherents were to engage; and never was the fidelity of disciples more severely proved, than was the fidelity of the first converts at the commencement of our religion. With only twelve constant companions Jesus began his preaching. Their dispositions, as various as their employments and capacities, were all to be trained up for a perilous service. There was Matthew, called unexpectedly from the profits of a lucrative trade; Peter, ardent, confident, ambitious, but inconstant; John, affectionate, gentle, amiable, but unenterprising; Thomas, slow to believe, quick to doubt, and curious to examine; Judas, dark, designing, covetous and treacherous; with several others, who joined themselves to Jesus, full of indefinite hopes, and solicitous to share in the

emoluments and dignities, which they daily expected their master would dispense. Such were the minds, which our Saviour was to prepare for disappointment, and discipline to courage and endurance. To the worldly among them he talked, sometimes of the uncertainty, and sometimes of the worthlessness of present possessions; here placing before them pictures of poverty, and there recommending to them treasures in heaven. To the ambitious he discoursed of humility, of contentment, and laborious servitude, studiously undervaluing the easy dignities and powerful stations, to which they aspired. To the wavering and doubtful he proposed frequent experiments of their confidence, and insisted on the excellence of faith. To the gentle and feeble-minded he talked of impediments, hardships, disgrace, persecutions, and death. To the treacherous he entrusted the purse, which contained the stock of the little company, that the traitor might see, how little the success of the gospel and the support of its followers depend on money, which thieves like him could pilfer, and on fidelity like his, which lasted as long only, as it was serviceable to the purposes of his avarice. Such was the tenour of the conversations, by which our Saviour was continually preparing the minds of his disciples for the severities, which they were soon to suffer; and, without doubt, much of the disinterestedness, the patience, and the intrepidity of the apostles, after the ascension of their master, is to be ascribed to the lessons, with which he had fortified their minds, while he remained with them on earth.

Now, my christian friends, when we observe, how essential it was then made to the character of a christian, that he should possess a spirit, which could sustain indignities, support disgrace, relinquish comfort, endure torture, and triumph over death; when we see, how frequently our Saviour insisted on independence and magnanimity in his followers, and studi-

ously instructed and disciplined their minds for the extraordinary sufferings, which awaited them, it is surely worthy of consideration, whether we have, in any sense, exercised a spirit, similar to that which animated the primitive disciples. It is surely of some consequence to inquire, in what manner we, who repose in religious security, we, whom no persecutions assail, no difficulties molest, and no terrours alarm, may now exhibit something of the undauntedness of proselytes, something of the patience of the saints. Surely, the path of christian profession, which was once spread with thorns, is not now covered only with flowers. Surely, the descendants of those men, who once made the most magnanimous surrender of comfort and of life, cannot follow the same master to heaven, without meeting an impediment, and without making a sacrifice. To confess Christ now before men, cannot be utterly dissimilar to the confession of Christ in the age of the apostles. Let us endeavour, then, to ascertain, how we may now confess Christ before men, so that he may confess us hereafter before his Father, who is in heaven.

1. He, who now confesses Christ before men, must not be unwilling to avow the sentiments, which he entertains of his character. To believe in Christ, is not simply to believe, that such a person once existed. This you may believe of Julius Cæsar, or of Pilate. Neither is it enough to talk of him as a good man, or a wise teacher, to praise his example, to descant upon his precepts, to admire his sufferings, and to declaim about the excellence of his character. In this way, as every moralist flourishes about Socrates, every skeptic may harangue about Christ. To confess Jesus, is to confess him in the character, which you believe he supported, and in the authority, which you believe he claimed. It is to acknowledge him, as the Son of God, the image of Deity, the representative of the Father's authority, the con-

stituted teacher, legislator, redeemer, and judge of the world. In Jesus of Nazareth were exhibited, in an unparalleled degree, the powers and characters of Jehovah. "This is my beloved Son," was the attestation of heaven, "in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." "Whom," says our Saviour to the apostles, "whom do men say that I am?" "And they answered, some say, John the Baptist; others say, Elias; others, Jeremias, or that one of the old prophets is risen again." "But," continues our Saviour, "whom say ye that I am?" "Peter answered, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." You, then, who profess to adopt the name of christians, recollect, that the relation, in which you stand to Christ, is unlike any other, into which you can enter. His doctrines, where you have clearly discovered them, are not controvertible, like the tenets of a philosopher; nor are his recommendations to be discussed, as if they were the counsels of a fallible adviser. If you are satisfied, that his authority is divine, your opinions are to be submitted to his instructions; if you have taken his hand, you must suffer yourselves to be led by his wisdom. You believe in God, believe also in Jesus. From the authority of men, it is lawful to appeal to that of God; from the authority of Christ there is no appeal, for whoever receiveth him, receiveth God that sent him.

2. To confess Christ before men, it is not enough, that we are willing to avow our implicit belief in his authority; we must, secondly, discover in our lives, that we are not ashamed of any peculiar restraints, sacrifices, privations, or labours, which this confession imposes. We profess to take Jesus of Nazareth for our guide to everlasting life. It is naturally expected of disciples, that they exhibit a character, like that of their master. Ye call me master and Lord, says our Saviour; and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and master, have given

you an example, ye should do as I have done to you. Who would expect to find the followers of Diogenes, the cynic, clothed in purple, sleeping upon down, or rioting in luxury; or the disciples of Epicurus, walking barefoot, practising abstemiousness, or living in superstitious or habitual devotion? Allow me, then, to say, that you do not confess Christ before men, if you lay no restraints upon your desires, out of deference to his laws, if you abridge none of your indulgences, in conformity to the spirit of his religion. It is in vain for you to profess your belief in the gospel of Christ, if, whenever the spirit of christianity and the spirit of the times interfere, you manifestly bow to the opinion of the world. Does that man confess Christ before the world, who lives precisely as he might have done, if Jesus had never been born, never established a religion, never suffered upon the cross, and were never again to appear, as the final judge of character, and dispenser of retribution? Does he confess Christ before men, whose life exhibits nothing, which would lead an observer to conclude, that he acknowledged any other master than his inclination, and any authority but that of public opinion? If you are afraid of being called superstitious, because you practise the offices of devotion, pusillanimous, because you endeavour to be meek and forgiving, morose, because you do not plunge headlong into the amusements of the age, avaricious, because you are not clothed in purple, and do not fare sumptuously every day, or rigid, because you are not willing to be dissolute; with all these fears, and hesitations, and accommodations, it is absurd for you to bear about the idle appellation of a believer in the gospel. Reject the profession of your faith at once, and avoid these unworthy inconsistencies. What should we have thought of the sincerity of Paul's conversion to christianity, if, while he resided at the polished metropolis of Greece,

and called himself a christian, he had been seen bowing down in the streets to the statue of Jupiter, or complaisantly accommodating his creed to the skeptical Epicureans, whenever he found himself in their company, or joining in a laugh against his Lord and master, with some of the witty inhabitants of Athens? What, if we had been told, that he eagerly sought admittance to every festival and show in honour of their gods, and placed himself at meat at every idol's table? What, if he had been seen joining in the lewd dances of the Bacchanalia, hurrying to the Olympic games, or seeking for amusement with the profligate youth of the city? What, if he had spent all his time in asking after news, with the idle and inquisitive strollers in the forum; and when that insolent citizen inquired, What will this babbler say, what if Paul had resented his impertinence, like a man of spirit, and, to save his wounded honour, had manfully gone out to single combat? If such had been his course of life, think you, he could have made that defence before the Areopagus, which the historian has recorded? Alas, my friends, the name of Christian has come to us by birth, and by inheritance; but not so descend the spirit and the power of our religion.

3. To confess Christ before men, is, thirdly, to adopt those methods, and embrace those opportunities of acknowledging him, which the present state of his religion renders practicable and proper. The only open and formal manner of professing ourselves christians, which is, at the present day, at once unostentatious and public, is, by observing those rites, which are peculiar to christianity—baptism and the Lord's supper. It is not enough to denominate us christians, that we publicly assemble with christians in houses of worship. The doors of our sanctuaries are open to the infidel, as well as to the believer; to the Jew, and to the Pagan; to the Mahometan from

the shores of the Mediterranean, and to the savage from the banks of the Missouri. Attendance upon the weekly exercises of the temple affords no unquestionable proof of our belief in christianity, and no distinguishing pledge of our attachment to its cause. You, who now fill these seats, do not intend, by your presence here, to declare to the world, that you are christians.

It is, however, to be presumed, that those, who, either for themselves or for their children, have recognised the ordinance of baptism, are sensible, that by this act they voluntarily submit to a rite, which is, in fact, initiatory to the profession of christianity. They acknowledge the authority of Christ, they enrol themselves in the number of his pupils. They virtually admit, that all his requirements are obligatory; and declare to the world, that they are willing to submit to his commands, as far as they are discovered. Can any one, then, satisfactorily inform us, why the other rite, which is peculiarly significant of our discipleship, and especially expressive of fidelity and attachment, is so generally neglected? Have you ever seriously considered, that the latter is a natural consequence of the former, if the former was not hypocritically observed; and that, in the earliest ages of the church, the observance of each of the ordinances was inseparably connected? Have you ever considered, that, by studiously regarding the one, and inconsiderately neglecting the other, you exhibit an explicable inconsistency in your professions of attachment?

Bear with me, my friends, while I indulge myself in freely examining some of the motives, which, probably, restrain you. Difficulties, as well as fears, sometimes vanish on a near inspection; and to disentangle what is perplexed, close and careful observation is commonly more necessary, than either resolution or strength.

1. Allow me, however, in the first place, to doubt, whether you have yet seriously considered, or sensibly understood the obligation, which your belief in the authority of Jesus so clearly imposes. Perhaps you have regarded as mere words of course the invitations, which are repeatedly addressed to you from the pulpit, and addressed to your gratitude and love, as well as to your sense of duty. Have you not too easily contented yourselves hitherto with your weekly attendance on the customary services of the sanctuary; services, which you have found may be periodically observed without any interruption of your time, and which it would not, perhaps, require more resolution to discontinue, than to repeat? Perhaps you are too indolent, or too secure to reflect on the duty we are considering; or you imagine yourselves too busy to devote a portion of your time and thoughts to a commemoration of your Saviour's death. But the plea of occupation is futile. You have bought a piece of ground, and you must needs go and see it. And what of this? Is every project in business to be accomplished, before you can have leisure to listen to the recommendations of such a friend as Jesus? You have bought five yoke of oxen, and you must go to prove them. Cannot this be effected without rejecting the invitations of the gospel? And you have married a wife, and therefore you cannot come. But why can you not bring with you to the table, your consort, your children, your dependants? The tables of the Lord are not yet crowded. Here are no struggles for admittance; here are no contests for accommodation.

2. Give me leave to ask you, how long you have been deferring your attention to this duty, and how much longer you imagine you shall be employed in collecting resolution? Nothing is more certainly neglected, than what we are always intending to do. When will that more convenient time arrive? Is that

bright hour, which is to bring you opportunity, inclination, or resolution, now on its passage? Ah, my friends, I know of no moment but the present. I have known opportunities, but they are past, and I strive in vain to recall them. The virgins, who slept, imagined, that they should have sufficient time to go and buy oil and trim their lamps; but, while they were gone, those who were ready went in to the nuptial feast, and when their companions returned, the door was shut.

3. Perhaps you excuse yourselves, on account of the solemnity of the ordinance. But, my friends, because it is solemn, is it therefore the less important? Because it is solemn, may it therefore be more securely neglected? Besides, what has taught you to make so great a distinction between this and the other duties of religion? Surely not the example of our Saviour. In his presence was the rite instituted, and then it was affectionate, social and cheerful. No terrours were thrown around the meeting, no doubts disturbed the happy fraternity, no mystery brooded over the eucharistical feast. Surely, your's was not the sentiment of the primitive disciples, for they celebrated this ordinance at every opportunity, and whenever they found themselves together. Surely, your's was not the opinion of the Corinthian converts, for so little were they appalled with the awful solemnity of the rite, that they soon converted it into a riotous festival. Surely, your's was not the opinion of the apostle, or he would have proceeded farther in his reproof, than merely to have blamed their disorder and excess. It is true, the ceremony is serious, and so, also, is every act of homage, because it is performed in the presence, and directed to the eye of Jehovah. Nothing can be more religiously solemn than prayer; and there is nothing in the exercises at the communion more sacred in reality, than the customary addresses to the throne of God.

4. You excuse yourselves, perhaps, because you imagine you are not yet prepared for an ordinance so holy. This, I know, is the most customary, and, let me add, the most fallacious apology. If you are unprepared for this, believe me, you are unprepared for the worship of the sanctuary, in which we have now been uniting; you are unprepared to enter your closet, and offer up your secret devotions; you are unprepared to present your children at the baptismal font; and, what is more than all, you are unprepared to leave this busy world, and enter on those unknown scenes, which, even while you are hesitating, may burst upon your vision. Can you, in such a state of things, say carelessly and coolly, that you are unfit to come to the communion, especially when the ordinance is perpetuated for the very purpose of promoting your spiritual preparation for the communion of Jesus and the saints in heaven?

But where do you gather the opinion, that a precise degree of preparation, which I know not how you are to ascertain, is necessary to the cummunicant? You surely do not collect it from the circumstances, in which the supper was instituted. To the twelve disciples, who were the first communicants, the ceremony was utterly unexpected. It was suddenly instituted in the midst of a common meal; and the apostles had no time to deliberate about those necessary qualifications, on which succeeding ages have so unadvisedly and unhappily insisted. If our dispositions and habits are such, as to disqualify us to join with mortals, like ourselves, in commemorating the death of our common benefactor, alarming indeed is our condition. My friends, it is time to pause: it is time to look about us. If we cannot, without guilt or hypocrisy, celebrate the memory of Jesus, when departed, think you that such disaffection will be admitted to his presence?

Perhaps you flatter yourselves, that there is less danger in utterly neglecting this duty, than in undertaking to perform it, without having ascertained the worthiness of your preparation. But, my friends, the obligation of the duty is certain; the degree of preparation is not. If your intention to perform the will of your master is sincere, you are not to delay, till every difficulty vanishes, and every scruple is satisfied, especially in a case like this, where, if you leave the words of scripture, your only criterion will be some inexplicable and, perhaps, delusive feeling, which may come and depart in a day. If you have no serious desire and no real intention to conform to this request, it is idle to talk about degrees of preparation. This state of your inclinations is your sin, and not your excuse.

Lastly, I am disposed to believe, that many abstain from the communion, from a suspicion, that it will impose upon them some new obligations, which they fear they shall be unable to fulfil. This excuse sometimes results from a tenderness of conscience, which deserves to be fortified and enlightened, rather than indulged. If you believe in the authority of Christ, and profess, though not formally and publicly, to receive his religion, your obligations continue the same, whether you come to the communion, or whether you forbear. The mere commemoration of the death of Christ, cannot impose any new duties, or alter the extent of christian obligations. The observance of one command can neither enlarge, nor contract the circle of the others. It is true, in consequence of an open profession, the eyes of the world will be turned more directly upon you; and, together with the necessity of greater circumspection, you will feel, also, the influence of new motives and aids to obedience. But, as you cannot be too holy, why should you shun an additional inducement to purity and watchfulness. The bonds, which bind you to

your religion, cannot be too numerous, or too strong; and it becomes you seriously to consider, whether you do not more essentially injure the interests of the gospel by openly neglecting one of its positive commands, than you would by making a profession, which you might, sometimes, indeed, be tempted to dishonour, but which God may give you the grace to adorn. This timidity is at least a weakness; be careful, that it does not grow into a crime.

The time will not permit us to proceed further. These are only hints, which might be copiously illustrated, and thrown into a more argumentative form.

May God grant, that we, who, from a sense of obligation, I hope, assemble round this table, may be more and more constrained by the love of Christ, since he died for all, that they which live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again.

SERMON XIV.

LUKE VIII. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR.

It appears, at first view, astonishing, that so little effect should be perceptibly produced in society by a long established system of public instruction on topics the most important to mankind. It would seem incredible to one, who, for the first time, was made acquainted with our institutions of religion, that such a provision for weekly worship, teaching, admonition and consolation, should long exist without a more sensible and eminent effect on the minds and manners of the community. He would conclude, that, without some serious incompetency in the teacher, or blame in his audience, the facts and precepts contained in the gospel, which relate to the everlasting well-being of mankind, could not be heard without greater effect. That the inefficiency of public instruction is, in some degree, to be attributed to the incompetency, infirmities, or mistakes of preachers I am not disposed to deny. Let us take it for granted in the outset, for to discuss it at length, would be unprofitable to you, and false humility in the preacher.

From these remarks, however, let it not be inferred, that we are disposed to deny the utility of preaching. There is, undoubtedly, a secret and permanent influence flowing from our public institutions of religion, which can be thoroughly understood and fairly estimated only if God, in his displeasure, should call us to witness the consequences of the complete abolition of them.

The efficacy of preaching appears more inconsiderable, than it really is, from this circumstance, that, of those who regularly attend upon it, few are guilty of habitual enormities and open vices. The sins, against which we find it most necessary to preach, are those hidden biasses of the heart, that worldly spirit, that habitual selfishness, and that religious torpour, which are not, if I may so speak, limbs, which may be cut off, but slow diseases, which are to be cured, and cured not by a single application, but by a long course of moral regimen and exercise. Hence, to pursue the allusion, the influence of the christian ministry is not to be seen in the leaping of the lame, the recovery of sight to the blind, the raising of the dead, or in the conversion of thousands from one religion and course of life to another, as in a day of Pentecost; but rather in strengthening the weak organs, in guarding the careless against infection, and in gradually improving, as far as may be, the tone of the religious system, and the health of the religious community.

These general remarks may serve to show, that public instruction among us is not so inefficacious as it might at first appear to be, and that, if no other good effects could be stated to flow from it, yet the evil secretly prevented, and the melioration secretly induced, are more than a recompense for the labours of those, who are engaged in supporting these institutions. The object of the present discourse, however, is not so much to account for the inadequate

effects of preaching on the great mass of mankind, as to lead the attention of those, who are habitually hearers of the word, and profess a respect for religion and its institutions,to consider some important prevalent errours, prejudices, and sins, which impede, and often destroy, the beneficial influence of religion on their hearts and minds.

1. You will agree with me, no doubt, in the first place, that, till the attention is gained, the labours of the preacher are vain. Some of the impediments to this attention and confidence are to be found in the prejudices, in which we allow ourselves toward individuals. We will hardly consent to learn our duty, except from a particular mouth. We suspect one man of heresy; and, of course, all that he delivers has a tinge of this leprosy, and therefore effectually prevents all contact with our mind. Another is avoided as too damnatory, or too metaphysical, too clamourous, or too severe. We suffer ourselves to waver with popular changes; to lose our confidence in one favourite, when he is no longer the first; or to turn away from another, because we are familiar with his manner, and he no longer offers novelties.

When we first inquire into the reputation of a preacher, or measure the precise limits of his creed, before we venture to trust ourselves with him, or when we come with minds prepared to hear with captiousness, or not to hear through aversion, it is not wonderful, that so much of the natural influence of instruction should be wasted. It is true, that prejudices and partialities are not to be avoided; and, perhaps, when they are unattended with correspondent aversions, are more salutary than injurious, on the whole. Yet, when we find that the preaching of some men appears to us barren and unfruitful, it is surely worth while to inquire, where the fault exists; and to decide, which is most easy, natural, and just, that we should accommodate ourselves to the preacher's method of

teaching, or that the preacher should be expected to suit the peculiar tastes and previous notions and capacities of hundreds of minds.

The different reception of the same preachers, in different assemblies, is finely illustrated in the history of Paul. Upon his arrival at Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics were all prepared to expose the new apostle to derision, and went round inquiring, what will this babbler say? At Lystra, on the contrary, the city was all enthusiasm and admiration; the gods, say they, have come down to us in the likeness of men. The sentiment of the apostle, in his reply, is admirable. We are men of like passions with you; but we are also ministers of the most High God, who show unto you the way of salvation, and our duty and your's is equally simple, and serious, independent of the passions and partialities of men.

2. The effect of preaching depends much, in the second place, on the disposition, which we are in the habit of bringing with us to public worship. For what purpose, my friends, are you assembled here? Not surely to set an example to others. If this were the only reason of your meeting, for what purpose, let me ask, are those others assembled? There must be some ground for this custom, beside example, otherwise those, whose example is of no value, would have no reason to assign for their worship. No, my friends, I trust, that every one is sensible, that the same God, who made, and preserves, and governs us all, demands of you the same homage, which he demands of others; and that what you receive in common deserves to be acknowledged in common. Your obligations are not altered, except as they are increased, by the difference of your circumstances, or your improvements. The instructions here given are not nicely adjusted to any particular stations or characters, but are of consequence to us all as moral, accountable and immortal creatures. They related to

the awful and parental character of that great Being, in whose power is the disposal of our whole existence, whether in this world or the next; they relate to the pardon of sin, in which, as offenders, we are all interested; they relate to that unexplored world, whither we are all tending, a world, which may burst upon us in a moment, whether we have made any provision for its scenes or not. The mind, which is not previously composed to the duties of this place, cannot easily engage in the exercises of the sanctuary. Those, who do not come to pay a solemn homage, cannot enter into the spirit of the service, or bring away any thing of value. It may be, that their curiosity is appeased; but their hearts are unaffected. It may be, that their attention is supported for the time; but every thing is forgotten, when the service is closed. It may be, that their conscience is discharged of a burden; but they are relieved rather than improved. It may be, that they do not always, or often, regret the time, which they have spent; but they look not back upon it with the satisfaction, which those will always feel, who, conscious of the privilege and means they have enjoyed, have learned something more of God, or of themselves, of their duty, or their destination.

3. In the third place, much of the inefficacy of preaching is to be traced to that ignorance and defect of preliminary knowledge, which exist among many of our hearers, who yet would be unwilling to be denied the name of christians.

It is natural for the preacher to forget, that those, whom he addresses, are not so familiar as himself with the truths which he declares, with the arguments which he adduces, with the allusions which he makes, or the scriptures, on which he founds his discourses. Hence, what appears familiar and intelligible to him, is abstruse to his auditors. When he imagines, that he has completed a fair demonstration of some religious truths, he may find his labour lost, and his deductions

unintelligible. It happens, that some link in the chain of thought, which existed in his own mind, and rendered all its parts so mutually dependent and firmly supported, is entirely unknown to his hearers; and his discourse leaves a very indistinct impression. It may be, that he has raised an animated exhortation from some great truths, which he supposed every one allowed, and to which he concluded no one was a stranger; and yet be miserably disappointed to find, that, in consequence of the distance between his own mind and the minds of his hearers, all that he has said is like water, which, instead of having reached the ground, is evaporated in the air, and by which no soil is fertilized, no growth of goodness quickened. You reply, perhaps, that this is the fault of the preacher; you will say, that he ought not to assume premises, which he has not proved, or presuppose information, which he has not given, or scatter his seeds in ground, which he has never cleared. But, my friends, is it impertinent to ask, are you to depend for all your religious knowledge on the occasional, and unsystematical addresses of your ministers? With the scriptures in your hands, with so many volumes of religious and moral instruction within your reach, on subjects, in which you are surely not less interested than ourselves, are we to presume, that you are yet unfurnished with the rudiments of christianity? At this age of the world, when, as the apostle says, you ought to be teachers, must you be taught the first principles of the oracles of God? And, at this period, are you such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat? He, that would attend a course of lectures on any branch of education, or topic of literature, takes care to prepare himself with previous principles. Are we alone to be for ever laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, explaining rudiments, and beginning at the very cradle of theology; or have we not rather a right to demand of you, as preliminaries, a

rational belief of revelation, and a considerable familiarity with its records?

4. A fourth cause of the inconsiderable effect of preaching, is the want of reflection upon what we hear. Discourses, even among those, who have no doubt of the main truths of their religion, are too often heard as if they were insulated and complete performances, intended to answer no purpose beyond the information given at the moment. We go to be entertained at our ease. If the speaker fails to effect this grand object, we consider ourselves disappointed, and return vacant and uninterested to the occupations of life. Thus, many of these holy days truly pass away, like a tale that is told; or, if the success of the preacher is more, we still charge not our memories with the subject, and conceive, that our interest in it is at an end, when the discourse is concluded. But, my hearers, does the object of preaching terminate like that of a drama, in the pleasure afforded at the moment? It is not intended as a relaxation of an hour, in which curiosity is to be kept alive, and which leaves no practical impression. The real purpose of a discourse cannot be answered without your co-operation. The practical improvement is to be made in your chambers, in your families, and in your private meditations. Called upon, as we are, from week to week, to produce something, which shall arrest attention, miserable indeed would be our condition, if we were regarded merely as the purveyors for the appetites of the public. We can treat few subjects profoundly; fewer still, systematically. We can only give you hints, which you must pursue at your leisure; and open to you principles, which you must follow through their consequences. It is to no purpose, that we awaken a transitory attention on this day, if it declines, as the sun goes down. It is to no purpose to insist upon truths, if you receive them only upon our authority, or if men content themselves with an assent without reason, or with a captious re-

jection without investigation. Till our principles are made your's by inquiry, by meditation, and by a serious application of them to the conduct of life, we shall always be accused of looseness in our reasonings, of inconsequence in our reflections, of presumption in our language, of abstruseness or excessive refinement in our speculations, of ignorance of human nature, and of want of adaptation to the circumstances of society. The scriptures will continue to be regarded rather as furnishing us with a text, than as the very ground and matter of instruction; and men will revolt at a thousand incongruities, absurdities, and strange modes of speech in our discourses from these holy records, which, if they were properly studied and understood, would appear to be far beyond the burlesque of the witling, and the ignorant derision of the man of pleasure.

In the last place, as the inefficacy of doctrinal instruction results from want of reflection on what we hear, so the effect of practical discourses is lost, unless every hearer makes a personal application of them to the correction of his own heart, and the regulation of his own conduct. The spirit of God will not force persuasion or conviction on the mind, which shuts itself up against the truth. There is no miraculous efficacy accompanying the words of any preacher, which will convert an auditor against his choice. Without the exercise of our own thoughts, we may hear discourses innumerable, and advance not a step nearer heaven. The sick man is not to be healed by the perpetual visits of the physician, or by the encouragements and recommendations of friends. He may lie for ever on his bed, and waste his life in fruitless wishes and ineffectual prayers. Till he applies the prescriptions, which are left, and exercises himself in the regimen and habits, which are enjoined him, he may doze away a sickly existence, without recovery or strength.

It would be amusing, if it were not so humiliating, to hear the observations of some men, when they have just listened to a discourse full of pointed applications. They complacently imagine, that one man must have felt this passage, and another have been struck by so direct a reference. Many retire expressing the conviction, that such exhortations, as those they have been hearing, cannot fail of doing good, and wonder at the insensibility of mankind, or at the courage of the preacher. But let us only imagine, that every one of our hearers were employed in making applications for the rest, and what a curious scene of absurdity would be presented; and what a strange contrivance to be unprofitable would be the art of preaching! Every one would be employed in showing how another ought to be affected, and yet no one could be improved; for, with all this grave concern for the good of others, each would neglect the only being, whom he has it always in his power to correct.

Though the addresses from the pulpit are necessarily general, yet they ought not to be heard without personal application. The faithful hearer never comes up to the sanctuary to please himself with general declamation against the ungodly. He is not employed in seeking to evade reproof, nor does he take care always to allow as much as possible to the license of the speaker, and the authorized tone of the profession. Every description, which gives him an image of himself, is a signal to him for reflection. Every exhibition of christian perfection is to him an incitement and a reproach; every picture of human depravity is to him a suggestion of gratitude for his own past preservation, and an admonition to take heed, lest he fall for the future.

This list of causes might easily be enlarged; but I prefer to conclude with some application of this precept: take heed how ye hear.

1. Would you derive the greatest improvement from public religious instruction, divest yourselves of unfavourable prejudices against those, who impart it. Who, then, is he that addresses you, that you should come prepared to defeat his purpose? Is it a self-complacent herald of his own fame; a vain propagator of his own opinions; a conceited exhibiter of his own talents; a man, who lives only on your breath, and who, if you withdraw your favour, must be content to shrink into insignificance and silence? No; it is, or it ought to be, a messenger of Jesus Christ, who maintains nothing on his own authority; who comes not to bind you to his interpretation as infallible, but to invite your feet into the way of peace, and to repeat to you only what God has already uttered. If he had no other authority, than that which his talents give him, and then asked you to rest on his decisions alone, you might, indeed, come prepared to refute him, or turn away with contempt. But, if he does not wander beyond his instructions, but refers to the same common standard of the scriptures, he does not deserve your prejudices. But, say you, he perverts and corrupts the word of God, and preaches not Christ, but his own imaginations. My friends, I cannot believe, that any man can stand up before you in the name of Jesus Christ, and, without any other inducements than those, which are commonly offered by this profession, deliberately prevaricate in this solemn employment, or disguise what he seriously believes to be the truth of the gospel. He can have no purpose, which is to be answered by the destruction of evangelical truth. All his interests on earth are centred in the success of christianity, and connected with the growth of true piety and virtue in the world. But, you say, he is miserably deficient in his statement of truth; and his hearers are perishing from his incapacity, or defects. What then! Does he not refer to the authority of Christ and his

scriptures as supreme? Does he not inculcate a temper and a practice, which, if it were followed, you will acknowledge, would make this world the abode of peace, and people heaven with blessed spirits? Yes; but he neglects to produce the only adequate motives; he does not give that representation of the doctrines of christianity, by which alone it can be rendered effectual. But let us not imagine, that God enlightens, and effects his great purpose of restoring mankind to himself, only by the partial views, which happen to be familiar to ourselves. If you find, that the preacher aims at the same object with yourself, and coincides with you in the great moral purpose of Christ's appearance, do not compel him to arrive at his conclusions and effect his object in the path, in which you have travelled; but rather thank God, that there are men of real sincerity and virtue, who can receive christianity in a form better suited to their ideas of God, and better adapted to their religious improvement, than your own.

Again, would you derive the greatest improvement from the public institutions of worship and instruction, endeavour always to enter these walls under a thorough impression of the nature of the duty, in which you are now engaging. For, my friends, in whose presence are we assembled? Of a few friends only, who have chosen this mode of passing an easy hour; of a preacher, a poor mortal like yourselves, who is placed here to furnish something for your curiosity? Are these the only beings, that belong to this place? O no; here we stand before the Majesty of heaven and earth, whose presence fills immensity; we come to pay our homage to him, who liveth for ever and ever, the support of all nature. We stand before a God of purity inexpressible, and of mercy everlasting. We come to learn the will of him, on whom our poor life every moment depends; we come to throw ourselves on his compassion, to con-

fess our sins, to devote ourselves to his service through Jesus Christ, and to learn what he has revealed to us of Himself, of ourselves, and of our destination. This is the threshold of a more glorious temple in the heavens; this is an entrance to the world, in which God discovers himself to the eye of man. In a few years, these privileges will have passed away; your prayers will ascend here no more; no more will the word of God reach your ears from this place; the follies of your attendance cannot be retrieved; lost opportunities cannot be recalled, and all that ingratitude and neglect, to which these walls have been a witness, will rise up before you, and reproach you with unutterable sorrow.

Lastly, would you derive a substantial advantage from the instructions of preachers, bring your own studies and reading in aid of them. Do you find yourselves unfurnished with religious ideas? Consider, I beseech you, is there any knowledge so interesting to you, as a moral and an immortal creature? What! is it of no consequence to you, that God, the supreme disposer of your fate through an eternity to come, has made you a revelation of his will? Can any thing be imagined more serious than such information, on which depends the salvation of your souls? Let me entreat you, then, to make yourselves and your children familiar with these scriptures, not by a blind and inconsiderate perusal of an occasional passage, but by a diligent study of them, as the records of God's will, and of human duty. Repose not implicit reliance on our representations, on the one hand; nor accuse us, on the other, of departing from the word of God, when we give you an illustration of a passage, which may not coincide with your previous opinions, or even with the first impressions, which the words suggest. For it is not always true in the scriptures, any more than many other works written in a foreign language, and in a mode of thinking so differ-

ent from our own, that the first and most natural meaning, which the words convey, is certainly the true meaning; but the history of God's will, as it stands in the scriptures, requires to be diligently and impartially explored, that our faith may not stand on the assumptions of men, but on the word of God.

But, especially, let me beseech you not to consider your task as accomplished, when you have finished your attendance here. The most important duty remains, to apply what you have heard to your own character and circumstances, and convert the general language of the preacher into personal admonitions and directions.

The great work of religious perfection is not to be accomplished by thronging to the sanctuary, and assisting at all the exercises and discourses of others; but by a studious attention to the state of your affections, by a practical application of religion to the business of life, and last, though not least, by fervent and frequent prayers to Almighty God to bless his word, to remove your ignorance, to quicken your understanding, and engage your affections at all times in the great work of your sanctification; that so, not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, you may be blessed in your deed.

SERMON XV.

PHILIP. I. 9.

AND THIS I PRAY, THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND YET MORE AND MORE.

THE natural tendency of public sentiment to pass the limits of moderation extends also to religion; a subject, in which, as all men are interested, almost all men have rushed into some extreme of doctrine or practice. The history of the church, it must be acknowledged, abounds with extravagances, which perplex the candid, and are the jest of the profane. Sometimes religion has been made to consist in violent affections; sometimes, in exteriour performances; now it is considered an affair of the understanding; and now, of the animal mechanism. In one age it is busied about what is mysterious; in another, about what is ecstatic; while by many it is always confined to what is barely rational, cold, unaffecting and simple. The character of individual christians is marked with a diversity of expression, corresponding, in some degree, to this variety of character in periods and in sects. The hearts of some men are tender, and their passions fervent; the temper of others is calm and equable, and wrought with difficulty into

ecstasy and rapture. Some are extravagantly fearful of extravagance, and are fortified against the approach of enthusiasm; while others look with jealousy on every exercise of reason, content with feeling what they know not how to explain, and care not how to understand. In this flux and reflux of prevailing and personal sentiment, it is our duty to attend to the bias of the age, to guard the character of true religion from the reproaches, it may suffer by the excesses of its ardent friends, or the lukewarmness of its indifferent professors. We are to see, that the waters of life neither waste away in noisy ebullition, nor remain cold and stagnant, silently evaporating without being moved.

Among many christian professors there is, perhaps, too much of a disposition to reduce christianity to a barren system of rational truths. They are apt to make it a mere collection of specific statutes, like a civil or criminal code, in which the precise amount of obligation, and limit of transgression, may be clearly ascertained. Men of inquisitive and speculative minds are in peculiar danger of preferring the exercise of the understanding to that of the heart, and thus of rendering the light of religion little more than a cold coruscation, which imparts no warmth to the region of the affections. But, my friends, when we consider how important a part of our constitution the affections are, and how much they do in ultimately determining the character of the man, you cannot suppose, that religion is the only subject, from which the exercise of them is to be excluded. When we consider, too, the infinite sublimity of religious truths, the influence they have on human happiness here, and on man's expectations for eternity, surely it cannot be, that he, who is impassioned on every other subject, may be always lukewarm on this, that the affections, which glow in every other sphere, must lose all their warmth, as soon as they touch the region of theology. If it

were enough merely to believe, we might believe as well in a malevolent, as a gracious being. If it were enough to know the sanctions, and to admit the obligations of a law, the character of the lawgiver would be of no consideration. If it were enough to keep the commandments according to the barren letter of the moral code, surely the first commandment would have been more than superfluous, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. But it is not sufficient, that the affections be merely admitted into religion. If they are allowed to enter it at all, they must enter it largely. If God is to be loved, he is to be loved supremely. If Jesus, though absent and invisible, is yet our friend, he demands, on our part, an attachment stronger than death, which many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown. If the soul is worth any thing, it is inestimable; you cannot love it too dearly. If the interest of any one of us reaches beyond this earthly scene, it spreads throughout eternal duration. It should move our feelings, as well as our thoughts. There cannot be awakened too deep a sensibility for the immortal welfare of a being, who is susceptible of innumerable gradations of bliss and wretchedness. I will not shrink, then, from the declaration, that, if you have never felt the pleasures of devotion, I must doubt your piety; if you have never felt the sense of your unworthiness, I must doubt your humility; if you have never felt the luxury of doing good, I doubt your generosity; if you have never felt the inexpressible worth of the christian revelation, if you have never glowed with gratitude to its author, and admiration of his character, you know nothing of christianity. I must say, if your soul has never soared into the region of immortality, if your expectations have never soared impatient for the free range of heaven, you know religion only as a law, and not as an enjoyment. It is your schoolmaster,

and not your confidential friend. You have not leaned upon the bosom of Jesus; you have only entered the lecture room of a philosopher. Such was not the disciple, whom Jesus loved.

The scriptures are written, it is true, in the language of orientals, and abound in phrases and expressions of such passionate hyperbole, as seem, to the colder and more chastised imaginations of the western world, like the language of exaggerated feeling. But, with all this allowance, and it is great, they cannot be made to describe a religion, which exists only in the head. There is not a worthy passion, which silently pervades, or tumultuously agitates the breast of man, that has not been enlisted in the cause of God, and encouraged in the scriptures. Hope, the most animated of the affections, is, in our religion, the swelling spring of ineffable happiness. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." The most impatient desires of religious improvement are represented, as a part of the christian character: "Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Let him that is athirst come, and I will give unto him the waters of life freely." Joy enters largely into the christian temper, "For the fruit of the spirit is love and joy." Sorrow, deep, piercing, and humiliating, is not excluded. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Gratitude, I need not tell you, is a vital principle of religious obedience; and compassion is a sentiment so essential to religion, that it has even given a name to the righteous; and a merciful is equivalent to a good man. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," was the passage so dear to our compassionate Saviour. Zeal, too, is not to be rejected for its abuses, if

Christ, when he gave himself for us, intended, not only to redeem us from iniquity, but "to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." To these christian affections I need not add the comprehensive one of love, for it is not only represented as the source, attendant, and result of true religion, but it is, in numerous passages, commended as the substance and epitome of duty, the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment. From this enumeration you may understand, that religion is not a bare comprehension of truths, not the knowledge and remembrance of facts, not the confession of a faith, or the observation of duties formally defined; but it is a celestial spirit, which mingles with and informs all our duties, in secret, and in public, which agitates the mass of our intellectual and moral faculties, which discovers itself in fears and hopes, joys and sorrows, gratitude and humiliation, earnestness and all-hallowed love.

I know there are some, who doubt the possibility, and more, who doubt the propriety of introducing the affections into real religion; and their objections we propose now to consider. As God must, in every system of faith, be the principal object of religious contemplation, if we can establish, upon rational grounds, the sentiment of love to him, the most important characteristic of the religion of the affections is secured. It is objected, then, that a being, so far removed beyond the limits of human conception, can hardly be the object of confidence and love. We can fear infinite power, we can be astonished at unsearchable wisdom, we can be awed by inapproachable purity, joined with inconceivable grandeur; but to love a being, who has nothing in common with mortality, nothing visible, tangible, or audible about him, is not within the ordinary exercise of man's affections. Yet it appears to me, that this single circumstance, that God is not the object of any one of

our senses, is abundantly compensated by the consideration, that he is never absent from us; that he compasseth continually our path and our lying down, and that we cannot remove a step from the sphere of his presence; that every sigh, which escapes us, reaches his ear, and not an affectionate movement springs up in our hearts, to which he is not intuitively attentive. The faintest glow of gratitude, which lights up the countenance, shines before his eyes; and the least cloud of godly sorrow, which passes over the brow, sends its shade to the throne of God, encompassed as it is with "undiminished brightness." Why, however, is the affection of love toward infinite goodness more unintelligible, than that of fear toward infinite power? A power unseen is commonly the more dreadful from its obscurity. Why, too, should not the other perfections of God, as well as his power, be the objects of affections, refined into more sublimity and purity, and wrought into higher force, under the chastising influence of an all-pervading awe? Let it not be inferred from any of these remarks, that God is to be loved, merely because he has been good to us, or because his favour may be profitable to us hereafter. Affection is nothing, which rests not in its object. Love of God, it is true, may be originally generated by acts of personal benefaction; but he, who, loves his Creator, merely because he has considered him as the source of all that he has yet enjoyed, and the security of all that he has yet to expect, loves him not yet for himself alone. If the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit on the vine, if the labour of the olive should fail, and the herd be cut off from the stall, such a man loses all the consolations of religion, and looks round in disappointment for a resting place for his affections. His God beams only in the sunshine; clouds come over his prospect, and, behold, his sun is set. No, christians, the love, which God demands, is disinterested and supreme.

It sways the mingled crowd of the other affections, and presides in the large assembly of the inclinations of the heart. "The christian's love of God," says Wilberforce, "is composed of admiration, of preference, of hope, of trust, of joy, chastised by a reverential awe, wakeful with continued gratitude."

But why is it, that, in religion alone, things spiritual and invisible are to have no command over the affections? Is not this theory perpetually disproved by every observation of men's ruling passions? The metaphysician becomes extravagantly fond of his obscure and lofty speculations. The mathematician is in raptures with the beauty of a theorem, of which the world sees nothing but the lines and angles. The artist glows with imaginations of ideal beauty. The man of taste has his fancies and his fondnesses, and discerns and loves a thousand inexpressible delicacies, impalpable to ordinary minds. And has religion nothing to elevate the soul, nothing to absorb the thoughts, to summon the passions, to make men feel? Because God cannot be seen, shall he be therefore excluded from our affections? Because he is purity and goodness, unmingled with the grossness of human nature, is the grandest object, on which our minds can dwell, to be for ever contemplated in distant, uninteresting speculation? God is not to be loved! Cold, calculating mortal, go with your theory and your conclusions to the company of the worldly projector; unfold them to the plodding drudges of avarice; proclaim them in the haunts of men and women without souls, and in the dens of savage philosophy. There they may listen to you. You have nothing to do among christians. It is all absurdity to your ear, that God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, that those who believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. No doubt, in your estimation, Paul was little short of a madman, when he exclaimed, I

am sure, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A more plausible objection to the admission of the affections into religion arises from the enthusiasm, to which they are said naturally to tend. Mysticism and fanaticism have ever had their numerous and insane admirers. I know, that some men are constitutionally apt to mistake their sensations for sentiments of the heart, and love to feel, rather than to think; men, to whom the fluctuations of their religious feelings are a kind of mercury to their religious improvement. Indeed, it is one of the hardest problems of religion, to define the sphere, or ascertain the extent, of religious affections. Good men, who have seen the heat of fanaticism generating in every soil a thousand noxious weeds, and innumerable mushrooms of sanctity, which have perished almost as soon as they appeared, have fled, perhaps too precipitately, to what has been called the frigid zone of christianity, where all is hard and frost-bound, and even the light of the region seems reflected only from snows, from which it plays without any joyous warmth, or fertilizing influence.

But why should we perpetually resort to the old fallacy of reasoning, from the abuse of what is good, to its utter inutility? Is it the affections only, which are liable to this corruption? Is not every thing valuable in human life exposed to grosser perversion, exactly in proportion to its greater intrinsic worth? What think you of reasoning? Has not that sure and celestial instrument of human instruction, as some would dignify it, been often debased into the most wretched sophistry, exerted in every possible form of fallacious deduction, and turned against the dearest interests and expectations of man? Suppose you could

convert christianity into a mere system of metaphysics, do you think it would be more stable, or influential, or excellent? Indeed, I think the abuses, to which our religion would then be exposed, would not be less deplorable, than those produced by the abuse of the affections. A sophism may be as fatal to the interests of the soul, as a convulsion or a trance; and is sometimes as rapid in its private circulation, as the progress of a sigh or a groan through a fanatical assembly.

I may appeal to you, that I have never been the advocate of what may be called the madness of sanctity; but, if christianity is to exist at all, my friends, let it exist with some vitality. Let us not substitute in its place a senseless, motionless statue of marble, however polished or well-proportioned. True, our religion is a religion for philosophers; but it is a religion also for men, for poor and ignorant men. It provides consolations, and joys, and hopes, as well as truths. You may sit calmly in your closet, and smile at the imagined raptures and holy musings, as you may call them, of your less informed fellow christians. But take care that the time do not come, when you may envy them their feelings; take care, that your philosophy does not chill the last blood, that passes through your heart. You may strive in vain to catch a breath of enthusiasm, to buoy you up in the arms of death. Your religion will not then first descend from the head to the heart. You have disdained the aid of the affections in religion, while your attention was engrossed in the affairs of the world, and you had enough of occupation to keep you from too much interest in the affairs of your soul. When you now find it vain to love the world any longer, when you find, that you cannot enjoy the fondness of your friends but a few hours, the soul, astonished and alarmed, looks round, as it departs, for an object for its affections. But in vain! All

before it is comfortless. Not a hold has the fond heart of any thing in the immeasurable void, which is deepening around it. God is its judge, but it wants a friend. Jesus was called its teacher, but the soul knows not how to embrace the feet of its deliverer.

But it is still further objected, that the affections are a fallacious test of religious worth; that we are in continual danger of mistaking the fervour of the spirit for genuine love of God, and transitory movements of the passions for internal principles of goodness. It is true, that the passions are an uncertain guide in religion; and the external and organical expressions of internal feelings are still more illusory. But this is not less true of every other external indication of moral goodness. The only being, whom it is finally important should not be deceived, cannot, for a moment, be deluded by the most consummate hypocrite, human or super-human. As to man, though the assertion may appear extravagant, I hesitate not to say, that we may be as easily deceived in the real character of others, if we judge from their public and visible actions, as if we judged only from their passionate emotions, or signs of high wrought enthusiasm. I am not more sure of the real internal worth of the man, all whose conduct is regular and punctilious, without passions and without variations, than I am of the enthusiastic and zealous christian. Under the show of regularity, the former may conceal a hard heart and a cunning hand. I am not more sure of the piety of him, who regularly goes up to the sanctuary, and perhaps, dozes away his hour, or statedly puts up a lifeless prayer at home, than of his, whose zeal keeps him in the continual ardour of religious exercises, in public and in private. Under all this form of godliness there may be hid much sanctimonious imposition. No, my friends, there is no modification of human conduct, that may not de-

ceive us; and as to self-deception, I know not whether the formal observance of external duty may not, sometimes, delude us into greater errours with respect to ourselves, and encourage a more dangerous self-complacency, than the equivocal glow of the feelings, and agitation of the nerves. Hence the objection, that the affections, in particular, are a fallacious test of real holiness, is of inconsiderable consequence; but it is not of inconsiderable consequence to remember, that he may well be suspected, who, on every other subject, is warm and impetuous, but in religion, is indifferent and cold. That man may well be suspected, who takes an active interest in every event that transpires, is busy in every project that is undertaken, but, in religion only, is idle, inattentive, and incredulous. Such a man is not to plead, that his feelings are not easily excited, or that his constitutional temperament is lukewarm; and one would think, that, if he were dead to every other sentiment, the immense interest, which he himself has at stake in eternity, and the still greater interest of a whole world of living souls, to whom religion is all important, would rouse every latent spark of passion in his breast, and suffer him not to rest in the cause of God, till the affections themselves were quenched in the flood of death.

In what remains of this discourse we shall consider the modifications, to which religious affections are subject from various causes, and some of the means, by which the affections are repressed and destroyed. Though it appears from what has been said, that the exercise of them constitutes a most important part of the religious character, you cannot fail to have observed, that, in men of apparently equal seriousness, they discover themselves in very unequal degrees. It is not always fair to conclude, that the highest visible emotion indicates the highest degree of religious sensibility. Perhaps it may be rather con-

cluded, that men, in similar circumstances, and under similar preparatory discipline, usually possess a more equal degree of this sensibility, than is commonly imagined; and that the difference between them is, that some are cautious and reserved, others unguarded and communicative, in the expression of it. The causes, that modify the exercise of the affections in different minds, are extremely numerous, and some of them we proceed to consider.

1. The external exhibition of a man's religious feelings depends much on his original temperament. Some men are cautious and cool. They are ever on their guard against the contagion of passion; they refuse to be wrought upon by eloquence, and are with difficulty awakened by animated representation. Modest and retiring in their dispositions, they love to conceal the impressions, which they receive, and, particularly in religion, they dread the eye of curious observation. There are many men, whose ruling passion and whose favourite bias you will hardly discover, even after an intimate acquaintance. They never thoroughly expose themselves, though there is nothing in their hearts, which they should be ashamed to unveil. I doubt not there are thousands, who practise, in secret, exercises of devotion, of which the world suspects nothing, and which, if it did suspect, it might deride. Thousands, from timidity, or from indecision, avoid those means of religious cultivation, which might call forth more of their religion into public view, than they are willing to display. Would to God I could believe this class to be more numerous, than that of those, whose religious feelings are never to be recovered from that flood of worldly and selfish pursuits, in which they are for ever overwhelmed!—Others, of sanguine temperament, are easily affected by the language of feeling, and readily catch the tones of passion. They love the sympathetic communion of souls; and hasten to kindle the torch of religious af-

fection at every light, which they discover in another. These are the first in every exercise of piety, and rush forward in every project of benevolence. They seem to be destined, in the arrangement of Providence, to serve as leaders of his great purposes. They call forth the less sensible, and move the less active, who, sometimes, at last outstrip their predecessors in the race, though they themselves would never have started first in the course. They can hardly tolerate any other, than an affectionate and tender mode of religious instruction. They think, they have gained nothing, if they have not been wrought into powerful emotion; and suspect themselves of unfruitfulness, if they have not felt the dews of divine grace sensibly descending on them. These men are easily seduced by novelty, and rush instinctively towards the most ardent minds. They are often imposed upon by the show of zeal in others; and are too apt to suspect a want of piety in those, who fall below the actual temperature of their own feelings. In short, when they are truly sincere, they are among the best of christians; but when disguised, or worldly passions have mingled with their religious affections, they are the most troublesome and dangerous of men.

2. The religious affections are also considerably modified by the difference of the doctrines embraced. Those, who consider the human race as originally corrupt, as utterly lost in the depravity, which pervades their nature, are frequently plunged in the most distressing anxiety, and humbled with an oppressive sense of their inherent loathsomeness in the sight of a God of purity and justice. Hence, as soon as their minds are directed to other and more cheering truths, as the benignity of Jesus and the fulness of God's grace to the penitent, a light breaks in upon their dark and dreary meditations. The change in their feelings is entire. They exult in raptures of gratitude,

and triumph in the greatness of their deliverance. Their previous conceptions of the character of God, as a being of inflexible justice, form an inexpressible contrast to their views of Jesus, who appears a ministering angel of comfort, pardon, and grace. Their religious life afterwards is made up of extreme fluctuations of feeling, according to the views, which happen to predominate in their minds: and, if they do not fall into spiritual pride and self-complacency, they preserve, through life, much of the enthusiasm, which is inspired by the awfulness of some, and the sweetness of others of their contemplations. Those men, on the contrary, whose system excludes these views of hopeless depravity, and who are fond of dwelling on the benevolence of the divine character, are seldom hurried away by excessive transports, or overwhelmed with the despondency of dread. Their affections are habitually equable, usually reverent, seldom violent, and sometimes cold. Their system, too, as far as it respects the character and offices of Jesus, leads them to transfer more directly to God, the Father, many of those affections, which other christians bestow almost exclusively on the Son. Though they often feel the sublime spirit of devotion, and rise on the wings of hope to the abodes of unsullied perfection, yet they do not rise from such an abyss of wretchedness, as the others, and they seldom sink again below the ordinary level of human feelings.

3. The affections, also, are modified by the metaphysical direction of religious inquirers. Some men seem to find a substitute for the simple exercise of the affections in a most intense application of the understanding: and while the unlettered christian seeks, in his frequent, but superficial contemplations, for a few plain and striking truths, the abstruse inquirer is involved in deep speculations, and finds an interest in them, which is mistaken for religious af-

fection. "Indeed, strong reasoning powers and quick feelings do not often unite in the same person. Men of a scientific turn seldom lay their hearts open to impressions. Previously biassed by their love of system, they do, indeed, attend the offices of religion, but they dare not trust themselves with the preacher, and are continually upon the watch to observe, whether every sentiment agrees with their own particular tenets."*

We pass over some other modifications of the religious affections, and would now attend to some of the causes, which most effectually repress and ultimately extinguish them. We would remark, by the way, that the circumstances hitherto enumerated, though sources of diversity in the manner of exercising religious affections, are by no means inconsistent with them, by no means inconsistent with a supreme love of God, genuine charity to men, deep interest in the world to come, or with any of the secret joys or sorrows of a serious mind. But there are pursuits of life, and habits of mind, which repress, and others, which utterly destroy, the religious affections, which freeze the current of the soul's best feelings, and leave us but a name to live, while we are dead.

Among these last must be reckoned worldly and avaricious pursuits. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. There is not a maxim in religion more sure in its application. An excessive love of the gains of worldliness obscures all the finest feelings of the heart, and incrusts all the faculties and sentiments worthy of a rational, an immortal soul. If a worldly man sometimes thinks of God, as a personal benefactor, he can feel no complacency in his character of universal and disinterested good will. He has no place for what is sublime, spiritual, and intellectual. When such a man attends

* Mrs. Barbauld's Essay on Devotional Taste.

on the public offices of devotion, he never resigns himself to the impressions of awe and sanctity, which belong to this place, nor does he open his heart to the influences of piety. He is brooding over his disasters, his gains, and his speculations. The regular habits of business, or the moral sense remaining in the community, keep such a man within the limits of legal and honourable dealing. Beyond this sphere his conscience never expatiates, it never inquires, and seldom accuses him. With him gain is godliness. His desires do not extend beyond this world's goods, perishable as they are. In his retirement the prospects of new acquisitions are the only visions, which float before his eyes. When he composes himself to sleep, the last thought, which visits him, arises from the earth, and drives away the shadowy forms of heavenly things, which were gathering round his pillow. And, if he commend himself to God, as soon as the formal duty is done, Mammon springs upon his prey.

I say, then, the love of gain is encroaching and despotic; and the longer it predominates, the more heart-hardening is its influence. It checks every elastic effort, which the soul makes toward heaven. It makes a man unworthy of the very pleasures he can enjoy; and I know not a more dreadful punishment for the mind, in which this principle reigns, than to disclose to its view the joys above, which it cannot reach, to give it a glimpse of satisfactions immortal and uncorrupt, which it cannot relish, and then condemn it to the perpetual and grovelling labours of avaricious and earthly pursuits.

Another destroyer of the religious affections, and the last, which we mention, is the love of pleasure. There are two classes of men, that are governed by the love of pleasure; the gay and fickle, who are ever lost in the rapid succession of amusements; and the sensual, who are for ever plunged in gross and criminal enjoyments. The time and the passions of

the former are all monopolized. The ideas of God and of heaven will not harmonize with the gay and busy spectacles, in which they seek for satisfaction. The souls of such men revolt at the intrusion of religious ideas; and the expectation of an approaching amusement chases away the recollection of all that is serious. Abstract contemplations and invisible things can have no charms for the mind, which follows continually the ever-changing figures of fashion; and such a mind must be debilitated in all its powers, and lose even its terrestrial affections, by the fickleness and folly of all its exercises. As it would be impossible for an astronomer, to make any observation on the remote and celestial luminaries, who should be gazing continually on the clouds, that flit across the sky, and noticing, through his glass, the innumerable successive hues which gild them, so the mind, that is pursuing the endless varieties of dissipation, knows nothing, thinks nothing, and is interested in nothing, which is pure, intellectual, and heavenly.

The love of sensual gratification is yet more degrading. All the passions of those who cherish it seem to be converted into appetites; all their affections, into lusts. If religious feelings of a spurious character unite, as they sometimes do, with carnal passions, a most horrible and depraved combination is formed, which brings disgrace upon the holiest affections of the soul. No, christians, the love of pleasure and the love of God are irreconcilable. They are at continual war; and they never can divide the empire of the same breast. I shudder to think, vain and profligate man, how far you are from the temper of the gospel! It appals me to imagine the sufferings, which will be necessary to bring you even to consideration. And how dreadful may be the discipline, which must bring your heart to enjoy a pure, holy, and spiritual religion, God only knows. Will you, then, continue to love supremely a world, which

will desert you? Will you loosely ramble on the brink of perdition for the worthless flowers of pleasure, which you can gather there? O sinner, think, I beseech you, how fearful a thing it will be, to stand before a God, whom you have never loved; to see a Saviour, whom you have never deigned to honour, and whom, by your conduct, you have treated with every species of neglect and contumely. Remember, senseless and brutal man, heaven is not a place for earthly minds. If your affections have not been placed above, you will not find there a friend to welcome you; you will not find a joy, which you can taste, or a thought familiar and dear to your meditations. Christians, I pray God, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent.

SERMON XVI.

PROV. XXV. 28.

HE THAT HATH NO RULE OVER HIS OWN SPIRIT, IS LIKE A CITY THAT IS BROKEN DOWN, AND WITHOUT WALLS.

No man can be said to have attained complete rule over his own spirit, who has not under his habitual control the tenour of his thoughts, the language of his lips, the motions of lust and appetite, and the energy of his passions. This shows you at once the extent, and the division of our subject. By its extent you will immediately perceive, that it excludes from the praise of self-command much of what passes in the world for great moderation. There are many men of such stagnant and heavy tempers, that no irritation can provoke them, and no injuries rouse them to resentment; men, who are never thrown off their guard by rage, and yet indulge with much complacency in all the grossness of animal pleasure, and resign themselves, soul, spirit, and body, to the tyranny of sensuality, intemperance, and lust. To compliment such men with the praise of self-mastery would be absurd; yet this virtue is, in general, supposed to consist in the mere suppression of anger. There are others, who seem to have established a

perfect control of the tongue, that little member, which setteth on fire the course of things; men guarded in speech, careful of offence, using knowledge aright, who yet secretly cherish a spirit of unextinguishable resentment, and take no pains to conquer a passion, which they find it so easy to silence. There are others, who exhibit the utmost modesty of speech, temperance of appetites, and gentleness of passions, who yet indulge the wildest rovings of thought, and expatiate in the vainest reveries of an undisciplined imagination. Let us then consider the several provinces of self-government. And

1. The government of the thoughts. After all that has been written and recommended on the subject of self-command, the regulation of the thoughts has seldom drawn the attention of moralists. The imagination is supposed to be a faculty, which is not to be controlled, or directed. As our thoughts cannot be discerned by others, nor their habitual current determined by exterior observation, they do not enter into the estimate made of our characters by the world, and are, therefore, unregarded in our judgment of ourselves. On the authority of silly maxims, like these, that thought is free as air, that no one can help what he thinks, innumerable hours are wasted in idle reveries, without the hearing of censure or the suspicion of blame. But when we consider, how great a portion, even of the most active and busy life, must unavoidably be spent in thinking, and that complete inactivity is a state of mind unknown, even to the most sluggish of our race, the employment of the thoughts rises into unexpected importance, and constitutes no inconsiderable trait of character. The time, which we fondly supposed to be merely wasted in doing nothing, may have been busily employed in mischievous imaginations, and thus, what was considered as lost simply, is found to have been abused. When we reflect, also, that every licentious princi-

ple, every criminal project, and every atrocious deed, is the fruit of a distempered fancy, whose revings were originally unchecked, till thoughts grew into desires, desires ripened into resolves, and resolves terminated in execution, well may we tremble at discovering, how feeble is the control over our imaginations, which we have hitherto acquired. If we were asked, in the solemn language of the prophet, how long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? few of us, it is feared, could return a satisfactory answer.

It is, indeed, to be lamented, that our rules of vice and virtue are applied so seldom to what passes within ourselves. Others must form their judgments of us from our actions and words only, but not so should we form our judgments of ourselves. The indulgence of a loose imagination is not a crime cognizable by the world, till it has betrayed itself in conversation, in writing, or in action. Thus, what others cannot censure, because they cannot know, we forget to estimate, or are afraid to examine, till correction is hopeless and impracticable. To suppress a rash speech, or curb a craving appetite, is sometimes attempted with success; but who ever thinks of checking a rising thought, or reining in a headstrong fancy? Who voluntarily draws off his attention from a seducing subject, or resolves to think no more of a favourite project, lest his imagination should lead him astray, lest his principles should be polluted, his temper injured, or his time wasted? But out of the heart, says our Saviour, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies. At the head of this formidable enumeration are placed evil thoughts, the invisible, airy precursors of all the storms and tempests of the soul; and it would be no less absurd to use no precaution against the violence of the wind, because its motion is invisible, than to take no care of our thoughts, because

their operations are unseen, and their tenour unmarked by others.

We do not say, that he, whose head teems with foolish fancies, is as reprehensible, as he who vents his folly in conversation, or who spreads it over the pages of a book; or that he, who suffers his imagination to dwell on impure ideas, or to portray licentious images, is guilty of a crime, as heinous as that of the wretch, who endeavours to inflame the lusts, or violate the purity of the innocent. We do not say, that Cæsar, brooding over his schemes of ambition in his tent, was as guilty as Cæsar passing the Rubicon, and turning his arms against his country; but we do say, that licentiousness of thought ever precedes licentiousness of conduct; and that many a crime, which stains the page of human nature, was generated in the retirement of the closet, in the hours of idle and listless thought, perhaps over the pages of a poisonous book, or during the contemplation of a licentious picture.

The hints, which we have now suggested, as to the importance of restraining the imagination, cannot be deemed improper in an age, of which it is the misfortune, to be inundated with books, whose smallest fault is their stupidity, and whose only permanent influence, where they have any, tends to pollute all the sources of reflection, to fill the fancy with figures unlike any thing in real life, the understanding with principles inapplicable, doubtful, or dangerous, and the heart with hopes, that it would be folly to realize, with wishes, which it would be ruin to gratify. The imagination, when completely distempered, is the most incurable of all disordered faculties. Watch, then, its first wanderings, and remember, that you have made little progress in the government of yourselves, if your thoughts disdain your control. Remember, also, that, when the thoughts are under

habitual restraint, the government of the tongue, the appetites and passions easily follows.

2. The second branch of self-command is, the government of the tongue. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. This will not appear an extravagant assertion, when we consider how numerous are the vices, in which this little member takes an active part; that it is this, which wearies us with garrulity, defames us with calumny, deceives us with falsehood; and that, but for this, we should be no more offended with obsceneness, shocked with oaths, or overpowered with scandalous abuse. Well might the apostle write, if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.

If we consider these vices of the tongue in the order of their enormity, we shall see how easily one generates another. Talkativeness, the venial offspring of a lively, not to say an unrestrained fancy, hardly rises to a fault, till it is found, that he, who talks incessantly, must often talk foolishly, and that the prattle of a vain and itching tongue degenerates rapidly into that foolish talking and jesting, which, as an apostle says, are not convenient. Loquacity is forward and assuming, and soon becomes tiresome. The story, a thousand times told, loses, at last, its humour; and a jest, a thousand times repeated, is despoiled of its point, and palls upon the ear. Something must then be found to revive flagging attention; and what is so universally interesting as slander? The faults of our neighbour are then dressed up in all the charms of exaggeration; and the interest of a description is found to be amazingly heightened by a stroke of ridicule, or a tinge of sarcasm. In a listening audience, at every new calumny passed upon another's reputation, some one is found, whose fancied credit revives, and rises on its ruins in all the lustre of comparison. The tongue then riots in its new

privilege, till, at length, "at every word a reputation dies." All this may be done without deliberate malignity, and without violation of truth; because, to speak evil of most men, it is not necessary to speak falsehood, and to pour contempt upon another, it is not necessary to hate or to abhor him. Remember, then, that the tongue must be sometimes restrained, even in uttering truth. To justify a froward mouth by a zeal for truth, is commonly to assign, as a previous motive, what occurred only as an after apology. As we may flatter by an unseasonable and lavish expression of merited approbation, so we may calumniate by an incautious and unrestrained disclosure of real defects. A word spoken in due season, how good is it!—but remember, that death and life are in the power of the tongue, and the tongue of the wise only useth knowledge aright. Thus far the unguarded talker, we observe, may have proceeded without misrepresentation, and without mischievous intention; but he, whose vanity has been long flattered by the attention of an audience, will not easily relinquish the importance he has acquired in particular circles, or see, without uneasiness, that interest decline, which his company has been accustomed to excite. Hence, as the stock of scandalous truths is exhausted, fiction lends her aid; and he, who was before only a prater, a jester, or a tattler, degenerates into a liar, who entertains by falsehood, and a calumniator, who lives by abuse; and instances are not unfrequent of men, whose moral sense, by a process similar to this, has become so entirely obscured or corrupted, that they will utter falsehoods with the most unconscious rapidity, and the most unreflecting indifference. Such are the habits, which follow, in alarming progression, from an unrestrained indulgence of the tongue. Is not the danger formidable enough to induce us to say, I am purposed, that my mouth shall not transgress: I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.

The catalogue of sins is not completed. Impurity and profaneness are not far behind. The first, indeed, bespeaks such grossness of vice, and the latter, such thoughtless impiety, that we presume it is almost superfluous to denounce them in this state of society, and from this place of religious instruction. If, for every idle, unprofitable, false or calumniating word, which men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment, what account shall those men render, whose conversation first polluted the pure ear of childhood, first soiled the chastity and whiteness of the young imagination, whose habitual oaths first taught the child to pronounce the name of God without reverence, or to imprecate curses on his mates with all the thoughtlessness of youth, but with all the passion and boldness of manhood?

Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show, out of a good conversation, his words with meekness of wisdom; for by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.

3. We proceed to the third branch of self-command, the government of the animal appetites. Dearly beloved, I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. For how humiliating is the consideration, enough, indeed, to make us weep with shame, that man, the noblest work of God on earth, the lord of this lower world, whose spirit the pure breath of omnipotence breathed forth, whose understanding was formed to grasp at unlimited improvement, and enabled to rise, and purify, and spiritualize, as it enlarged—that this noble creature should suffer himself to fall into the hands of the grovelling mob of appetites, and to be fettered by base lusts, which ought to be his slaves—that this ethereal spirit should be wasted in the service of sensuality, and this intelligence, capable of mounting to heaven, be sunk and buried in the slime and pollution of gross

and brutal pleasures. When you look around you, then, and see, on every side, how vast is the number of immortal souls, chained to earth, and lost to heaven, how deeply deplorable is the sight? Will you direct your observation to the lower classes of society? There may you see intemperance boasting of its victims. You see limbs enfeebled, and faculties clouded with intoxication. You meet, at every turn, the ruins of robustness; and of understanding you hardly discern the parting vestiges. Will you ascend to the rich and more polished classes of society? You see luxury in the room of intemperance, and a refined epicurism taking the place of vulgar sensuality. Instead of intoxication, stretched on a pallet of straw, you see repletion, reposing on a bed of down. Instead of an appetite, craving for its burning draught of daily poison, you see a fastidious taste, nicely discriminating flavours, and pronouncing upon delicacies, a sated palate, longing for variety, and rejecting it, as soon as offered. Instead of the reeling of vulgar drunkenness, you see sluggish bodies, bloated by habitual excess, or else pining away in the midst of luxury and abundance, till sickness imposes too late the restraints, which reason could not enforce, or sudden death snatches his gorged and swollen victim from the very table of his revels.

But to descant on the evils of an intemperate indulgence of lust and appetite, is, perhaps, useless. Instances are numerous within every one's observation, and admonitions are to be found in the page of every moralist. The most frequent operation of unrestrained desires discovers itself in an inordinate pursuit of pleasure, or what is, with great significancy, called, in modern times, dissipation. To analyze this species of pleasure, is almost impossible. It is the well-known tyrant of modern society, the idol of restless and unoccupied minds. The inquiry of its numerous votaries is not, what shall we eat, or what shall

we drink, but wherewithal shall we be clothed? Who will show us any new good? Who will invent for us a new pleasure? Who will rid us of the irksome task of thinking? Who will snatch us from the horrours of solitude, and the pain of obscurity, and kindly transport us to some busy scene of untried amusement? This disposition for perpetual dissipation, when exhibited in its excess, may be called rather a madness, than a passion. To say, that its unhappy votaries are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, seems to be a description, which falls far short of the extremity of their case. They are lovers of pleasure, which has no definite object; slaves of restive desires, which fix on nothing. They exhibit pitiable spectacles of wishes never satisfied. They stand as awful examples of self-anarchy and internal misrule. Their thoughts, their time, and even their passions, are lost in the whirl of endless dissipation.

4. But let us leave these mournful examples of the degradation of our nature, and proceed to the last branch of self-command, which we proposed to consider, the government of the passions. Not to be in a passion, is generally the amount of the notion, which the world entertains of self-command. But, excellent as is this attainment, we conceive, that it embraces but a part only of that extensive rule, which the christian is expected to maintain over his own spirit. In the broad scheme of gospel ethics, the opposite to anger is meekness; and meekness is no narrow or superficial virtue. It is a grace, which receives little of the applauses of the world; a grace, which Jesus alone inculcated, and which no philosopher of ancient times seems to have understood, or recommended.

The meek man of the gospel is the very reverse of those, who act the most bustling and noisy part on the theatre of human life. He finds himself in a

world, where he will be oftener called to suffer, than to act. He is not ambitious, because he sees little here worth ambition. Humility is the gentle and secret stream, which runs through his life, and waters all his virtues. To the government of the passions, the principal prerequisite is the restriction of the desires; therefore, as he expects little from the world, he will not often quarrel with it for the treatment he receives. In short, the meek man of scripture considers himself placed here, not in a state of enjoyment, but of trial; and to be passionately fond of pleasures, which are insecure, or to be passionately disturbed at injuries, equally transitory, seems to him utterly unworthy of a being, destined soon to leave this scene of rebuffs and disappointments, and capable of existing for ever in a region of immortality and peace. Finding himself, at present, in a state full of jarring elements, and of violent changes, the sunshine, which is frequently interrupted without him, he endeavours to preserve in mild lustre within his own breast. No dark clouds of discontent, no storms and whirlwinds of passion deform the serenity of his mind. Where others are transported, he is calm; where they are restless, he is patient; where they are passionate, rude and unforgiving, he is mild, peaceable, full of mercy, and reconciliation. His control of his passions is not so much the result of any present and strong resolution, as of the general temper of his mind. When he is reviled, he reviles not again, because he feels no disposition to revile. When he suffers, he threatens not, because the style of threatening is, to him, an unknown tongue. He has been accustomed to commit his cause to him, that judgeth righteously. How equable is the career of meekness! How easily sits upon the meek man the government of his passions! How gracefully does he sway his sceptre! He is not in perpetual danger of suffering from excess, he is not obliged unceasingly to

watch, and curb, and rein in a wild and headstrong spirit; but his course through life is gentle and secure, as it tends to that peaceful bourne, where he will find quietness and assurance for ever.

How unlike this the spirit of the times! How little does this temper consist with a state of passions in constant turmoil, with provocations ever recurring, and quarrels hardly appeased; a state marked with incessant agitation of the spirits, and feverish sensibility to injury or insult! A meek man in this world of our's is hardly acknowledged by his species. For what shall he do in a society, where to kindle with resentment, is spirited and noble; and to retaliate an affront, is the dictate of honour? What shall he do in a world of restless beings, where some are climbing after dangerous power; others labouring for wealth, which never satisfies; others dissolved in pleasure, which gradually destroys? Where shall the meek pupil of Jesus hide, in this bustle of contending passions and unrestrained pursuits? He will find, alas, that this is not the place of his abode. He must live above the world, while he lives in it, that he may breathe a purer and a calmer air. From this elevated retirement, look, christian, with steadfast eye on the author and finisher of your faith. He was not of the world. And why? Not because he was in the form of God; but because he could assume the form of a servant, and wash the feet of his disciples; because he could refuse the offer of royalty, bear indignity without resentment, and become obedient unto death, despising the shame, even of the cross itself. Surely it is little to expect of the servants of such a master, that they should at least be angry and sin not, that they should be slow to speak and slow to wrath, in the midst of a hasty and irritable generation; for he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.

Thus have we attempted, cursorily, to review four branches of self-government, the control of the thoughts, of the tongue, of the appetites, and of the passions. We have seen, that, when unrestrained, they become the most dangerous of tyrants. We have seen, that their first excesses must be resisted, and even lawful indulgences denied them, if we would escape being brought under their power.

But, we doubt not, it will be said by those, who have never thought of checking a wish, or controlling a passion, which ever arose in their hearts, that the restrictions we impose are too severe; that they cannot be maintained, but with much trouble and self-denial; and that, if strictly enforced, they would subtract too much from the sum of human enjoyment, during the hasty term of a frail life. To attempt to prove, after so many instructers, philosophers and divines, that no substantial enjoyment is lost, nor the real sum of sublunary happiness diminished by these salutary restraints, would be tedious, if it were not superfluous; for, to show the misery of unrestrained indulgence, we have only to ask, what can exceed in wretchedness the inquietude of the revengeful, the pains and diseases of the sensualist, the perpetual weariness of the slave of dissipated pleasures, or the gnawing remorse of the man, who has indulged himself in rash and bitter speeches, which he cannot retract.

But let us grant, that self-denial is as painful, as it has been falsely represented. Let us grant, that the government of ourselves is a work, which requires uninterrupted labour and unpleasant attention. Is this uttered as a complaint by one, who, as a follower of Jesus, has virtually professed to deny himself? Are we to profess the most pure and holy religion, which the goodness of God ever granted to mortals, without a single distinguishing mark of our privilege? Shall all the religions, which imposture and superstition have

in every age established, be able to impose penances, on their disciple, to encourage mortifications of the flesh, to require sacrifices of pleasure, and even martyrdom of life; and cannot the system of the gospel lay a restraint, which will hold, or obtain the sacrifice of a passion, a lust, or a pleasure, worth retaining? It has been well observed, that, "if christianity requires from its votaries a higher degree of purity, and a stricter command over the passions, than any other religion, it has a right so to do; because it affords proportionably greater helps towards accomplishing that great work, and a proportionably greater prize to recompense the labour. For, however severe this struggle with our appetites may be to us, and severe enough, God knows, it sometimes is, yet it is our comfort, that, if we endure to the end, these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

This suggests another consideration to enforce our subject. Is it possible, that he can complain of the restraints, which christianity imposes, who has ever heard of the rewards, which it promises? How eloquent, upon this subject, is the apostle of the Gentiles! Know ye not, says he to the Corinthians, in whose sight were annually exhibited the celebrated Isthmian games, know ye not, that they, which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even in these races, every man, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible. I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Pursuing, then, the apostle's reasoning, let

* Bp. Porteus, Vol. II. p. 236.

us ask, if the incorruptible crown of heaven is to be attained without an effort, or is unworthy of one? Are the pure joys of a future state to be grafted, think you, on the sensual indulgences of the present; and, while, with one hand, we cling to the delights of the world, can we stretch out the other, and lay hold of eternal life? It is absurd and impious to suppose, that such rewards are to be attained without a sacrifice; and think you, that you can merit them by those petty self-denials, which may, perhaps, have forced themselves upon you in the course of your vocations? At the approach of indisposition, you may have submitted to short restraints upon your appetites; in obedience to the forms of polite intercourse, you may have controlled your boisterous passions; on the death of a friend, you may have slackened your career of dissipation; in the presence of a superiour, you may have suppressed intemperate language, and checked the oath just escaping from your lips. And for these petty victories do you expect the wreath of honour? Are these the afflictions, which are to work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Indeed, the disproportion is too serious. God grant, that, when we have offered to bear the cross of his Son, we may not be secretly endeavouring to ease ourselves of its weight.

Finally, my friends, those of you, who are now fighting manfully the good fight of faith, be of good courage. The contest will soon be over. The struggle with passion, though here not completely successful, shall be crowned with victory hereafter in the regions of everlasting peace, where no insolence affronts, and no revenge pursues. The baser appetites, which, even in the best of men, sometimes retain an unhallowed force, shall lose their office in a world inhabited by pure intelligences, and their power in bodies refined and spiritual-

ized at the resurrection of the just. The tongue, that unruly member, shall not wander from the praises of its author; and the imagination shall be employed on those subjects of celestial contemplation, which at once fill and surpass the conceptions of man; such as eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

God grant, that we, who have this hope in us, may purify ourselves, even as God is pure.

SERMON XVII.

1 COR. XI. 31.

IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES, WE SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED

No action, sentiment, or occurrence is presented to the human mind, on which it forms not some kind of judgment. The multitude of objects, over which the mind ranges, is innumerable; and the extent of human comprehension, though not infinite, is at least undefinable. All that earth, air, seas, and skies contain, submit themselves to man's investigation. The heavenly bodies appear to come down, and offer themselves to the inspection of the inhabitant of this little planet; the records of time unrol themselves to the observation of this creature of threescore years; he looks from his narrow chamber on the manners and inhabitants of the remotest regions; nay more, he seems to explore futurity, to converse with the world of spiritual existences, and ascend in contemplation to the throne of God. In this mighty range of thought, next to that great Being, who fills, embraces, and sustains the whole, the most interesting object of speculation is the human mind; and to every individual, his own mind is an object, in comparison with which every other is unimportant. But the knowledge

of one's self, though so interesting, is not an easy acquisition; and to pass a strictly unbiassed judgment on our own character, is an act of impartiality, of which the records of the human mind never have furnished, and, probably, never will furnish an example.

The duty of self-knowledge is one of those few, which the heathens estimated according to its importance. To the precept, know thyself, they ascribed, with no great propriety, a heavenly origin; for there is no one, whose utility unassisted reason sooner discovers. The passages, also, in scripture, which urge this personal virtue, are numerous, pointed, weighty. We are taught its value, sometimes by direct injunction, sometimes by interesting narrative; we gather it, in one place, from the prayers of the pious; in another, from their expressions of regret; and in another, from the examples of their presumptuous confidence. When we read the parable of the ewe lamb, by which the holy prophet taught the monarch of Israel the enormity of his guilt, who marks not the wretched blindness of the royal scholar, who suspected not his own character, till the fearless Nathan exclaimed, Thou art the man? Hear, too, the aspiring Hazael, when the prophet warned him of his guilty usurpation: Is thy servant a dog, says he, that he should do this? Who weeps not, too, when he finds the ardent, but too confident, Peter, declaring, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee? Yes, Peter, you will deny him once, twice, thrice, even within the reach of that eye, which, while it tells you, that you are forgiven, teaches you more of yourself, than you ever yet have known.

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. Let us consider the difficulty, the advantages, and the means of forming a correct estimate of ourselves. The portions of our character, which it most concerns us to understand aright, are, the ex-

tent of our powers, and the motives of our conduct. But, on these subjects, every thing conspires to deceive us. No man, in the first place, can come to the examination of himself with perfect impartiality. His wishes are all necessarily engaged on his own side; and though he may place the weights in the balance with perfect fairness and accuracy, he places them in scales unequally adjusted. He is, at once, the criminal, the accuser, the advocate, the witness, and the judge.

Another difficulty, which prevents our passing a correct judgment on our own characters, is, that we can always find excuses for ourselves, which no other person can suspect. The idea of possessing an excuse, which it would be improper to communicate to others, is consolatory beyond expression. Frivolous as the apology may be, it appears satisfactory, because, while no one knows its existence, no one can dispute its value. From repeated failures in any undertaking few men learn their own incapacity; because success depends upon such a concurrence of circumstances, minute as they are numerous, that it is much easier to lament the blameless omission of something, which would have ensured success, than to look full in the face our own deficiencies. It is the same with the opinions we form of our moral worth. The motives, which co-operate in producing almost every action, are so various and almost imperceptible, that, in contemplating our conduct, we can select those that are honourable, and assign them that influence afterwards, which they ought to have had before. By frequently defending, also, the purity of our motives, we learn, at last, to believe, that they are precisely what they ought to be; and mistake the eloquence of self-apology for the animation of conscious integrity.

Another, and very essential cause, of our ignorance of ourselves, is, that few men venture to inform us of

our real character. We are flattered, even from our cradles. The caresses of parents, and the blandishments of friends, transmute us into idols. A man must buffet long with the world, ere he learns to estimate himself, according to his real importance in society. He is obliged to unlearn much of what he has been told by those, who, in flattering him, have long been used to flatter themselves. And when, at last, he learns to compare himself with others, to correct his false estimates, and to acquiesce in the rank, which society assigns him, he is assisted, not by the kind admonitions of friends, not by the instructions of those, who take an affectionate interest in his character; but he must gather it from the cold indifference of some, from the contempt and scorn of others; he must be taught it by the bitterness of disappointment, and the rudeness of superiority, or the smiles of exulting malice.

This leads us to the last difficulty, which we shall mention, as preventing our forming a correct estimate of our own characters. We fondly imagine, that no one can know us as well as we know ourselves; and that every man is interested to depreciate, even when he knows, the worth of another. Hence, when reproved, we cannot admit, that we have acted amiss. It is much more easy to conclude, that we have been misrepresented by envy, or misunderstood by prejudice, than to believe in our ignorance, incapacity, or guilt. Nothing, also, more directly tends to swell into extravagance a man's opinion of his moral or intellectual worth, than to find, that his innocence has, in any instance, been falsely accused, or his powers inadequately estimated. In short, unless a person has been long accustomed to compare himself with others, to scrutinize the motives of his conduct, to meditate on the occurrences of his life, to listen to, nay, even to court the admonitions of the wise and good, and to hearken to the language of calumny it-

self, he may pass through life intimate with every heart, but that which beats in his own bosom, a stranger in no mansion so much as his own breast.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, which oppose themselves to the forming of an impartial judgment of ourselves, a good degree of self-knowledge, however, is not unattainable. When we shall have considered, secondly, its advantages, perhaps we shall be encouraged to enter with vigour on this new course of study. You may, at first, find the investigation difficult. You will, no doubt, make many unpleasant discoveries. Entering on a region, which you have never explored, a full prospect of your heart, if it could be presented at one view, must surprise and appal you. But proceeding, step by step, in the survey, though you will find, at first, many dark and narrow defiles, many hidden and dangerous pit-falls, many spectacles of unexpected deformity, yet, if you regularly, carefully, and perseveringly pursue the investigation of yourself, the prospect will, at last, brighten, the region will become more open and level, and your progress, at last, smooth, easy, and delightful. To encourage you, then, in this inspection of yourselves, we observe,

1. That an intimate knowledge of ourselves is absolutely necessary to the security and improvement of our virtue and holiness. It is true, that a good man may be ignorant of his own comparative worth; but no good man is ignorant of his own absolute defects. He, who is unacquainted with those portions of his character, in which reformation is most needed, will never make any progress in virtue, for empty wishes and indefinite desires of improvement alone cannot make us better. To be stationary in religion, morals, knowledge or capacity is impossible; and the character, which does not improve, will infallibly degenerate. If, then, you would secure the conquests, which, with the blessing of God,

you may have already attained over the enemies of your virtue, you must endeavour to place a guard at every gate, a sentinel in every watch-tower; you must visit all the weak places of your hearts, mark them, and place there a stronger force; you must be aware of every stratagem, and watchful of every symptom of defection, or remissness.

2. The knowledge of ourselves would preserve us from much of the calumny, the censure, and the contempt of others. If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. When we look round upon the judgments of men, we shall find, that most of the severity, ridicule, and reproach of the world is bestowed upon what are called follies, rather than upon vices. We laugh at vanity, oftener than we censure pride. We condemn mistakes with asperity, where we pass over sins with gentleness. Conceited ignorance, ostentatious parade, blind zeal, and glaring absurdity are treated by the world at large with greater severity, than open profligacy, sensuality, and crime. Against the contempt, which pursues such qualities, self-knowledge will effectually guard us. He, who thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself, says the apostle; he deceives not others. But he, who thinks of himself soberly, even as he ought to think, will seldom be mortified by the contempt, or degraded by the derision of the public.

3. A man, who knows himself, will know more of others, than one who boasts of studying mankind by mixing with all their follies and vices. Man has often been termed a little world, a world in miniature; and every individual is an epitome, perhaps, of the society, in which he lives. In general, we are impelled by similar passions, and occasionally engaged in similar pursuits. The same temptations assail, the same artifices deceive, the same motives impel us, though with various success, and unequal

repetition. He, who has been accustomed to watch the motions of his own mind, and to scrutinize the character of his own actions, will, in general, judge with more justice, and always with more candour, of the conduct of others, than any of those, who value themselves on their knowledge of life. There is something, which passes in the world for penetration and sagacity, which consists in always finding fault, where fault may be found; in suspecting baseness, when integrity is not clear; in condemning without scruple, where others hesitate to decide; and in predicting the worst, when the prudent doubt, or the timid are alarmed. But the man, who knows himself, will be ready to pardon mistakes, to conceal absurdities, to inform ignorance, to pity folly, and to account, at least, for vices, which he cannot excuse. When he censures, he censures qualities in others, which he has not failed to reproach in himself; and when he applauds, he applauds what he knows how to value, either from the struggles, which it has cost him to acquire it, or from the wretchedness, which he suffers from its absence. He will not strike without mercy, who feels himself the tingling of every stroke. It is ignorance of ourselves only, which makes us the libellers, or the self-constituted judges of others.

4. Self-knowledge will preserve us from being deceived by flattery, or overborne by unmerited censure. The language of adulation sounds in the ears of a man, who knows himself, like the language of reproach. He receives it, as a gentle admonition of what he ought to be, rather than as a description of what he is. He is humbled, rather than elated by extravagant praise; and is disposed to pity the ignorance, or suspect the designs of the man, who, whenever he approaches him, holds out a compliment, or whispers an encomium. Even when he is sensible, that, in any instance, he merits approbation, yet, when he considers

his innumerable deficiencies, failings, wants, unknown to all but himself, the praise, which he receives, seems to him to have little more foundation, than the enthusiastic anticipations, which travellers sometimes express of a country, which they have never seen, where they expect a cloudless sky, a temperate climate, a luxuriant soil, a happy people; but, upon exploring which, they find the same vicissitudes of weather, as at home, similar ravages of disease, similar miseries of poverty, and equal, though different vices, prejudices and defects of society. The man, too, who knows himself, learns to bear reproach. If he knows, that it is merited, he is silent, but suffers not the opportunity of improvement to escape him. He puts on no empty airs of resentment, or affected surprise. If it is unmerited, he can look up, with humble eye, to heaven, and say, My record is on high; or, if he suspects himself, he will ask, like the anxious disciples, Lord, is it I?

5. He, who examines himself, will learn to profit by instruction. Philosophy and revelation, moralists and friends, the press and the pulpit, are perpetually holding up characters for our detestation, and yet we profit not by the picture, we see not the resemblance, till some Nathan, bolder than the rest, exclaims, Thou art the man. Then we turn round in surprise, and wonder at the insolence of the prophet. We attend upon the public institutions of religion. The preacher portrays a character. We listen and admire. We recall the picture. What prominence of figure; what liveliness of expression; what strength of colouring! We are asked, for whom it was intended. In a moment we answer, it is this man. Does it resemble no other? Yes. And we instantly point, with much complacency, to a second, and a third, and then sit down in unsuspecting possession of the original. O Lord, examine me, and prove me, try

my reins and my heart; and that which I see not, teach thou me.

Lastly, if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged, at least, by the Judge of heaven and earth; that is, we shall not be unprepared for the judgment seat of Christ. It is impossible to imagine a more solemn and yet miserable object, than a presumptuous, unreflecting, thoughtless man, standing at the bar of God. All the gay and gaudy trappings of self-applause fall off, and leave a poor, miserable, naked and shrivelled body of worthlessness, depravity and folly. He turns from the view of his own deformity; he shrinks in vain to avoid the eye of omniscience. He thought himself innocent. Guilty of few open vices, he passed through the world unreproached. He now sees, that his innocence was nothing but inaction; and that he was unreproached, because unknown or despised. He thought himself pious; he finds, that he has been only a formal repeater of solemn words. He thought himself temperate; he finds, that he was often a cowardly venturer to the brink of excess, whence the danger of his health only called him. He thought himself just; but he sees, that he has been unequitable within the limit of the law. He thought himself charitable; but finds, he never made a disinterested sacrifice; hospitable, but he was only ostentatious; compassionate, but he was only childish. He thought himself zealous for truth, but he finds it was only for system; patriotic, but he was only a partizan; forgiving, but he was only cowardly. Think, then, can you bear to be stripped hereafter of so many fancied excellencies? Are you ready now to submit your motives to the eye of omniscience? Have you ever ventured to look with a steady eye into your own hearts? Dare you read to the bottom of the page? Are you not afraid to find there the sentence

of your condemnation? Do you know what manner of spirit you are of?

The time will not allow us to consider, minutely, the means, by which this knowledge may be attained. A few general precepts must conclude. First, then, suspect yourselves. Do not be afraid of doing yourselves injustice. When you suspect, watch your conduct; and detect, if you can, your predominant motives. Depend upon it, you will struggle hard to deceive yourselves. Compare yourselves, then, with the word of God, and with one another. Recollect, that what appears disgraceful in others, cannot be honourable in you; and what diminishes your esteem of them, ought to diminish your esteem of yourself. Find, if you can, some disinterested and sensible friend, who will have the courage to disclose to you your faults, and the goodness to assist you in correcting them. But, above all, look up to the Father of lights, lay yourself open to the eye of almighty mercy, and cry, Lord, who can understand his errours? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

SERMON XVIII.

EPH. II. 5.

BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED.

This simple proposition, though often in the mouth of christians, is yet not without its difficulties. Every believer in the gospel acknowledges its truth; and yet there are very few men, who would entirely coincide in their interpretation of the passage.

It is not to excite your surprise, that we shall now proceed to enumerate some of the most popular senses, in which this proposition has been understood, but only to guard you against being carried away by the dogmatical assertions of men, who are contented with detaching a form of scripture words from the place where it is found, and insisting, that it means only what they choose to understand by the phrase.

What then is the meaning of grace? When spoken of God, it means simply, gratuitous kindness, and thus is it often applied to any thing, in which his favour is discovered. Thus the gospel is called the grace of God. The terms *saved*, or *salvation*, originally mean deliverance from danger, from disease, or evil of any kind, and hence, are often used with a latitude, which embraces all the benefits, derived

from the introduction of the gospel, whether relating to this life or the next, including of course the healing of the mind, and deliverance from the power and consequences of sin.

The following are some of the interpretations, which the clause in our text has received.

1. There are many, who understand by the proposition, by grace are ye saved, that man can do nothing towards his own salvation. By grace, they understand a supernatural operation of the divine spirit, which effects a change in the moral nature of a man, toward which his own exertions contribute nothing; and where this change is effected, salvation is certain, and thus God is not only the ultimate source, but the sole and immediate agent in the production of goodness in moral beings.

This, in technical language, is the doctrine of human inability. It represents the moral state of man to be such, that he can do nothing to save himself from ruin; for, if it were otherwise, his salvation, it is said, would not be of God, but of himself.

In this statement, it is obvious to remark, that though there is a sense, and a very just one, in which man can do nothing without God, it cannot be regarded as any derogation from the grace or glory of God, to admit, that man can do all, that God enables him to do. God governs and treats his moral creatures in a moral way; and it would seem to be charging God with folly or contradiction, to say that he offers men means and motives to virtue, while he has provided them with no capacity to use the one, and no susceptibility of the influence of the other, without his own immediate and extraordinary operation. To a plain man, there is no greater mystery in our dependence on God, in the affair of religion, than in any other. We are to be saved, indeed, by grace, as by grace we are, every moment, preserved from natural and moral ruin; that is, by the goodness of

him, who gives us our powers, and appoints us our circumstances.

Others, on the contrary, to avoid the perversion, to which the interpretation just stated is exposed, and by which christianity has suffered, think, that they sufficiently answer the meaning of the apostle, when they admit, that man is not saved, either by his own exertions, or by the operations of divine grace alone, but by the concurrence or co-operation of God's spirit with human endeavours. Thus they suppose, that grace, by which they mean spiritual influence, is communicated to all good men, in answer to prayer, or in consequence of human endeavours, and especially in seasons of great temptation, trial, necessity, or peculiar infirmity; and yet always in such a silent manner, as not to be distinguished from the natural operations, or ordinary state of our minds. Thus, say they, we are truly saved by grace, because, if left to ourselves, we could not work out our salvation, but should, infallibly, sink in the arduous undertaking. In this way they propose to avoid the difficulties, attending the doctrines of human merit or ability on the one hand, and those of human inability and irresistible grace on the other; while their adversaries say, that they only unite, in one unintelligible scheme, the real difficulties of both. Perhaps the principal advantage of this mode of interpretation is, that it seems to allow sufficient meaning for the various phraseology of different passages of scripture, while it leaves the real metaphysical difficulty of man's dependence and activity as inexplicable as ever, and as much open as before to the disputations of those, who wish to penetrate into the secrets of the divine influence on moral agents.

There is yet another class of christians, who conceive, that men are said to be saved by grace, because the introduction of the christian religion, by which men are prepared for salvation, or a state of future

happiness, is a singular instance of the grace or undeserved favour of God. It is a proof of his care, to which mankind had no claim, and of which they had no previous desert. It was God's grace or favour only, which originally appointed Jesus the mediator, and sent him into the world; it is God's gratuitous or unmerited kindness, which provides the means of reformation and recovery offered us by christianity, which gives the promise of pardon to the penitent, establishes the hopes and wishes of immortal life. It is in consequence of God's favour, that we are born under this dispensation; and if we attain, at last, to the salvation, which it offers us, by grace only do we reach this felicity, because it is pure goodness, which originally furnished the means.

In all these interpretations of the clause, by grace ye are saved, you may have observed, that it is taken for granted, by the different parties, that the apostle refers to the final salvation of those, to whom he is writing; but it is at least doubtful, whether this is here the meaning of the apostle. You well know, that the term, *saved*, is used to express any kind of deliverance, temporal or eternal; salvation from danger, from disease, from miseries of various kinds, from intellectual darkness, from doubt or despair, from habitual corruption, from present condemnation, and from everlasting punishment. When Peter, in the name of the apostles, cries out, in the midst of a storm, Lord *save* us, for we are perishing, every one understands him to mean, deliverance from the immediate danger of shipwreck. When our Saviour discovers in the sick woman a remarkable confidence in his power of curing her, and other dispositions worthy of his favour, and says to her, Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee, no one imagines him to mean any thing more than this, to your faith you owe the recovery of your health. So when the jailer, alarmed by the earthquake, and fearful that his prisoners

had escaped, rushed into the presence of the apostles, crying out, Sirs, what shall I do to be saved? the best interpreters understand him to mean, how shall I best consult my safety; and when Paul says in reply, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your family shall be saved, he not only includes the idea of present security, but extends the meaning of the word to embrace the spiritual benefits, which would follow from his reception of the christian doctrine.

If now we examine the meaning of the apostle in the clause before us, we shall find, that he cannot here refer to the eternal salvation of those, to whom he is writing. He says of them, that they are now saved, not that they will be saved hereafter. Here is an actual and present privilege, and not the unconditional promise of a future benefit. That the Ephesians had not then entered upon the heavenly felicity, it is unnecessary to prove; they could not, therefore, be then saved, in the sense, in which we commonly use the term. Neither is it probable, that the apostle meant, they had been made subjects of an irresistible and effectual grace, from which they could never fall; that their final salvation was as certain, as if they had actually entered upon it; for though we may believe, that there would not be an impropriety in figuratively saying, that *they* were saved, who had only an infallible security of being saved, yet we cannot find, that this was the idea of the apostle, or of the early interpreters, but only a fiction of later theologians. No! the apostle's meaning cannot, perhaps, be more exactly expressed in English, than in these words, by God's unmerited favour are ye delivered. If it is asked, from what the Ephesians were delivered by the grace of God, I answer, from the ignorance and wickedness of their former heathen condition. This is the only salvation intended in the passage under

consideration; their final salvation still depended on the use they made of the new light, the new motives, and the new means, which they enjoyed, for virtue and happiness.

In support of this interpretation, let me refer you to the words, which precede the text, and to the whole strain of this epistle. On what does the apostle continually insist? Does he say, you are now secure of an eternal salvation, and, therefore, you have no conditions of acceptance to perform? Far from it. The whole tenour of his exhortation is this: By God's favour you are delivered from the darkness and miseries of your idolatrous state. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord. Walk, therefore, as children of the light. The blessings, you already possess, are but the pledge and foretaste of those, which the same grace will bestow on you hereafter, if you walk worthy of God, who hath called you to glory and virtue.

If any one, in consequence of the explication, we have given of this passage to the Ephesians, should accuse us of diminishing the grace of God in the final salvation of believers, and of encouraging the obnoxious plea of human merit, let such person first know whereof he speaks, and what he affirms. We believe, and so must every christian, that if any of us reach at last, under Jesus Christ, the blessedness of his heavenly kingdom, it will be through the grace or gratuitous goodness of God, whose grace alone introduced the christian dispensation, whose grace has fixed the terms of acceptance and forgiveness in mercy, and not in the rigour of law, and, finally, whose grace alone could have offered a reward, so infinitely transcending the deserts of the believer. Salvation, under the gospel, begins, proceeds and terminates in grace; and although we do not believe, that it was the apostle's intention, in this particular

passage, to state all these principles of our religion; yet we are so impressed with their truth and importance, that we propose to illustrate them in what remains of this discourse.

In the first place, it would be enough to justify the propriety of the assertion, that final, as well as present salvation is of grace, to remark, that the introduction of the christian dispensation, under which we live, is an instance of the undeserved goodness of God. No reason can be assigned for the mission of Jesus Christ into the world, but the love of God to his rational creatures. Nothing but grace could have led him to look with an eye of pity on the state of mankind, and provide a method of recovering any part of them from the dismal influence of idolatry, in which they were sunk, or from the unfavourable and uncharitable operation of the Jewish economy, in the state to which it had then fallen. Indeed, no motives, but those of pure benignity, can be assigned for God's granting to his creatures at all any light beyond that, which unassisted nature furnishes. It was not his fault, but man's, that they had debased and extinguished much of that illumination, which reason had given, or which he had vouchsafed to them in former communications. God would not have been unjust, if he had left our race to all the consequences of their self-depravation, to the miseries of superstition, to the horrours of idolatrous worship, and to all that moral darkness, in which the world was enveloped before the coming of the Christ. It was, then, because God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If, then, a single christian attains to glory, honour, and immortality, under this gracious dispensation, it is by grace he is saved. For no one man or nation has a claim to the light, which it furnishes, to the motives, which it affords, to the promises, it makes, to the pardon, it extends, or to

the eternal life, which it discloses. These advantages, by which so many men are recovered to spiritual life, who, without this, would have been sunk in idolatry, are the benefactions of a merciful Father. If, then, christian, in consequence of your knowledge and improvement of the gospel, you are saved at all, it is by grace you are saved; and for this grace you ought to be unceasingly grateful.

2. But not only may we say, with great justice, that every christian, who attains to heaven under the gospel dispensation, is saved by grace, because it was pure grace, which sent Jesus Christ with this religion into the world; but the terms of human salvation, under this dispensation, are conditions of favour on the part of God; and the system proceeds altogether upon the principle of benignity or kindness. God is represented as forgiving the sins of mankind, upon their repentance, and as receiving them to his favour, upon their faith. The terms of acceptance are not a strict and literal conformity to the whole law of God, without any place for repentance, or allowance for infirmity, for, if this were the case under the gospel, who then could be saved? but the gospel is introduced, as a dispensation of grace, in contradistinction to that of law. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The new covenant, as it is called by the writers of the New Testament, in opposition to the Old or Mosaic, is founded upon better promises; and the situation of mankind, with reference to God, as their moral governour, is exhibited in a different light.

The terms of our salvation, under the gospel, are not laid in a sinless obedience to what may be called the rule of right, but in the sincerity and strength of the principle, from which our obedience proceeds, or, in other words, of our faith. The difference between law and gospel is this: that, by the former; considered as a law, no provision is made for human trans-

gression; its language is positive, unbending, and unaccommodating; and if God's conduct towards his creatures were to be guided purely by what we may call legislative exactness, we should have no hope of escaping from the condemnation, to which every man, as a transgressor, is exposed. It is in opposition to this view of God's government of his creatures, that the gospel is so often called grace, a spirit, a life, in other words, a principle of faith. It provides for remission, for pardon, and for repentance. It represents God, in the light of a father, disposed to receive the returning child; as a friend, who looks at the disposition, which his creatures exercise towards him; as a gracious governour, who wills not, that any should perish, but rather that they should come to repentance.

In this view, the gospel is continually held up by the apostles in opposition to the law; it is called a spirit, and not a letter; life, and not death; grace, and not condemnation. I do not say, that this has not always been God's method of justification, from the beginning of the world; indeed, the apostle to the Romans seems to declare, that it has; and that, in fact, the gospel, or rather, that faith, which is the principle of gospel obedience, is as old as Abraham. I say only, that the christian dispensation is the first, in which the character of God has been expressly and explicitly exhibited in this parental light, as justifying men freely by his grace, and as accepting a principle of sincere faith, and the practice of unreserved repentance, instead of legal, strict, and unerring obedience.

But even if we had no other dispensation, with which to contrast the christian, yet whoever looks into his own character, and considers the terms of the gospel salvation, the impossibility of our ever attaining to eternal life, on the ground of merit, and the very nature of those promises, which the gospel con-

tains, must be sensible, that if he is made heir of an immortal life at all, he must be saved by grace, and cannot be sufficiently thankful for a religion, which throws such a light on the character of God, and relieves the mind of man from its misapprehensions and doubts on the subject of pardon.

This leads me to say, thirdly, whenever, as christians, we look into our own characters, and then at the heaven, which is opened to the true believer, and observe the astonishing disproportion between the rewards promised and the service done by us, we feel the whole truth of the assertion, by grace are ye saved, in the sense, in which it is commonly used. The first honest attention to our own characters discovers to the christian the absurdity of the doctrine of merit, in the sense of our deserving reward from the hands of a holy and just governour. There is not a law of God, which we have not broken; there is not a class of duties, in which we are not sensible of defective performance. The law of God requires of us love to him with all our hearts. Who is there, that can boldly step forward, and put in his claim to the rewards of heaven, on the ground of the complete performance of this law? Is the case easier with the law relating to our social duties, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself? The man must be foolish or infatuated, who can believe, that his obedience has been such, either in spirit, in extent, or in constancy, as that he may go and demand a compensation from the justice of his God. On the contrary, no fact, in the history of religious men, is more certain than this, that their humility before God always increases with their piety and virtue; and *they* are most sensible of their need of God's mercy, whose characters, in the estimation of the world, are thought to put in the strongest claim to reward.

But even if it could be allowed for a moment, that it might be said, without abuse of language, with re-

spect to some very good men, that they were worthy of a better world than this—which is a form of speech, however, to which there are very strong objections—yet, when we consider the terms, in which the state of the blessed is described, how can we imagine for a moment, that even the best of men have merited, or could merit, such a reward? For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. When you add to all this the idea of this reward being unlimited in duration, as well as inconceivable in greatness, who will not say, that it is infinitely beyond any thing, to which man can have a right or a pretension? When, therefore, the scriptures teach us the exceeding grace and mercy of God, as displayed in the salvation of men, they teach us the same doctrine, which a consciousness of our own deficiencies establishes and confirms. What we feel in ourselves, corresponds with what we read in scripture.

But, against this doctrine of salvation by grace, there have been raised two objections, which I should think myself unfaithful to the subject, if I neglected to consider. The first is founded, not in just views of christian doctrine, but on the systems and vain interpretations of men. It is asked, how can God be said to forgive us freely or gratuitously, if, as is sometimes declared, complete satisfaction is already made to his justice, by the death of Christ, for all the transgressions of those, who are admitted to partake in the benefits of his death? If, by the punishment which some represent as inflicted on Christ, as the substitute of the human race, the claims of God's law are satisfied, it is no longer mercy, but justice in God to accept those, for whom this satisfaction has been made. How, ask they, can it with any propriety be said, that we are saved by pure favour, after such an atonement has been made by the blood of Christ?

To this the common answer is, that we are to ascribe it to the pure good will of God, that he accepted any atonement or provided any satisfaction; and, therefore, we may still be said to be saved by grace, because it was grace, which made it just to save us. All this confusion follows from men's substituting words or inventions of their own, in place of the general expressions of scripture.

The death of Christ is no where in scripture spoken of in such terms, as make it necessary to imagine, that a strict equivalent has been paid to God for the transgressions of mankind. The terms, satisfaction, substitution, and some others, equally used on this subject, are not to be found applied to it in scripture, but only in the systems of theologians. If we will but go back to the simplicity of the faith and language of scripture, we shall find, that all which Christ did, and suffered, from his birth to his painful death, proceeded from the antecedent love or favour of God, and was a part of his great design to recover mankind from sin. The idea of satisfaction to an offended Deity, never once enters into the different statements, which are made of these facts. There is nothing in scripture, which represents, that Christ has made it just for God to forgive sins now, upon repentance, when it would not have been before. The dispositions of God toward mankind, or the principles of his government are not altered by the death of Christ; on the contrary, the disposition of mercy, by which we must at last be admitted to everlasting life, is the same, which sent Jesus into the world, and admitted Jew and Gentile into the church of Christ.

Unless, therefore, we affix to the death of Christ ideas of an efficacy, which the scriptures do not ascribe to it, there is no kind of inconsistency between the merits of this death and the gratuitous dispensation of pardon upon repentance; but both the death of

Christ, and the acceptance of mortals are alike parts of the same gracious scheme, and flow from the same sentiments of mercy in God. We only embarrass ourselves and our religion, when we attempt to introduce the legal ideas of substitute, equivalent, surety, or satisfaction.

But a more important objection still recurs. If the grace of God is so gratuitous, as you represent it, and if the death of Christ, though you do not choose to call it a satisfaction, has any efficacy in the forgiveness of the sins of mankind, how is this to be reconciled with the indispensable necessity of good works, for which the apostles have, in so many places, taken care to provide? I might answer this question by saying, that the nature of christian salvation is such, that it is impossible for any but a good man to enjoy it; and christianity cannot alter that original constitution of the moral world, by which God has made salvation or happiness dependent upon virtue.

But if this should not be deemed satisfactory, or accommodated to every apprehension, I shall be excused in giving, in conclusion, the following quotations from one of the plainest and most popular of writers.*

"In the business of our final salvation, there are naturally, and properly, two things, viz. the cause and the condition; and these two things are different. We should see better the propriety of this distinction, if we would allow ourselves to consider well, what salvation is: what the being saved means. It is nothing less, than, after this life is ended, being placed in a state of happiness exceedingly great, both in degree and duration; a state, concerning which it is said: the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that

* Paley's Works, Vol. iv. p. 275. Boston Edition.

shall be revealed." "It is, out of all calculation, and comparison, and proportion, above and more than any human works can possibly deserve. To what, then, are we to ascribe it, that endeavours after virtue should procure, and that they will, in fact, procure to those, who sincerely exert them, such immense blessings; to what, but to the voluntary bounty of a God, who, in his inexpressible good pleasure, has appointed it so to be? The benignity of God towards man hath made him this inconceivably advantageous offer. But a most kind offer may still be a conditional offer. And this, though an infinitely gracious and beneficial offer, is still a conditional offer; and the performance of the conditions is as necessary, as if it had been an offer of mere retribution. The kindness, the bounty, the generosity of the offer do not make it less necessary to perform the conditions, but more so. A conditional offer may be infinitely kind on the part of the benefactor, who makes it, may be infinitely beneficial to those, to whom it is made; if it be from a prince or a governour, may be infinitely gracious and merciful on his part; and yet, being conditional, the condition is as necessary, as if the offer had been no more, than that of scanty wages by a hard taskmaster.

In considering this matter in general, the whole of it appears to be very plain; yet, when we apply the consideration to religion, there are two mistakes, into which we are very liable to fall. The first is, that, when we hear so much of the exceedingly great kindness of the offer, we are apt to infer, that the conditions, upon which it was made, will not be exacted. Does that at all follow? Because the offer, even with these conditions, is represented to be the fruit of love, and mercy, and kindness, and is, in truth, so, and is most justly so to be accounted, does it follow, that the conditions of the offer are not necessary to be

performed? This is one errour, into which we slide, against which we ought to guard ourselves most diligently; for it is not simply false in its principle, but most pernicious in its application; its application always being to countenance us in some sin, which we will not relinquish.

The second mistake is, that, when we have performed the conditions, or think, that we have performed them, or when we endeavour to perform the conditions, on which the reward is offered, we forthwith attribute our obtaining the reward to this our performance or endeavour, and not to that, which is the beginning, and foundation, and cause of the whole, the true and proper cause, viz. the kindness and bounty of the original offer. This turn of thought, likewise, as well as the other, it is necessary to warn you against. For it has these consequences: it damps our gratitude to God; it takes off our attention from him. Some, who allow the necessity of good works to salvation, are not willing, that they should be called conditions of salvation. But this, I think, is a distinction, too refined for common christian apprehension. If they be necessary to salvation, they are conditions of salvation, so far as I can see."

I can add nothing to the simplicity, or perspicuity of these statements. I will only, therefore, beg you to remember, that the grace, and mercy of God, in the salvation of men, so far from diminishing the necessity or the obligations of holiness, constitute, in fact, the strongest obligations and motives to christians to lead a life of unreserved and grateful virtue; otherwise they are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, by despising the riches of God's forbearance, and neglecting this great salvation.

SERMON XIX.

LUKE XVIII. 10.

TWO MEN WENT UP INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY; THE ONE A PHARISEE, AND THE OTHER A PUBLICAN.

CONFESSION of our sins, and humiliation on account of them, are not duties, which belong exclusively to our prayers. But, if ever the sense of our unworthiness ought to take full possession of the soul, it is, when we stand in the presence of God, when, after acknowledging his purity, and contemplating his bounty, we turn to the consideration of the sinfulness of our hearts, the ingratitude of our conduct, and the poverty of our best services. It is, however, much to be feared, that, in our intercourse with God, as well as with one another, we are not always thoroughly honest. Accustomed, as we are, to put on our best dress, and keep back our deficiencies in our conversation with mankind, especially when we are ourselves the subjects of it, there is much reason to suspect, that we sometimes carry, either our vanity, or our equivocation and concealment, to the foot of the mercy seat, and there, as well as in the world, we think to appear better than we are. Sometimes our confession of sins degenerates into an act of cus-

tomary formality, or, what is far more dreadful, we confess them, that we may recommence, with a lighter heart, the career of transgression. To correct these dangerous errours, and to assist you in the performance of this part of duty, let us attend to the following instructive parable.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The gates of the sanctuary are thrown open for the admission of all, who choose to enter its courts. The foot of the hypocrite does not stumble at the threshold; nor are the uplifted hands of the profane and polluted blasted and withered in the midst of their devotions. Even now, these walls enclose, with equal security, the devout and the dissembling, the humble and the haughty, the Publican and the Pharisee. In man's undiscerning eye, the incense of their prayers seems to mingle; but, through this cloud of disguises, the eye of heaven pierces into the intention, and explores the heart, which we are not allowed to penetrate or judge. The duties of the Lord's day have summoned us here, my friends, as usual; and we agree to bar out, for a time, the importunate cares, and not less importunate gayeties of the week. God knows the spirit of our prayers; and it may be well for us to remember, that, of the two men, who went up to the temple to pray, one went down to his house justified, rather than the other; they returned as they came, one a Pharisee, the other a Publican.

The Pharisee, continues the parable, stood and prayed thus with himself: "God, I thank thee, I am not, as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican." You are, perhaps, surprised to find, that a sentiment of this nature should have gained a place in the prayers even of a Pharisee. But out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, even at the footstool of the Almighty; and the man, who has been fond of comparing his

own advantages and attainments with the imperfections and disadvantages of his inferiours in life, will be little disposed to humble himself in the presence of his God. My friends, we never shall acquire a fair knowledge of ourselves, if this is the method we take to form the estimate; for who cannot find many in the circle of his acquaintance, with whom, in some respect, he will not suffer by comparison? When you consider, then, how inclined we all are, however unconsciously, to compare ourselves with those in the same rank or occupation of life, and when we observe, also, that every man is naturally most intimate with those, whose moral taste and attainments are of a rank with his own, have we not some reason to suspect, that the spirit, if not the language of the Pharisee have sometimes mingled with our prayers, and checked that humility, with which they ought ever to be accompanied?

But let us carefully trace the workings of this Pharisee's mind. He first thanks his God, that he is not, as other men are, an extortioner. He had not wrung from his debtors their hard earnings, nor snatched the bread from their children's mouths, nor left the parents to pine away in the cold damps of a dungeon. He had always been contented with sober gains. To the Publicans he had cheerfully left the collection of a hateful tribute; therefore, he had been guilty of none of the extortions and oppressions of office, concerned in no usurious contracts, or cruel impositions. He was surprisingly free from sins, which he had neither opportunity nor temptation to commit; and, with this wondrous purity, he comes into the temple of his God to indulge his self-complacency!

He next is thankful, that he is not an adulterer. He has not been willing to run the dangerous risk of being stoned to death by the laws of Moses, of which he was, perhaps, a constituted expositor; and for this, too, he thanks his God.

The catalogue of his excellencies would, perhaps, soon have been exhausted, even in his own account, had he not, perchance, turned his eyes upon a poor Publican, who had also come up to the temple to pray. The sight of this man adds another clause to his impious prayer. "God, I thank thee, I am not as this Publican!" The Publicans were a class of men exceedingly odious to the Jews, because they were the appointed collectors of a revenue, which, with a reluctance never to be subdued, was paid by this obstinate nation to the emperour of Rome. It is true, the receivers of this tribute were, in general, not less iniquitous than hateful; and nothing but the most extravagant propensity to self-applause could have found any satisfaction in a consciousness of superiority to this despised class of his countrymen. Here, indeed, closes the Pharisee's enumeration of vices, in abstaining from which he congratulates himself.

And now let us turn, my hearers, from this fictitious story, the temple, the Pharisee, and Jerusalem, and look at our own times, our own churches, our own characters. How often, in our secret meditations and prayers, have we deluded ourselves, and offended God, by partial estimates of our moral worth! In examining ourselves, how hastily do we suffer our thoughts to glance over the dark, and repose with delight on the bright portions of our character! In our commerce with men, do we not try to lure their gaze to these illuminated spots, and even venture to hope, that they may catch and please the eye of omniscience itself? Do we not value ourselves most upon our freedom from those sins, which we are least tempted to commit; and think it a great virtue to have been afraid of a great vice? Few of us are extortioners; fewer, perhaps, adulterers. We do not outstrip the age in degeneracy; and we do not care to fall far behind it. We are not guilty, forsooth, of

any sins but those, which most easily beset us; we allow ourselves those indulgences only, which belong to our profession, our occupation, our rank in the world. Are we to expect contrition, humiliation, godly sorrow, and repentance, in the prayers of such men—men, who prefer complaining of the increasing corruption of the times to stepping out of their old place and manners to resist its progress, and who compose their consciences by the thought, that the world abounds with more corrupt inhabitants than themselves?

The Pharisee, however, in the parable, relies not entirely on his freedom from atrocious guilt. He has yet in reserve some works of supererogation, to recommend himself more certainly to the God, who hears and disdains his prayer. "I fast," says he, "twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess." These fasts, it should be observed, were not required by the law of Moses. They were imposed only by the traditions of the Rabbins, and adapted to impress an ignorant populace with an opinion of their peculiar sanctity, temperance, piety and punctuality. It is true, that religious fasting is not the method, by which we are now disposed to discover our reverence for religion, or secure the reputation of saints. At the present day, a man would not be in the road to applause, if he were discovered by his fellow citizens praying at the corners of the streets, or if he were known to introduce two fast days into his domestic arrangements for the week. But, though we are not now so Judaical, or so ignorant, as to suppose, that such punctilious observances can atone for the want of piety, or of integrity, still are there none, who take to themselves undeserved credit for many habits and opinions, in the hope of concealing their want of the real spirit of christianity? Thus, it is popular, I had almost said fashionable, in the society, in which we live, to acknowledge, with much

seriousness, the importance of religious institutions, and to condemn, without reserve, that infidel philosophy, which had almost effected the desolation of the civilized world. It is creditable, at least among us, to lend to the cause of Christ the support of our eloquence, and, when circumstances require, to open our purses. It is customary, to pay to its ministers agreeable attentions; and not to withhold from its ordinances honourable respect. Our churches are not yet deserted, nor our sabbaths generally and openly profaned. Is it uncharitable or presumptuous, to inquire, whether there is not a disposition to rest our claim to the high and sacred character of christians on these easy expressions of good will and respect? Are we not in danger of substituting these for that thorough purity and inward devotion, which are the very life of the system? Is it not more common, to contribute a word in support of its institutions, than to give an example of the graces, it would form; to subscribe a sum to advance its interests, than to sacrifice a vice, which is at war with its spirit? Far be it from me, to withhold the honour, which belongs to christian bounty, or diminish that respect, which the institutions of our religion, even in these tempting times, have preserved; but far be it from me, also, to encourage you in the delusion, that any professions of regard to christianity will counteract the influence of that example, which sets at nought its authority; or that any contributions to its support, or any attentions to its teachers can atone for an habitual worldliness, which chokes and stifles all its virtues, or for a love of pleasure, which swallows up the wealth, the passions, and pursuits of its votaries.

There is, also, a great danger of confounding a regard for our own system of belief with a regard for our common faith. The Pharisee paid tithes of all he possessed. Forget not, my friends, there is due

a tithe of charity, as well as of zeal, or of rationality; and let us be less solicitous to oppose others, than to excel them. The spirit of christianity is wasted, whenever the flame of dissension burns; and in contending for the faith, it is easy to lose the temper of Jesus.

One farther observation shall close our reflections on the conduct and spirit of this haughty Pharisee. He thanks God, you observe, that he is not, as other men are. Remember, then, that a man may acknowledge, it is the grace of God, which constitutes the difference between him and others, and profess this humbling sentiment of the gospel, with some degree of sincerity, and, at the same time, cherish and express his pride in the very language, which declares his faith, and in the very prayers, which accompany his imaginary humiliation. Beware, my hearers, of carrying into the presence of your God a tone of spiritual pride, which you would be ashamed to exhibit in the presence of your fellow men.

But to return to the parable. "The Publican," continues our Saviour, "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" There is nothing in the history, which would lead us to conclude, that this humble worshipper had been guilty of enormous sins, that any unexpiated crime pressed upon his conscience, and drew forth this exclamation of abasement and remorse. He was, perhaps, as honourable, as pure, and as devout, as was expected of the class, to which he belonged in the community; still we hear him smiting his breast with anguish, and exclaiming, God be merciful to me a sinner! And what was there in his circumstances to suggest so different a prayer from the other? Why could he not have addressed his Maker thus: I thank thee, O God, I am not, as other men are, proud, vain, and superstitious, or even

notion with that of patriotism. We are too fond of boasting of our regular habits, our religious advantages, our attention to the regular services of the sanctuary, and the decencies of life. We cherish this flattering notion by comparing ourselves with countries, older in corruption, and more unblushing in their vices. Let us not rely too strongly on what our fathers have done for us. It was the darling and the destructive errour of the Jews, in the days of their depravity, that they comforted themselves with the reflection, We have Abraham to our father. The contrition of one true penitent, for his personal sins, is better than all the grace of our ancestors. Let us not mistake the beauty of the temple for the presence of God, which alone can consecrate it.

To conclude, the Publican, in the parable, throws himself, with deep humiliation, on the mercy of God. True penitence is not verbose, not declamatory. He does not attempt to aggravate his guilt by confessing sins, of which he is not guilty; an errour too common among those, who give themselves up to a hackneyed form of contrition; but he seems unable to dwell long upon his own unworthiness. Much less does he boast of any virtues, or plead any merit in his observances. You, christians, have far greater encouragements to the exercise of contrition, than this poor Jewish Publican. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is, at the throne of an offended God, a kind intercessor for his brethren. Though we stand afar off, though we lift up not so much as our eyes to heaven, yet has he promised us, that not a faint sigh of godly sorrow shall be lost. When the heart is wounded, the most secret act of sorrow is as eloquent, as the tears and entreaties of the most importunate supplicator. The Publican, though his prayer was short and unlabour-

ed, went down to his house justified, rather than the other. Christians! let not this house of prayer ever witness your pharisaic self-complacency; and may God touch our hearts with a sense of our own unworthiness, and his purity, and make our prayers the true expression of penitential feeling, through Jesus Christ.

SERMON XX.

MATT. XXVI. 35.

PETER SAID UNTO HIM, THOUGH I SHOULD DIE WITH THEE, YET WILL I NOT DENY THEE.

LUKE XXII. 61. 62.

AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER. AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE COCK CROW, THOU SHALT DENY ME THRICE. AND PETER WENT OUT, AND WEPT BITTERLY.

We have often called your attention to the internal evidences of truth, which the gospel history presents to a careful reader of the New Testament; and have often remarked, that proofs of this kind multiply prodigiously, the more the gospels are studied. To this class of proofs belong the characters, which are occasionally introduced in the evangelical narrative, and which, every one must acknowledge, are, in general, delineated with great distinctness and consistency. They all have their distinguishing traits, such as we find in real life; and so natural are they, that we reject, at once, the suspicion, that John, Peter, Thomas, Mary, or Paul, for example, are either fictitious, or studied portraits. In the number of the

twelve, each apostle has his peculiarities. One is bold and precipitate; another, gentle and affectionate; a third, doubtful and hard to be persuaded; and the best of them occupies a grade of excellence, which leaves him at an infinite distance below his Lord. If the gospel history had been a fabrication of some ingenious or fanatical impostor, instead of this distinctness and variety, I think, we should have found a tame uniformity of characters. The disciples would all have been fashioned on the model of their master; and the delineation of Jesus himself, supposing it to have been the work of imagination, would have presented none of those solemn and undescribable tints of supernatural originality, which now make the character of the Saviour of the world such as it is; such, in fact, as no mortal fancy had, or could have conceived; and such, too, as no being of merely mortal race would have been able, or daring enough to appropriate.

Among the characters in the New Testament, that of Peter is transmitted to us with singular force and individuality. Not that his character is *drawn*, for there is not an instance in the gospels of what may be called character painting. What we know of the apostles, we know, as it were, by accident. In the New Testament, there is no circumstantial narration of an individual's life; but all that is said of him is incidental, and unpremeditated, as well as short, and hastily set down. Of Peter, however, the first of the apostles, perhaps in age, certainly in calling and office, more facts happen to be recorded, than of any other in the company of the disciples. He appears to have been a favourite with our Saviour; and, though not perhaps so amiable as John, of a cast of mind more characteristic and decisive. If we collect the scattered notices of this apostle, and attempt to combine them in a regular outline, we shall find a character arising out of them, which, from its truth

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and nature, must have belonged to a real personage; a character, bold, impetuous, sensible, consistent in its contradictions, uniform in its variations; a character, such as the great drama of human life acknowledges, and often reproduces on the stage of human action.

Now, my hearers, when we consider, that four independent historians have recorded circumstances in the life of Peter; historians, who, from the occasional discordancies in their narratives, could not have written in concert,—that they have recorded, also, different facts, and, if we include the Acts, have written different portions of Peter's life,—that Paul, too, has left us, in his letters, indirect and occasional notices of the same apostle,—and that all these different traits, if combined, make up an original, interesting, natural, harmonious, and well-marked character, is not the conclusion irresistible, that the original existed, or that they all copied from nature, and probably from personal observation?

Recollect, now, I pray you, that, if one only of the characters of the apostles be supposed to be real, the gospel history must be true. The facts are so intimately blended, the characters so mutually dependent, that the whole story of Jesus and his immediate disciples must exist together; nay, the character of a single apostle is not to be accounted for, but on the supposition of the truth of the principal facts in the evangelical history; and thus, from the character of a single apostle, we come to that most grand and glorious conclusion, the divine original of the gospel of Christ.

In the following discourses, we propose to give you,

1. An outline of the character of Peter, as far as it may be collected from the circumstances mentioned in the evangelical histories;

2. And then to make some reflections in confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and in aid of our christian steadfastness.

The character of Peter is no uncommon union of qualities. In his constitution there was nothing phlegmatic, nothing cold. He was sanguine in his projects, rash in his movements, tender in his attachments, exposed to change from the very impetuosity of his feelings; with more of courage, than of fortitude; more of zeal, than of firmness; more of confidence, than of constancy.

That fact in Peter's history, which has given him such a pre-eminence in the estimation of christians, and has elevated him, in the opinions of a large division of the christian world to a seat second only to that of Jesus Christ, and secured to him an everlasting primacy in the church, was that magnanimous acknowledgment, which he first made of the character of his master: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. It was at a time, when, as you well know, the Jews were full of expectation, that the great deliverer was to appear in the family of David, who should raise his standard of revolt, assume the almost forgotten ensigns of hereditary royalty, place himself at the head of his oppressed and impatient nation, confirm his authority by visible and splendid prodigies, maintain his cause by supernatural achievements, establish his court in the capital of Judea, and erect an universal and everlasting dominion.—In this state of things, when every Jewish mother was longing to give birth to the Messiah, and every Jewish breast beating high with hopes of future greatness, Jesus appears, a perfect contrast to such worldly and ambitious fancies, the poor son of a carpenter's wife, wandering from village to village, without a place to lay his head, simple in appearance, spiritual in his conversation, meek and lowly in his views, and daily disgusting his gross and self-

ish followers by his recommendations of poverty, and predictions of approaching calamity. The disciples were, beyond measure, perplexed. They saw Jesus daily performing the most astonishing and beneficent miracles, which convinced them, that God was with him; but their preconceptions of the Messiah's character were such, as refused to be reconciled with his present situation and prospects. Now, in this crisis of distressing uncertainty among the disciples—for they had left all and followed Jesus—when others were deserting him in great numbers, dissatisfied and disappointed, and Jesus says to his disciples, Will ye also go away? Peter, with his usual forwardness, answers for them all: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And, soon after, when Jesus explicitly asks them, Whom say ye that I am? Peter alone replies, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus exclaims, Blessed art thou, Simon; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father who is in heaven: that is, you derive this from a higher and better source than the world's opinion. Then our Saviour pronounces that memorable promise: Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and Peter's confession was not unworthy of such a promise. It was a brave confession; a sentiment of his heart, as well as a dictate of his understanding. It was the united result of Peter's personal attachment to Jesus, and his knowledge of his miracles and character.

The most characteristic trait of Peter's mind is, undoubtedly, that impetuosity, and ardour of feeling, which rendered him sometimes too confident, rash, and intemperate, but commonly bold, decisive, and affectionate. Observe, now, I entreat you, how clearly this distinctive feature of his character is presented to us by all the evangelists, and even preserved

through the different periods of his life. Permit us, first, to remark, however, that every man's virtues or vices are peculiarly his own: that is, they cannot be transferred to the mind of any other man, though equally virtuous or vicious on the whole, without assuming a different colour, or else producing some manifest incongruity of character. The graces of the best christian in the world are, in some degree, modified by his peculiar temperament: they are not precisely the same thing in him, which they are in another christian of the same school. It is not to be hoped, perhaps it is not to be desired, that we should here lose all our characteristic passions, in the uniformity of christian perfection. The christian always meliorates the man; but never yet has the man been completely lost in the christian. The only character, in which every thing constitutionally seems to have been lost in a kind of perfection never to be surpassed, is that of Jesus Christ; and this is one of the many proofs of its superhuman greatness.

But the native ardour of Peter's temper is perpetually breaking out, both before and after the death of his master. That sudden confidence, which is always attendant on such minds, is curiously exhibited in Peter's desiring our Lord, if it were indeed he, to bid him come to him on the water. Jesus says, come; and Peter sets out to walk upon the waves, in all the ardour of faith; but he has proceeded but a few steps, ere his heart fails him. The billows are boisterous, and he sinks, crying out, Lord, save, or I perish. Is it fanciful to imagine, that we discern, in this partial failure of the apostle, the hints and rudiments of that lamentable weakness, which afterwards allowed him to deny his master?

The impetuosity of Peter's temper, united with the strong affection, which he bore to Jesus, sometimes mounted into intemperate courage, and sometimes melted into the other extreme of tenderness and hu-

mility. When Jesus had requested him and two other of his disciples to watch with him, during that night of agony, when he was apart, praying, that the cup of death might pass from him, Peter, like a man of more ardour than perseverance, was overcome with sleep. He is soon awakened by the noise of the multitude, that approached, with their swords and staves, to arrest his master. Immediately, he puts his hand upon his sword, and asks his master, if he shall strike. But, with characteristic impatience, he cannot wait for the answer, but instantly draws, and cuts off the ear of one of the high priest's servants. Jesus cries out: hold! so far as this!*—touches the ear, and heals the wound.—Two exquisite traits of character, both in Jesus and his impetuous disciple. These are the little circumstances, which give a story the stamp of truth.

Let us mention some other instances, equally beyond the reach of the fabricator of a narrative.

Jesus, after his resurrection, appears on the shore of the lake, where some of his disciples were out in a boat employed in fishing, but without success. They espy some one on the shore, who orders them to throw on the right side, and they shall find. Immediately the net is filled, almost to breaking. They conclude that it was Jesus; and instantly Peter throws himself into the sea to swim to his beloved master, while the rest of the disciples wait, till the boat reaches the shore.

Again, in that affecting interview, when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, when he comes to Peter, he cries out, Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answers him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me. Melted to tenderness by this reply, he flies to the other extreme of humility, and says, Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head! A man

* See Wakefield's note on this passage.

of such passions, in a moment of affectionate enthusiasm, might rush into death to save a friend, while, in the next moment, his fears might overpower and petrify him.

Once more, there is mentioned a trifling circumstance in a visit to the sepulchre, which, though entirely incidental, may, perhaps, be thought happily to illustrate this apostle's affectionate character. On the morning of the resurrection, he arrives with John at the sepulchre, and finds it open. John stoops down, and, looking in only, concludes, that Jesus is not there. But Peter, not satisfied with this, goes in, and searches the sepulchre. After that, John also enters, and they ascertain, that the sepulchre is undoubtedly empty. Now this trait, like the others, is incidental, but they are all worthy of being observed. It is the privilege of simplicity and truth alone, to leave these touches of nature, which are not without difficulty to be attained, and which, in the present case, are utterly inconsistent with imposture.

You see, then, my hearers, the character of Peter. Our Saviour, who had been with him more, perhaps, than with any of his disciples, as he appears to have resided at his house in Capernaum, knew his disposition, and often attempted to discipline and improve it. He even goes so far, as to forewarn him, that, with all his fervour of affection, he would one day deny his Lord. Peter declares, with indignant confidence, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Ah, Simon! though you are ready to fight for your master, you cannot yet suffer for him! You have followed him, hitherto, not only because you love him, but in the expectation, that he will discover his Messiahship. You are hoping, that he will soon declare himself, and lead you to victory in his cause, and to honour and eminence in his kingdom. You are not prepared to see him die upon a cross. Your faith will falter in that day of disappointment.

Your impetuosity alone will not ensure your fidelity. It is one thing, to have the boldness of enthusiasm, and another, to have the firmness and endurance, which are necessary in the apostle of a suffering master.

We must attend now to that unfortunate event in Peter's history, which, if it were not so instructive, might be forgotten. But, while it has blemished, it has contributed to immortalize the fame of this apostle.

Jesus, contrary to the expectation of his disciples, even to the last, is arrested and hurried way to trial. He is now entirely in the power of his enemies. His supernatural faculties appear to have deserted him; and the God, in whom he had trusted, comes not to his rescue. At this crisis, his hitherto faithful disciples, alarmed, disappointed, and confounded, forsake him, and flee. Peter, however, yields to his affection, and follows his master, at a distance, to the palace of the high priest. Eager to see what would be the end, and, no doubt, secretly hoping, that our Saviour would yet deliver himself, he mixes with the crowd of servants and soldiers at the bottom of the hall, where he might observe all that passed, and remain unnoticed in the multitude and tumult. But either his speech or his perturbation soon betrays him. One of the high priest's maids unfortunately passes him, and says, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. He replies, I was not. Again, another challenges him. He denies it again. Then a relation of him, whose ear he had cut off, looking at him, says, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? And now, with all that passion, which we have seen to belong to him, and with that distracting terrour, which attends upon great and sudden danger, and upon falsehood in a man unaccustomed to deceive, he begins to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.

Ah! faithless, fallen Peter! Is this, then, the man, who was just now drawing his sword, and ready to fight for his master? Is this the man, who lately declared before all the disciples, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee? Is this the man, on whom Jesus was to build his church, so stable, so immoveable, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it? Is this the man, who was to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Precipitated, in a moment, from all his dignity, real as well as imaginary, the great apostle is the sport of a maid! The magnanimous, enthusiastic, fearless, and, let us add, honest disciple is become the prey of his own guilty conscience; and shrinks into the covert of his own shame. I know not the man! Though you know not your master, poor, fallen Peter! he is not forgetful of his disciple and friend. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter! One would think, that such a look, in such a moment, would have overwhelmed him with confusion, and chilled the blood around his heart; that he must have sunk to the earth, in hope that it might open, and swallow him up, and his unsupportable shame.—He cannot, indeed, endure it. He rushes out of the hall, and weeps, says the evangelist,—and weeps bitterly.

In the circumstances of this affecting event, we discern all the peculiarities of Peter's character. It was the same man—who cannot see it?—that first confessed and that first denied his master, the same man, that so loved and so abjured him. When the other disciples fled, his affection overcame his fears, and he ventured to follow to the high priest's palace. The others had not the courage to rush into the same extremity of danger, and were not, therefore, exposed to a similar temptation. No! they were not forward enough, they were not ardent enough—if the solecism may be pardoned, they were not bold enough to fall,

like Peter. And how momentary was his fall! The blush of dishonest shame had hardly time to tinge his cheek, ere the tears of contrition washed away the stain. The tempter dropped his prey, as soon as he had grasped it. The moment of his fall coincided with the moment of his repentance. He went out, and wept bitterly. Here we see all the quick sensibility of his temper. A look dissolved him. The bigoted high priest and cruel Jews were unaffected by the manifest innocence and greatness of our Saviour's character, as it appeared upon his trial. Though the earth shook under them at his crucifixion, and darkness covered their favoured land, while the light of nations was expiring in the midst of them, their hard hearts were not touched. All his beneficence, all his compassion, all his power, his resurrection itself left them the same ungracious, unrepenting, unforgiving, unforgiven race. In the mean while, Peter is in tears. A look recovered this tender apostle. While his master was suffering on the cross, Peter, I doubt not, was suffering, in secret, reproach and anguish on account of a fault, which, because he could not forgive himself, the world and his master have long since forgiven him.

This unfortunate event in Peter's life was, no doubt, permitted in the counsels of a kind Providence, to humble this confident apostle. It was necessary, to temper the inconvenient warmth of his zeal, to moderate his impatience, and to make him ashamed of his positive and ostentatious professions. This, indeed, it seems to have effected. By his lamentable fall he seems to have learned extraordinary humility; for we find him, in after life, acknowledging before Paul, who was comparatively a novice in the gospel, that he had been in an errour, in yielding to the opinion of the Jews of Jerusalem, and withdrawing from his intercourse with the Gentiles. Yes, my hearers, this venerable apostle

was rebuked by his younger brother Paul, and he submitted. This humility he learned, I doubt not, in that memorable school, the hall of the high priest, where he had been so terribly rebuked by the eye of his master.

Let us turn to a most affecting and beautiful incident in the character of Jesus, and conclude this part of the discourse. As soon as he has risen from the grave, his first words to Mary Magdalene are: Go tell my disciples and *Peter*, that I am risen from the dead. How touching is this little mention of Peter only by name. Afterward, in an interview with the apostles, where Peter was present, he draws from him a threefold declaration of his attachment, in allusion to his having three times denied him. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, that he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and replies, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Thus was Peter reinstated by our Saviour in his apostolical commission, and he preserved, to the end of life, that pre-eminence, to which his age and virtues entitled him, and all that activity, which his disposition rendered peculiarly easy. Yes, affectionate apostle! from the hour of your fall, you followed your master through the dangers of a public ministry; and now the crown of honourable martyrdom in the cause of christianity adorns the head of that apostle, who was once tempted to say of his master: I know not the man.

The outline, which we have now presented you of the life and character of Peter, has, we hope, sufficiently prepared you for the reflections, which are to follow. The first of them is, the argument in favour of the truth of the gospel, drawn from the change of character and views in Peter, and the rest of the apostles, after the resurrection. It is an argu-

ment, which we earnestly entreat the unbeliever to ponder well, to examine on every side, and tell us, how its force is to be eluded.

If you will attend, then, to the characters of these twelve men, among whom Peter was unquestionably the most eminent, you find, that they were, in general, uncultivated, and, originally, as narrow in their prejudices, as the rest of their countrymen. They do not appear to have been distinguished from the middling class of Jews by any qualities, which would command peculiar respect, or conciliate extraordinary affection. Certainly, they were among the last men, whom we should have chosen to propagate a new theory, and to convert, to such a system as the gospel, the conceited disciples of Zeno and Lucretius, and the still haughtier doctors of the synagogue. They who sat in Moses' seat were prepared to despise their presumptuous pupils, who had been so long implicitly subjected to their ecclesiastical authority. They could not but smile, to see these Galileans putting off their fishers' garments to put on the robes of a prophet. No! we should have chosen the noble and intelligent Nicodemus, the learned Gamaliel, the rich Joseph of Arimathea, the eloquent and insinuating Tertullus. So entirely the reverse of this were the appointments of Jesus, that the only man among the disciples, who appeared capable, by the energy of his character, and, perhaps, by the powers of his mind, to spread a new religion in the face of an opposing world, is suffered to show his incompetency, and give a most humiliating proof of his infirmity, which is transmitted to all succeeding generations, to satisfy the christian, that, if that doctrine, or that work had been of men, it would have long since come to nought.

Peter and the other disciples, we doubt not, attended Jesus, while he lived, chiefly because they had hopes of his assuming some higher power, than

that of healing diseases; a power, which should defeat the enemies of the Messiah, and reward with the first places in his kingdom his faithful adherents. Such was the state of Jewish expectation, that they could have formed no other idea of the kingdom of Christ. Whenever Jesus hinted, that they would meet with sufferings, they probably had no conception, that these sufferings would be any thing more, than some temporary impediments from the incredulity of their countrymen, which would soon be at an end, and terminate in their final elevation to undisputed authority. But, when our Lord hinted at his own death, Peter cries out, indignant and alarmed, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee; so that our Saviour was obliged to rebuke him, and say, Get thee behind me, Peter, thou art an offence unto me.

The apostles retained these worldly hopes, till the very last moment of their attendance on our Saviour. Of course, his arrest must have sufficiently surprised them; but when they found, that there was no interposition in his behalf, and that he was not to escape from the hands of the officers, they gave up his cause as lost. Their full blown hopes were blasted in an hour; and all the gay and imposing imaginations of a worldly kingdom, with its palaces and crowns, robes and riches, the ermine, and the sceptre, vanished like the dream of the morning, leaving them nothing, in the place of all this, but their nets and rods, and fishers' garments. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. Peter returns, indeed, from curiosity, or from personal attachment; but he returns only to deny his master. In this state of confusion and disappointment, when the few disciples are all dispersed, Jesus is tried; and the unwillingness of Pilate, the last hope of his friends, avails nothing to his release; but the new founder of the christian faith, without resistance, surrenders himself to cru-

cifixion, and breathes his last breath upon the cross. Now, I ask, where was the religion, which he preached? His history has come to a close; his life has gone out, after a short and dazzling lustre; his religion is dissipated with his disciples; and, in this solemn hour, what remained, I ask, of christianity? Why was it not, at that moment, obliterated? Why was it not then added to the funeral pile of the thousand and ten thousand systems and chimeras of the human mind? The triumph of the Jews was, at that moment, complete. Jesus had expired; and the gospel appeared to have sunk, never again to rise.

Wait but a few days, and a man arises, in the midst of an assembly of thousands of hostile Jews, with confidence in his features, intrepidity in all his motions, with the utmost fluency, sincerity, gravity and energy of speech. He begins by saying, Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know—him being delivered by the determinate council of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witness. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ; and he hath shed forth this spirit, which ye now see and hear. This speech is delivered in the presence of eleven other men, who corroborate every fact by their own testimony of the same. And who is this man? Who are these men, so assuming, so presumptuous? Do you know, that this man is Peter, who, but a few days since, denied his dying master, and hid himself to conceal his shame? Do you know, that these are the same men, who fled in all directions upon the arrest of Jesus, and of whom we hear no more, till we find them in this assembly of the mur-

derers of their leader? I have a right to ask the skeptic, whence this sudden transformation? Jesus, you say, is dead; his body moulders in the dust; his resurrection is a mere fable. Will you say, that they, who followed a master principally for the rewards, they expected, when he was alive, were thus completely and suddenly changed in their views, their hopes, their intrepidity, their whole character, when they knew, that he was dead, and was still lying lifeless in the grave? From a dead man what had they to expect? From his murderers what could they anticipate, but a fate similar to their master? I have a right to call upon the skeptic for a solution of this difficulty. I have a right to demand of him, to inform me, why the religion of Jesus was not utterly extinct, when he was dead upon the cross, and his disciples had fled in consternation. I have a right to be informed—If Jesus did not rise, and the story of the apostles is a fable—whence is it, that a religion, which contains these facts, has existed through eighteen centuries, humble in its origin, persecuted in its progress, and gaining strength by opposition? How was it, that twelve cowardly and feeble men established a religion in the centre of Jerusalem, the founder of which had but just expired in the shame of an accursed crucifixion?

You may say, if you please, that it was enthusiasm and fanaticism in the apostles, so that they really imagined, that they saw and conversed with Jesus after his death; and were not guilty of falsehood, but were only insane, when they maintained the fact of the resurrection. But what enthusiam is this, which could bring together twelve men, who had fled in consternation, and induce them to agree in a consistent and intelligible story? If they were enthusiasts, whence the change of their ideas respecting the nature of our Saviour's character; whence this new

direction of their views? If they were enthusiasts merely, it is to be supposed, they would be enthusiasts according to their old notions, and that a little of that suffering and persecution, to which they were soon exposed, would cure them of their madness. But the most pusillanimous of men are converted into the most bold and intrepid; the most ambitious and worldly, into the most spiritual, disinterested and faithful. They maintain, through the greatest sufferings—sufferings, such as they once could not think of with patience—a faith, which has stood to the present hour, and will stand, I trust, till the heavens be no more.

This change, then, in the character of Peter and the disciples, let the infidel account for, if he can, without admitting that fact, which is the basis of our religion. If the fall of Peter lends any confirmation to the truly miraculous nature and propagation of our religion, he did not fall in vain.

We have learned something, then, from Peter's history, in aid of our faith. It also affords instructions of a practical nature. It gives us all a lesson of resolution and vigilance, lest we, too, fall from our steadfastness. Let no christian say, that he can never be precisely in Peter's situation, and, therefore, that he can never deny a master, who is no longer present with his followers. We deny him, christians, when we suppress our secret convictions of the truth of his gospel, and would make the world believe, that we know not the man. We deny him, when we attempt to shake off the restraints of his laws, or bend them to a more convenient standard; or when we take pains to hide the few peculiarities, which our christian education, or profession of the gospel yet oblige us to retain. We deny him, when, like Peter, we mingle with the vicious and the base, endure the jests of the scorner, and the licentiousness of the man of pleasure, and, lest we should be sus-

pected of rigour, or of superstition, choose not to be distinguished from the promiscuous multitude of worldly men, who know not their God and their Redeemer. No, it is not impossible to deny our master, nor is it easy to be always true to his cause.

It seems, indeed, to be no difficult task, to be a christian, when the religion is creditable, when respect attends upon its institutions, and men throng to the temples, and the profession of christianity leads to public honours. But, my hearers, to say nothing of the struggles, which every disciple of Jesus has to maintain with the corruptions of his own heart, a man must not expect to be a christian, even in the best of times, without suffering some reproach from being true to his christian principles. The standard of the world is low and variable; but the everlasting laws of christian purity, piety and benevolence are not affected by any changes of manners, or fluctuations of opinion. The gospel stands, in the midst of the tide of fashions and fancies, the measure of all opinions, but regulated by none. He, who would be faithful to this religion, cannot pass through the world, without being tempted by the example of others, tried by many severe duties, reproached by some, whom he wishes to love, and neglected by others, whom a little sacrifice of his principles might retain in his favour. Let him, then, be vigilant and resolute.

Again, the fall of Peter teaches a lesson of humility. If there are any presumptuous and enthusiastic christians among us, they may learn from this history, that they are not the most secure. Excessive confidence in religion is hardly to be distinguished from arrogance. It is never the means, and seldom the consequence of a religious life. Let us not trust, then, too much, to any temporary excitements in religion; and much less think ourselves secure, because we have made a competent profession of our

faith. Let us remember, too, that no man is allowed to make wanton trial of his faith and virtue. A man may be justly left to be overcome by a trial, which he has presumptuously sought, when he might have triumphed over a temptation, and stood a test, which was presented to him in the ordinary course of Providence. The spirit of the christian life is, indeed, a spirit of power and fortitude; but it is always joined with humility, distrust of one's self, humble estimation of our own powers, and deep sensibility to the infirmity of human virtue. The daily prayer of the christian is: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Let him, who thinketh, he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.

Again, we learn from the history of Peter, that, though a good man may fall, he is yet distinguished by tenderness of conscience, and deep and severe contrition. Peter went out, and wept bitterly, and returned to his master. The habitual offender may regret his sins, because he retains a lurking fear of their consequences. But the good man suffers, because he feels the shame and ingratitude of his offences. He feels a stain, as he would a wound, though the world may not have discerned the blemish; he hopes for pardon, but does not cease to mourn.

To conclude, do not flatter yourselves, because Peter fell, and instantly recovered, that he, who is every day sinking, and falling from his fidelity, is to be as easily recovered. Contrition may purge away the occasional lapses of a man, who lives the life of a disciple; but it is difficult to conceive, how the effects of a depraved life, the example of which has been extending and operating in every direction, are to be expiated or removed by a dying hour of fear and sorrow, however deep, however painful. Watch, therefore, and pray, that ye fall not into temptation.

SERMON XXI.

EPH. VI. 4.

FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH; BUT BRING THEM UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD.

THE subject, upon which I am about to address you, my friends, needs no laboured introduction. I see before me the fathers and mothers of families, who must, ere long, resign the world to another generation; a generation, which will remember them with fruitless reproaches, or everlasting gratitude. There are among us thousands of young creatures, whom our schools and colleges and families are pouring into the world; and I ask, with anxiety, who is responsible to the God of nature, and to the world, for these daily and hourly accessions to the numbers of society? Life, surely, is not all, that you are to give them; support, protection, accomplishments and estates are not all, that you owe to these creatures of your affection. For the time is coming, when all these exteriour appendages to life will be heard of no more; the grave will receive your children, as it has their fathers; the accomplishments, with which you decorate them, will have fallen off, and withered in death; even the strong constitution of their

bodies will have crumbled away in the tomb; the possessions, which they have inherited, will have shrunk into the narrow inclosure of a coffin. And is there nothing more? Surely, I see them existing anew in another state, whither they have carried, from this world, the character of their souls. And what is this, and whence came it? It bears your stamp; it proclaims your care, or your neglect; and, in their destination, you may read something of your own.

Fathers, says the apostle in my text, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This, surely, can be interpreted as nothing less, than a precept for the religious education of those, who are committed to your care. It shall be my present object, then, with God's blessing, to offer you some considerations on this interesting subject; to show you, how you may previously secure the greatest weight to your lessons; to guard you against some of the most common faults in this branch of education; and to point out some of the most suitable topics and modes of instruction. These are the three divisions of our subject.

I. 1. If, then, parents, you would train your children up to be religious beings, and give the greatest weight to your instructions, the first preliminary undoubtedly is, that they should have the highest respect for your characters, entire confidence in your knowledge, and an affectionate sense of your regard for their everlasting good. To any species of education this is an important preliminary; but, to a christian education, it is indispensable. This early deference to the character of the parent, it is, perhaps, the more necessary to inculcate, as the progress of manners and opinions, for many years past, has tended much to reduce it. If you would preserve in the minds of your offspring this permanent confidence and respect, they must early be sensible of a

control, easy and equable, impartial and systematic. You must not fluctuate in your rules, or counteract them by your example. Your commands must appear the result of affection; and, especially, your instructions must be supported and enforced by a consistent conduct. For what is more idle, than to talk seriously to your children, when you are not serious yourselves; or to recommend to their regard the interests of eternity, when they see you exclusively solicitous for their present gratification?

2. A second preliminary to the religious education of children, and without which it will be impossible, I fear, to train them up successfully to christianity, is, that, from their earliest years, they should receive a deep impression of its importance. In order to this, they should see, that christianity is a subject, which lies near your hearts; that you mention not the name of God or of our Saviour without respect; that you cannot easily tolerate in your presence the levity, which treats the gospel with indifference, or the impiety, which treats it with contempt. They must see, that you repair with delight to the assembly of God's worshippers, and hear you often acknowledging, in their presence, the obligation and the pleasure of devotion. But, nothing, nothing, which I can recommend, will tend so effectually to generate this early sentiment of reverence, as the performance of family devotion, to which your children should be admitted, as soon as they are old enough not to interrupt it. This will place them, even in infancy, exposed to the most favourable impressions, and the kindest influences of grace. Religion will make a part of their notion of life, and of their course of conduct: christianity will seem to them, from the first, as a necessary circumstance in the character.

3. A third preliminary to the religious instruction of your children, of not less importance to give your lessons their due weight, is this, that they should

clearly see, that it is your religion, which is the source of all that they respect in your character, and is the spring of the tranquillity and happiness of your life. This latter circumstance is especially important; for, if your religion does not make you happy, you cannot expect, that your mere lessons should be favourably received. Let them see, then, ye fond parents, that it is here you derive your purest pleasures, and your surest consolations. If they discover, that religion appears to be an interruption to your ordinary course of life; that it comes in only at stated times, to chill all your animation, and congeal the flow of your enjoyment, how can it ever be recommended to their gay and pleasurable spirits? It will appear to them as nothing better, than a severe pedagogue, coming, with its tasks, its rods, and its rules, to interrupt the festivities of life. Let them see, then, I say, that your religion is the source of complacent and amiable dispositions. When you talk to them of God, let your countenance light up; let them see, that you take pleasure in referring all your enjoyments to his bounty, and that you feel inexpressible consolation in commending them to his care. Let them discover, that you have a perpetual confidence in his protection; and, if ever you find yourselves with them in circumstances of anxiety and impending danger, they should be impressed with the conviction, that your tranquillity results from a consciousness of his presence, under whose overshadowing wing they and you are defended.

4. Lastly, all these advantages will be of little value, unless you begin with them, as soon as they are susceptible of instruction. As I have repeatedly touched upon this subject before, I will say little, now, on the necessity of early education. But, if any thing should be taught soon, it is surely that which ought never to be forgotten. The cup will be tinctured with the liquor which it first receives. The

earliest age is that, which imbibes the most copiously, and retains the longest. If, then, you would succeed in training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, begin before the heart is hardened by prejudices, or polluted with vice. If you intend them to be christians, let them know it, as soon as they can understand the idea of a God; let them know, as soon as the intellect expands, that there are some truths, eternal and immutable, which are never to desert them; truths, which time has sanctioned, genius embraced, learning illustrated, piety cherished, and the world reverenced, in every age. The first light, which strikes them, should be the light of heaven. The mind will be pre-occupied, if you are a moment idle. The mind of the child cannot be shut up, till you are ready to furnish it. No! strange prejudices, and curious and unaccountable opinions will gain an early ascendancy in the neglected understanding of your children; and, though it is hard to make them learn, you will find it still harder to make them forget what they should not have received.

II. I proceed, now, agreeably to our plan, to point out some of the most common mistakes on this subject of the religious education of the young.

1. The first is, an opinion, which too easily prevails, that the habits only of your children are to be regarded, and that, in time, principles will follow of course; that, if they only learn to behave well, it is of little importance to trouble their weak heads with reasons, or to furnish them with a stronger argument, than the example, or the command of their parents. But who does not know, that habits, unsupported by principles, are, even in the maturest mind, the most precarious and insecure of our possessions? As soon as you change your child's company, if you have left him without instruction, you change his character. Send him from his father's house, and you send him, innocent, indeed, but naked and unshielded, into the

midst of enemies in ambush, and weapons flying in mid air. An amiable temper, unfortified by principles, and good habits, strong only because they have not been tried, is the richest and the easiest prey of the polluting harpies of profligate society. A child may uniformly speak the truth, because it has been your maxim in its education, that it should never be exposed to the temptation of a lie; but how much more secure is the honesty of that child, who has been taught, that there is a God in heaven, who, afar off, discerns even an equivocation, and a world to come, where all falsehood will be disclosed. Indeed, parents, to be careful of forming your children to correct habits and fair demeanour, without implanting early principles of piety, is nothing better, than raising the walls of a citadel, which you intend to leave ungarrisoned, uncommanded.

2. A second mistake on the subject of education is, that, because many of the subjects of religion are beyond the capacity of children, to instruct them in christianity is only to load their memories with words, and, by the irksomeness of such a lesson, to give rise to an antipathy, which, in after life, may extend to every thing which wears the complexion of seriousness. But, even if it should be granted, that the primary truths of religion were not completely intelligible to the youthful capacity, it ought not to be therefore inferred, that tuition is vain. In many branches of human learning we acknowledge it enough, that the memory is stored with rules, the reasons of which remain to be explained; with facts, the application of which lies beyond the present reach of their capacities; and with words, which shall only facilitate the future progress of the understanding, and be used in the future operations of the intellect. Of this kind is the far greater part of the studies, which employ the first years of children. Indeed, if every kind of instruction were deferred, till its nature and use could

be completely understood by the pupil, we should soon be overwhelmed by a race of barbarians; and the next generation would find themselves thousands of years behind their progenitors.

But, in fact, the principles of our religion are some of the most simple and intelligible, which can be proposed to the human mind. Is there any thing so peculiar, so transcendently incomprehensible in the obligations of your children to their Creator, that these cannot be explained and illustrated by their obligations to yourselves? Must they be able to conceive distinctly of what is meant by spirit, by omnipresence, by eternity, before they can learn to fear and love their Father who is in heaven? What if they do cherish some gross and corporeal notions of God, they are only a little less imperfect than our own. Or must they be able to comprehend the nature of evidence, nicely to balance probabilities, and decide on the relative value of testimony, and the miracles of Christ, before you will venture to tell them of his death and resurrection, or hold up to their opening imaginations the solemnities of a judgment, and a retribution to come?

3. A third mistake on this subject is, that, to furnish children early with religious ideas, is to infuse into them prejudices; as if a creature, introduced, as man is, into the world, helpless, unfurnished, dependent, and inexperienced, could live, or act, or think, a single day, without the aid of some kind of prejudices. This mistake, indeed, would be hardly worth rectifying, had it not been, sometimes, advanced as a serious objection against every kind of religious instruction. Prejudice is an unexamined opinion. Now the slightest observation discovers, that such is the condition of man, and such the progressive nature of his powers, from their feebleness in infancy to their maturity in manhood, that it is a law of his condition, which omnipotence only can

abrogate, that, during the years of childhood, he should depend on authority, and lean on the understandings of others. His opinions, during this period, in distinction from his knowledge, can be nothing, and ought to be nothing, but prepossessions. And do you think, that, by withholding from him instruction on subjects of religion, you secure him, for any season, from the slavery of prejudice? Believe me, by this very neglect, you infuse into his susceptible mind one of the most baneful and captivating of prejudices; for you tempt him unavoidably to this dangerous conclusion, that religious opinions are unworthy his concern, or make no part of his interests, and are unnecessary, or unimportant to society. Besides, do you think, that no prejudices will grow up and deform his fruitful mind, of which you have not dropped the seeds? Think you, the opinions, he will entertain on these subjects—opinions, which he will gather from his first intercourse with society—will possess less of the nature of prejudices, than those, which might have been instilled by parental affection, and enforced by parental authority? I fear, you will be disappointed.

But on what other subject, which concerns the formation of the minds of children, do you make so absurd a mistake? Wherein do you forbear to tincture their tender minds with your own opinions? It is not politics. We early hear them lisping out your antipathies, and repeating on this subject, as they grow older, your oracular decisions. It is not literature. The earliest care is taken to form their rising taste on established principles, and to lead them to the perception of beauties, which have been sanctioned by the concurrent praise of successive generations. These are prejudices, which you think you cannot too early, or too plentifully pour into their empty minds. And are the elements of the religion of Christ less fixed, than the principles of taste, less

certain, than the doctrines of party? Why must these alone be picked up by chance, or be left to be gathered by your children, at an age, when all their habits shall be formed, all their prejudices rooted, and parental recommendation have lost its supreme authority? The same motives, which induce you to inform your child of the being of a God, and of his universal presence—truths, which you will call, perhaps, the uncorrupted dictates of natural religion—should also induce you to instruct him in the facts, the nature, and the precepts of christianity; for, let me assure you, that the difficulties and doubts, which respect the simple being and providence of a God, are much greater, and more numerous, than the difficulties, which belong to revelation, after the existence of a God is once granted. In the undistinguishing mind of a child, these truths are all equally prejudices; and they are noble ones too. They are prejudices, for which all nature cries aloud through all her works; prejudices, which past experience, from ten thousand tongues, calls upon you to inculcate. You will not, indeed, enforce doubtful, or merely speculative opinions; but you cannot do wrong in instructing your children in those principles, which have an immediate influence on their conduct. It is true, that, through your want of caution, they may find hereafter, that much, which they received from you, must be relinquished as doubtful; and you should remember, with solemnity, that this discovery will give a shock to their whole system of belief, proportioned to the importance of your mistakes. But it is better, that they should encounter even this hazard, than that they should rush, unprincipled, upon the world, in all the presumptuous poverty of skepticism.

4. Another most unfortunate errour upon this subject is this, that your children will certainly acquire at school, and by the public institutions of the gos-

pel, an adequate sentiment and knowledge of religious truths, with out the necessity of your interference. It is not necessary, you think, to waste your own time in giving supplementary lessons; for, on this subject, as on every part of education, the progress of the child is provided for in the customary way. This mistake, if indeed it can be called one, baffles all exposure. For, if any thing in life deserves to be considered as at once the exquisite bliss, and preeminent duty of a parent, it is this: to watch the dawning disposition and capacity of a favourite child; to discover the earliest buds of thought; to feed with useful truths the inquisitiveness of a young and curious mind; to direct the eyes, yet unsullied with the waters of contrition, to a bounteous benefactor; to lift the little hands, yet unstained with vice, in prayer to their Father who is in heaven. But so it is. The child, as soon as it is released from the bondage of the nurse, and needs no longer a careful eye to look after its steps and guard it from external injury, is too often surrendered to instructers, some of whom are employed to polish the surface of the character, and regulate the motions of the limbs, others, to furnish the memory, and accomplish the imagination, while religion gets admission as she can, sometimes in aid of authority, and sometimes as a Saturday's task, or a Sunday's peculiarity, but how rarely as a sentiment. Their little hearts are made to flutter with vanity, encouraged to pant with emulation, persuaded to contract with parsimony, allowed to glow with revenge, or reduced to absolute numbness by worldliness and cares, before they have ever felt a sentiment of devotion, or beat with a pulsation of sorrow for an offence, or gratitude for a benefit, in the presence of God. Believe me, parents, you have no right to expect, that the sense of religion will be infused by the labours of others. It is peculiarly the business—I should say, the pleasure of the parent

So natural is the transition, from filial duty and filial affection, to those sentiments, which ought to be cherished toward the Father of mercies, that any teacher, whether in the pulpit or the school, who is not aided by parental co-operation, must despair of exciting sentiments of piety, or of impressing principles of religion in the youthful mind. But if, beside supplying your deficiencies, he must, also, counteract your example, he will not, indeed, lose his reward hereafter, but he will look in vain for any present success. Abjure, then, I beseech you, the delusions, that your children are learning all that is necessary of christianity, without any encouragement or instruction from yourselves. When parents have ceased to be teachers, religion has ceased to be taught.

III. Though I have by no means exhausted this second branch of my subject, the time compels me to add something on the third and last division: that is, the most proper topics and modes of religious instruction.

1. You will, at once, perceive, that you should never begin with what is most difficult. It is not of so much importance, what particular manual of instruction you adopt, as that it should contain those facts and doctrines, which have the most direct influence on conduct, and are expressed in the most perspicuous language. It is of primary importance, that you make your children feel their perpetual dependence upon God, and acknowledge his continual omnipresence, in the darkness and in the light, through the night and through the day, at home and abroad, in solitude and in the presence of numbers, marking every action they perform, understanding all their petty concealments, comprehending all their subtile equivocations, overhearing all their profane or untrue expressions. They can easily understand, that there is one being whom they cannot deceive.

Teach them, also, to refer all the little innocent pleasures, which they enjoy, to a benefactor superiour to yourselves, and to bear their little disappointments, as tending, ultimately, to their greater enjoyment. Surely, nothing can be easier, than, before the mind has learned to pry into secondary causes, to teach them to feel their immediate dependence on a superiour power. By frequently comparing, also, their duties and sentiments toward God with their relation to yourselves, you have certainly a most efficacious instrument of religious impression.

2. In the next place, you will find, that the facts and narratives in the scripture are level to their capacities, and interesting to their feelings. They can early sympathize with the sufferings of our Saviour, early be impressed with the wonders of his miraculous works; and their questions will soon afford you opportunity to explain, in the most intelligible manner, how he was the saviour and benefactor of our race. They can understand the deplorable situation of mankind, at the time of his appearance in the world, and the love of the Father, in sending him, at that moment, to enlighten and redeem it. They can understand the high character of his obedience, and the merit of his painful sufferings and death. When they have once seen an instance of dissolution, and have conceived an idea of the loss of life, they can be made to understand what Jesus has promised to those, who obey him, and that he himself rose from the dead, as an example, and a pledge of the life, that he promises to the good. They can easily understand the wonderful excellence of the Redeemer's character, and, no doubt, they may be made to feel, that it consisted in great benevolence, meekness, patience, condescension and devotion. They will, at once, discover, also, that the Bible is a book of a peculiar character; and it is not difficult, to generate in their minds a reverence for its sentiments and style.

They should be directed to the most touching representations, and the most moral stories; and you will find them susceptible of the best impressions.

But, to preserve in their minds an habitual sense of religion, even from their infancy, there is nothing more salutary, than to accustom them to private prayer. Do not imagine, that it is necessary to confine them always to a certain form; nor satisfy yourselves, that it is sufficient to hear them repeat the Lord's prayer, morning and evening. You will find, that they can, much sooner than you imagine, make little prayers of their own, however short or incoherent they may, at first, appear. O, ye parents, if you were sufficiently interested in this most interesting of subjects, you would early aid their thoughts, and help out their imperfect petitions, and accustom them to pray for themselves, instead of hearing them repeat, for ever, a form, which they either do not understand, or utter unconsciously. But I must leave the subject to your own good sense, aided by a deep conviction of the importance of religion, and of early religion.

Before I conclude, however, I cannot but make one remark, of great practical importance, that, though a child may be secured from the contagion of innumerable examples of depravity in others, one unequivocal violation of rectitude, discovered in the parent, may paralyze the influence of all past, and all future instruction. What, then, is not to be apprehended from an habitual transgression of the laws of virtue. You cannot, you will not put lessons into your children's hands, every line of which condemns you; you will not hear them read from books, whose pure pages make you blush; you will not teach them prayers, who never heard you pray; nor send them regularly to the weekly services of the sanctuary, to see your seats empty, and hear your irreligious habits condemned. This, I acknowledge, would be too

much to expect of you. Walk, then, within your houses, with a perfect heart. Then may you teach diligently to your children the holy truths and precepts of your religion. You will be unwilling to talk of them, neither when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; that the generations to come may know them, even the children, which shall be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, and their children to another generation.

SERMON XXII.

DEUT. XXXIII. 29.

HAPPY ART THOU, O ISRAEL; WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE?

THE proclamation of the chief magistrate, and the long continued custom of this part of the union invite us once more, my christian friends, to cast a retrospective look of gratitude upon our public blessings. It cannot be very dissonant to the spirit of this institution of annual thanksgiving, to devote the hour, which is occupied in the instructions of the pulpit, to some considerations on the peculiar circumstances, which distinguish this country from older and distant nations; especially, if we endeavour to ascertain and to acknowledge those advantages for moral and religious excellence, which are afforded by its extraordinary position. The very multitude of our privileges, and especially their commonness and apparent security diminish, in some degree, the feelings of attention and interest, which they ought to excite. Absorbed, as we all are, in the pursuits of private emolument, we too often lose sight of those public, but not less distinguished advantages of our

situation, which frequently furnish the only, or the primary ground of individual improvement and happiness. It is true, we unavoidably feel, with peculiar gratitude, the value of our personal blessings; but it would be unpardonable, to be always inattentive to those public privileges, which, though we share them with many millions, may yet constitute our most enviable advantages. It is my intention, this morning, with diffidence, to consider, under several heads, some of the circumstances in the situation of this country, which are favourable to great moral and religious eminence; and to suggest, under each topic, such serious considerations, as are suited to the religious nature of the present occasion.

Omitting, as subjects too extensive for a single discourse, the blessings of christianity and civil liberty, the advantage, which I shall first mention, is to be found in the novelty and youth of our institutions. We may begin to build upon the experience of former ages, and older countries, with all the privileges, and all the spirit of new experiment. Young institutions are flexible, and may be easily contrived to meet the exigencies of circumstances, as they rise. To say nothing of our political institutions, which are, in truth, the most hazardous of our experiments—which, from the very nature of our government, every one feels himself called upon to scrutinize, and quite able to adjust—experiments, which, God grant, our folly may never defeat, let us attend to those establishments, which have learning, public utility, religion and charity for their objects. In the countries of Europe, the usefulness of this kind of institutions is inconceivably diminished by the circumstance of their antiquity, and the character of the times, in which they were founded. The munificence of truly pious benefactors was often directed to the most worthless objects. Estates have been bestowed upon monastic and unprofitable foundations; legacies have

been left to keep up the repetition of the most idle superstitions; the bounty of princes and states has been wasted upon establishments, which the change of manners, the progress of literature, and the growing culture of the human mind have rendered heavy incumbrances. In truth, it may be safely asserted, that more than half of the noblest generosity of centuries has been entirely unprofitable. Some institutions have grown into nuisances, from the very accumulation of their wealth; and it is too often true, that the danger of reform is more to be dreaded, than the inconvenience of enduring abuses. Ignorant regulations, absurd restrictions, or repeated mal-administration have continued to abridge the value of so many magnificent establishments, that we are almost ready to weep at the splendid waste of public charities and private virtues. We look upon these establishments, as we do upon the cumbrous Gothic piles, with which they are so often connected; piles, which time is continually impairing, while every successive year leads us to lament, that with all their solitary grandeur, they should continue so cold, so uncomfortable, so dilapidated, unfit for the purpose of habitation, and standing in worthless grandeur only to engage the curiosity of the antiquarian, or amuse a casual spectator.

My friends, a vast range of benefits is open before you in the public-spirited establishment of institutions, which shall continue favourable to the best interests of the community through many successive generations. Let no man consider himself uninterested in the future influence of any rising institution. The man of letters has something, for which he is responsible, in every literary project; the busy and active, in every new plan of public utility. The rich and benevolent are answerable for our charitable foundations; and every man has something, for which he is interested, in our religious institutions. We have

opportunities every day of affecting the moral and social character of the next, and consequently of more remote generations. Especially, let us remember the vast importance of our establishments for education, the intimate connexion, which exists between knowledge and virtue, between learning and the cause of pure christianity.

Let us beware of imagining, however, that because our institutions are young, they are, therefore, free from defect. There is need of experience, as well as of youthful vigour; and it is possible, that, by multiplying too fast seminaries of education and institutions of public good, we are misapplying talents and munificence, which might be more usefully employed in enlarging, encouraging, and improving older establishments.

A second circumstance in the situation of this country, favourable to moral and religious eminence, is, the equal distribution and abundance of the means of general competency. No man is here condemned, by the circumstances of his birth, to hopeless want, or to shameless mendicity. Temptations to fraud are not suggested in this country by the desperateness of any man's circumstances, but by the opportunity of great and alluring gains. So equally are our advantages distributed, that every man, in every rank of life, is necessarily taught, by some of the earliest lessons of commercial experience, the indispensable value of industry, integrity in his dealings, and the strictest fidelity and honour in his trusts. The weight of opulent oppression is not even felt; and the sins, which vast monopolies of wealth, or great inequalities in the means of different classes too often generate, are, we trust, here known only by report. In countries, where the distinctions of hereditary wealth have been augmenting through successive ages, the temptations to excessive luxury, sensuality, idleness and imperious rule are hardly to be resisted among the

great; and the conscience of the stranger stands aghast at the depravity, which brutalizes the lowest orders. There are countries, where myriads of the inhabitants have not the smallest stake in the community, and where many thousands of wretches are continued in being for no other purpose, as it would appear, than to prey upon the charity, or the unsuspecting kindness of others. Reduce any class of men to inevitable want and hopeless depression, and all the powers of their minds—powers, which must in some way or other be exerted—are bent to the contrivances of petty fraud, or the accomplishment of more desperate crimes. It too often happens, also, that the charities, which the increasing poor of a country demand, though highly honourable to the character of the nation that bestows them, tend to perpetuate the evil, they are designed to relieve. My friends, you cannot be too highly grateful for a constitution of society, which secures to the poor his earnings, and protects the rich in his hereditary possessions; which opens sources of competence to every class of the community, and affords the enterprising spirit opportunities of opulence.

A third circumstance, which you must allow me to mention, as favourable to the moral purity and religious character of our nation, is, the comparative thinness of our population. We are no where grouped, like the inhabitants of older countries, in large masses, but diffused over a prodigious breadth of soil. Indeed, from the great extent of our sea-coast, and the multitude of our commodious harbours, it is not to be feared, that we shall soon have to lament the corruption and the miseries of an overgrown metropolis. Far be it from me to say, that great virtues are not often the peculiar growth of great cities; virtues, which, perhaps, would never have ripened in the colder and more insulated climates of a country life. But it is no less certain, that the contagion of evil

example circulates most rapidly, where the points of contact are most numerous. Vast bodies of men are always swayed by something like the principle of fashion; and it is chiefly in large cities, that a standard of public opinion is set up, hardly less than omnipotent, and to which morals, taste and conscience must dishonourably conform. It is also true, that, where men are crowded together in superabundant numbers, the lurking holes of depravity are most numerous, and most difficult to be traced. Certain portions of the population form, among themselves, little commonwealths of corruption, in which crime is at once systematized, propagated, sheltered, and brought to perfection. The promiscuous collection of all ages and sexes in large manufacturing establishments, which is one of the evils attending on great wealth and population, is also most deadly in its influence on public morals. In these establishments a mass of corruption is brought together, and kept continually fomenting, till it produces the most active and deleterious spirit of human depravity. From the evils of excessive population we have nothing yet to fear. The very activity and diffusion of our commerce will prevent the inconvenient and excessive population of any one spot; and the prospect of an overgrown inland metropolis, more unfavourable to purity of manners than a commercial city, is too faint to occasion any present anxiety about its effect on the moral character of our nation.

Intimately connected with this advantage is the fourth, we shall mention, viz. the agricultural character of a very great majority of our citizens. No situation in life is so favourable to established habits of virtue, and to powerful sentiments of devotion, as a residence in the country, and rural occupations. I am not speaking of a condition of peasantry, of which, in this country, we know little, who are mere vassals of an absent lord, or the hired

labourers of an intendant, and who are, therefore, interested in nothing but the regular receipt of their daily wages; but I refer to the honourable character of an owner of the soil, whose comforts, whose weight in the community, and whose very existence depend upon his personal labours, and the regular returns of abundance from the soil, which he cultivates. No man, one would think, would feel so sensibly his immediate dependence upon God, as the husbandman. For all his peculiar blessings, he is invited to look immediately to the bounty of heaven. No secondary cause stands between him and his Maker. To him are essential the regular succession of the seasons, and the timely fall of the rain, the genial warmth of the sun, the sure productiveness of the soil, and the certain operations of those laws of nature, which must appear to him nothing less, than the varied exertions of omnipresent energy. In the country, we seem to stand in the midst of the great theatre of God's power, and we feel an unusual proximity to our Creator. His blue and tranquil sky spreads itself over our heads, and we acknowledge the intrusion of no secondary agent in unfolding this vast expanse. Nothing but omnipotence can work up the dark horrours of the tempest, dart the flashes of the lightning, and roll the long-resounding rumour of the thunder. The breeze wafts to his senses the odours of God's beneficence; the voice of God's power is heard in the rustling of the forest; and the varied forms of life, activity, and pleasure, which he observes at every step in the fields, lead him irresistibly, one would think, to the source of being, and beauty, and joy. How auspicious such a life to the noble sentiments of devotion! Besides, the situation of the husbandman is peculiarly favourable, it should seem, to purity and simplicity of moral sentiment. He is brought acquainted, chiefly, with the real and native wants of mankind. Employed solely in bring-

ing food out of the earth, he is not liable to be fascinated with the fictitious pleasures, the unnatural wants, the fashionable follies and tyrannical vices of more busy and splendid life.

Still more favourable to the religious character of the husbandman is the circumstance, that, from the nature of agricultural pursuits, they do not so completely engross the attention, as other occupations. They leave much time for contemplation, for reading, and intellectual pleasures; and these are peculiarly grateful to the resident in the country. Especially does the institution of the sabbath discover all its value to the tiller of the earth, whose fatigue it solaces, whose hard labours it interrupts, and who feels, on that day, the worth of his moral nature, which cannot be understood by the busy man, who considers the repose of this day as interfering with his hopes of gain, or professional employments. If, then, this institution is of any moral and religious value, it is to the country we must look for the continuance of that respect and observance, which it merits. My friends, those of you, especially, who retire annually into the country, let these periodical retreats from business or dissipation bring you nearer to your God; let them restore the clearness of your judgment on the objects of human pursuits, invigorate your moral perceptions, exalt your sentiments, and regulate your habits of devotion; and if there be any virtue, or simplicity remaining in rural life, let them never be impaired by the influence of your presence and example.

After what we have now said upon the virtuous and devotional tendency of a country life, it may, perhaps, be considered as inconsistent, or even paradoxical, to place our commercial character among our moral, much less our religious advantages. But, let it be considered, whatever be the influence of traffic upon the personal worth of some of those, who are

engaged in it, its intrinsic value to the community, and its kind influence upon certain parts of the moral character are not to be disputed. Hence, I do not scruple to state it as the fifth of our national distinctions, which call for our grateful acknowledgments. Tell me not of Tyre, and Sidon, and Corinth, and Carthage. I know, they were commercial, and corrupt. But let it be remembered, that they flourished long before the true principles of honourable trade were understood, before the introduction of christianity had given any stability to those virtues of conscientious integrity, and strict fidelity in trusts, which are now indispensable to commercial prosperity. They have passed away, it is true; and so has Sparta, where no commerce was allowed; and Judea, though mostly agricultural, is known no more, except for its national ingratitude and corruption. Besides, when the choice of a nation lies, as, from the present state of the world, it appears long destined to lie, between a commercial and a military character, surely there can be little hesitation about the comparative influence of the peaceful activity of trade, though it may tend to enervate some of the energies of the human character, and that deplorable activity of a mere warlike nation, where plunder is the ruling passion of the great, and destruction, the trade of the small, where every new conquest tends only to concentrate, in still fewer hands, the wealth of kingdoms, and to inspire the common people with an undistinguishing ferocity. Surely, we cannot hesitate, whether to prefer that warlike state of a nation, which poisons, at once, the sources and security of domestic happiness —a state, in which the lives, as well as the virtues of mankind, sink into objects of insignificant importance—or that commercial situation of a people, which rouses and developes all the powers of all classes of the population, which gives a perpetual spring to industry, and which, by showing every

man, how completely he is dependent upon every other man, makes it his interest to promote the prosperity, to consult the happiness, and to maintain the peace, the health, and the security of the millions, with whom he is connected. Surely, that state of a people cannot be unfavourable to virtue, which provides such facilities of intellectual communication between the remotest regions, so that not a bright idea can spring up in the brain of a foreign philosopher, but it darts, like lightning, across the Atlantic; not an improvement obtains in the condition of one society, but it is instantly propagated to every other. By this perpetual interchange of thought, and this active diffusion of understanding, the most favourable opportunities are afforded for the dissemination of useful knowledge, especially for the extension of that most precious of gifts, the gospel of Jesus. I need not add, that the wide intercourse, we are keeping up with foreign nations, ought to enlarge the sphere of our intelligence, liberalize our sentiments of mankind, polish the manners of the community, and introduce courteousness and urbanity of deportment. Merchants! if I may be permitted to suggest to you any considerations on the value of your order to the community, I would say, that upon your personal character depends much of these favourable influences of commerce. I would beg you to beware of an engrossing love of profit, which invariably narrows the capacity, and debases the noblest tendencies of the human character. I would persuade you to cultivate habits of mental activity, to indulge enlarged views of your connexion with mankind, to consider yourselves as forming part of the vast chain of mutual supports and dependencies, by which the activity, the improvement and the pleasure of the inhabitants of every part of the world are secured and promoted. Above all, forget not, that you are instruments in the hands of Providence, by which he

diffuses his blessings, and promotes his grand purposes in the cultivation, the civilization, and, thus, the moral and religious advancement of this wide creation. God grant, that you may never feel the remorse of having deliberately contributed to the introduction of a new vice into the community, or to the corruption of an old or established principle; of having aided the tyranny of a worthless fashion, or assisted the gradual encroachments of selfishness, vanity, pomp, and slavish imitation, on the freedom and dignity of social life!

I have already said, that the blessings of the christian religion and of civil liberty, though far more important in their influence, than any one of those advantages, we have already considered, were too extensive to be fairly represented in the limits of a sermon; and, for that reason, I purposely omit them, especially, too, as they are subjects of such common discourse. But I cannot spare myself the satisfaction of suggesting, as the sixth of our peculiar advantages, the perfect toleration and equal competition of religious opinions. In this country, the wishes of innumerable great and good men, of former ages and older countries, are wonderfully realized; and many of the sincere friends of religion are looking on, with anxious expectation, to watch the success of the experiment of unmixed religious liberty. It must be, it will be favourable to the grand cause of God and truth and virtue. In those countries, where freedom of religious inquiry is cautiously restrained, where subscriptions to formularies and articles of faith are made qualifications for every species of civil dignity or ecclesiastical employment, the conclusion quickly follows, that religion is only the creature of the civil power. Wherever an establishment exists, especially if freedom of inquiry is at the same time discouraged, the majority of the people have no other conception of christianity, than as it is

found in that establishment, or as it is stated in its authorized compendium. Hence, every objection, which, as the mind enlarges, is casually suggested against that peculiar modification of christianity, operates fatally against revelation itself; and hence the number of infidels in any country will be in exact proportion to the restrictions laid on the liberty of thinking and writing on subjects of religion. But when those grand objects of meditation, God, and Christ, and eternity, and retribution, and revelation, and miracles, and the origin and destination of man, are not considered as the exclusive study of the priest, from being the most sublime, they become, also, the most interesting of speculations. Man, in such a country, feels, that no power on earth can interpose between his conscience and his Creator. He feels something of the nobility of his origin, and has a foretaste of the grandeur of his destination. He finds, that there are subjects, and those, too, which infinitely transcend the ordinary subjects of human inquiry, in which he has as deep an interest as his superiours, and for the knowledge of which he is as responsible as his instructers. Thus the latent powers of the mind are developed, its pursuits ennobled, and its views enlarged; and man feels that sentiment of his own dignity, without which there can be nothing of frankness, nothing of generosity, nothing of stable excellence in the moral character.

When, also, there is a perfectly fair competition between all the sects of a community, each one of them finds, that it can maintain its influence, or its numbers, only by a degree of purity in its doctrines, which will stand the test of inquiry, or by the superiour sanctity of its morals, or by the especial exertions and zeal of its ministers. Hence, though the prodigious diversity of religious opinions in a free country will sometimes be found productive of serious evils, yet are these evils counterbalanced by the

circumstance, that here religion is brought home to the bosom of every man; it becomes his personal concern; he worships God with more ardent and devotional satisfaction, because he can worship him according to the dictates of his own conscience. Thousands of temptations to hypocrisy are thus cast off at once; the sacred inviolability of religious opinion becomes an hereditary sentiment, which every man is proud to transmit. Feeling the value of his own liberty, he learns to respect what he thinks the erroneous conscience of his brother; and, by the unembarrassed communication of every truth, of every doubt, and every interesting sentiments, the celestial fire of religious inquiry is enkindled in thousands of hearts, and the grand work of our spiritual perfection hastened and promoted. My friends, shall we become the more indifferent about our faith, as our means of ascertaining its truth and purity are multiplied? Shall that unbounded liberty of conscience, which we enjoy, terminate in nothing but the liberty of not bestowing a thought on the subject? Shall the unrestrained freedom of religious choice amount to nothing but freedom from the restraints of every species of religious belief?

Bear with me yet a little longer, that I may mention, in the seventh and last place, the peculiar advantages, we enjoy in our remoteness from the wars, the tumults, the revolutions, and the crimes of the older world. A mighty drama is acting on the theatre of Europe. We sit here peaceful spectators, while an ocean rolls between us and that stage of fearful events. Feeling none of the miseries of war, we have not yet witnessed all the confusion of its crimes. Indeed, my friends, our situation is unexampled in the records of nations. Brought into the rank of independent states at this late period of the world, the experience of past ages is spread out before us, and all the rolls of time are unfolded for our

instruction. A wonderful providence seems to lift us up miraculously to a lofty region of observation, that we may see the shock of empires, and tremble, and be thankful. Indeed, it would seem, as if a last experiment were making among us, to prove, whether a nation can profit any thing, not merely by the history of its predecessors, but by a series of dreadful events, which are passing directly before its eyes. God grant, the grand experiment may succeed! You and I, and generations yet unborn, are interested in it. It is to be seen, whether religion has found here that permanent shelter, she sought. It is to be seen, whether the only valuable blessings of human life, order, virtue, mental cultivation, religious liberty and religious sentiments can co-exist with a state of permanent and unexampled peace and prosperity. It is to be seen, in short, whether a people can be entrusted with the very blessings, for which thousands of great and good men have most earnestly sought; or whether we shall add another to the list of corrupted and corrupting states, and go down with the rest, enervated by the crimes of youth, to the vast cemetery of nations. God, of thy mercy, avert this result! Scourge us, distress us, reduce us, alarm us, if we may, by any means, preserve that righteousness, which exalteth a nation, and may escape that sin, which is the ruin of any people.

SERMON XXIII.

PHIL. IV. 3.

I ENTREAT THEE,—HELP THOSE WOMEN, WHICH LABOURED WITH ME IN THE GOSPEL,—WHOSE NAMES ARE IN THE BOOK OF LIFE.

THIS is one of the numerous passages in the gospel history, where honourable mention is made of the female sex. From the angel's salutation of the virgin mother of our Lord, to the letter of John, the beloved apostle, to the elect lady and her children, the New Testament is full of their exertions, their affection, fidelity and influence. In the course of our Saviour's ministry, sublime and solemn as was his supernatural character, we find frequent examples of his attention to them, and of their attachment to him. To the woman of Samaria he made the first declaration of his Messiahship, and imparted the first principles of his new and spiritual doctrine; and this, too, with a condescension, which surprised his disciples, who wondered, that he talked with the woman. We find him, also, a frequent guest in the family of Martha and Mary; for Jesus, we are told, loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. One of these affectionate sisters, to testify her respect for his person, just before his sufferings, came with a box of

costly perfume, and poured it over his head, as he sat at meat; and with so much pleasure did he receive this offering of female affection, that even the disciples murmured, while he declared, that, wherever his gospel was preached, it should be told for a memorial of her.

Mary Magdalene, too, a Jewish lady of some wealth and consideration, makes a distinguished figure among the friends of Jesus. She has been most strangely and unjustly confounded with that penitent female, who had been a sinner, and who bathed our Lord's feet with tears of contrition. But Mary Magdalene had been cured by our Saviour of one of the most terrible maladies, which can afflict our suffering nature; and the fondest employment of her recovered reason seems to have been, to listen to her deliverer, and to minister to him of her substance. With many of the women, she followed him from Galilee through that scene of suffering, when all the disciples from our sex forsook him, and fled. The women never lost sight of him, till he was raised upon the cross; then they stood by and witnessed his expiring movements. They left not the body, till it was deposited in the tomb; then they saw, where it was laid, and prepared their spices to embalm it. On the sabbath they were obliged to leave it, and rest, "according to the commandment;" but their wakeful eyes caught the first streaks of eastern light on the morning of the resurrection; and to the women, watching and weeping at the sepulchre, appeared the first delightful vision of the Lord of glory, risen in all the freshness of his new and immortal life.

Some of the earliest and most faithful converts of the apostles were also from this sex. To the assembled saints and widows, Peter presented Dorcas alive, who had been full of good works and almsdeeds, which she did. The tender heart of Lydia was melted at the preaching of Paul; and, in his epistles,

he seldom fails to send salutations to some of those excellent females, who, by their works of charity and labours of love, cherished the feeble community of persecuted christians, and illustrated the amiable spirit and benignant influence of the religion they professed.

Perhaps it is not difficult to account for these frequent examples of female christianity, so interesting, and yet so honourable to the gospel. The men, in Judea, were looking for a prince, as their Messiah, who should answer their ambitious hopes, not only by the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but also by dispensing individual honours and personal distinctions in his approaching dominion. Every Jew, therefore, as he expected a share of this splendid power, felt a portion of that vanity, which belonged to the expected masters of the world. Hence, they at first approached our Lord with impatience and high-raised hopes; but finding him, contrary to their previous fancy, so poor, meek, unpretending, spiritual and unambitious, they often retired in disgust, which, in the great men of the nation, his rebukes often inflamed to rage.

Meanwhile the Jewish women, in their retired and subordinate station, had little share in these ambitious expectations. The mother of Zebedee's children, when she came to ask a favour of Christ, solicited nothing for herself, but only for her sons, that they might have offices in his kingdom. To the happiness of the Jewish women it was of little consequence, whether the standard of the expected universal empire waved on the temple at Jerusalem, or the capitol at Rome. No wonder, then, they were delighted, when they saw the Christ, the prince, the idol of the Jewish expectation, treating their sex with distinguished kindness. They were more at leisure to feel and contemplate the moral greatness of Jesus, the sufferer; while the other sex were eager

to see the sign from heaven, which should mark out Jesus the triumphant. The women were won by the tears, which they saw him shed at the grave of Lazarus, in sympathy with the afflicted sisters; but the men, who were standing by, were dissatisfied, for, said they, Could he not have caused that Lazarus should not have died? and when Jesus, the wonder and glory of Judea, the suffering prince, casts his last look from his cross down on the fainting Mary, and says to John, with his last breath, Behold thy mother! is it to be wondered at, that the women, who stood by and heard it, should have begged this body, and embalmed this corpse, from which a spirit so affectionate had just taken its flight?

This regard for the founder of our faith they seem to have continued to the apostles; for the christian communities, in the first ages, were distinguished by an order of women, who ministered to the necessities of the saints, who brought up children, who lodged strangers, who washed the saints' feet, who relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work, thus embalming anew the remains of their Lord in the fragrance of their charities towards the church, which is his body.

I fancy myself standing in the presence of their successors, who have not forfeited the religious character of the friends of Jesus, and who yet feel the unimpaired influence of his affectionate religion. Do not imagine, that we disparage the glory, or that we lightly esteem the power of christianity, when we say, it is the only religion for the female sex; for, though it was introduced for the good of the whole world, it produces much of this good by its effects on their condition, and its power on their hearts.

When we find, upon opening the gospels, such language as this, Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the meek, the merciful, the peace-makers, the calumniated, is it surprising, that the most fond and

faithful votaries of such a religion should be found among a sex, destined, by their very constitution, to the exercise of the passive, the quiet, the secret, the gentle and humble virtues? Is it surprising, that—while the self-styled lords of the creation are absorbed in the pursuits of wealth and ambition, distracted in the game of war and politics, or kept by business or pleasure out of the knowledge of that care and obscurity, to which their female partners are separated by the customs of society—is it surprising, that the dependent, solitary female, in looking round for a bosom, where she may pour out her secrets, or assuage her anxieties, should resort with peculiar tenderness and confidence to that invisible parent, who is always present to her aid; and thus acquire a habit of devotion and communion with God, unknown to our more presumptuous sex?

You will not be offended by the suggestion, that, accustomed, as you are, to feel, oftener than to reason, the portions of our religion, which are addressed to the imagination, affect you with singular force. Accustomed more to retirement, than to active life, you have more leisure, and consequent disposition, for religious contemplations. It is, also, infinitely honourable to your character, that you ever feel a secret sympathy with a religion, which unlocks all the sources of benevolent affection, which smiles on every exercise of compassion, and every act of kindness. We may say too, perhaps, that your hearts, not hardened by the possession of power, the pains of avarice, or the emulations of public life, are more alive to the accents of pardon by Jesus Christ, more awake to the glories of the invisible world. The gospel came to throw a charm over domestic life; and, in retirement, the first objects, which it found, were mothers and their children. It came to bind up the broken hearted; and for that office woman was always best prepared. It came to heal the sick;

and woman was already waiting at their couches. It came to open the gates of life on the languid eye of the dying penitent; and woman was every where to be seen, softly tending at the pillow, and closing the eyes of the departing.

With this superiour susceptibility of religious impression and aptitude to the practical duties of the gospel, I know, there are evils associated, against which it is sometimes difficult to guard. Sensibility degenerates into weakness, and religious awe into superstition, in your sex, oftener, perhaps, than in ours; yet, with all these dangers and inconveniencies, I believe, that if christianity should be compelled to flee from the mansions of the great, the academies of the philosophers, the halls of legislators, or the throng of busy men, we should find her last and purest retreat with woman at the fireside; her last altar would be the female heart; her last audience would be the children gathered round the knees of a mother; her last sacrifice, the secret prayer escaping, in silence, from her lips, and heard, perhaps, only at the throne of God.

But enough of the religious character of the female sex. To say more, perhaps, would be invidious; and to have said less would hardly have been just to those meek spirits, who have, in every age, given a charm and mild lustre to the gospel, which they first hailed, as it dawned over the hills of Palestine. A less delicate and difficult subject remains.

What has christianity done for that sex, to which it seems so well adapted; and what ought they now to do for christianity? These are the remaining heads of our discourse.

1. What has the introduction of christianity done for your sex? This inquiry presents itself with peculiar interest on this occasion, when we are called to appear before an assembly of females, who, under the genial influence of the christian religion, and

of this alone, have founded, and supported, and successfully conducted the institution before us. In former ages, and under any other system of religion, these children, instead of being nourished, as they now are, by the care of christian women, would probably have been exposed, at their birth, to perish under the broad cope of heaven; and you, ladies, instead of assembling with your young and tender orphans to praise the Father of the fatherless, and claiming the respect and the patronage of our sex, would have been crouching under our tyranny, or ministering to our passions, or leading, in obscure apartments assigned to your sex, a selfish, vapid, and unprofitable life.

But, now, wherever this gospel is preached, that, which these women have done, shall be told for a memorial of them, and of their sex. These walls, this service, these orphans, this audience, and all the circumstances, which surround us, proclaim the power and blessedness of the gospel.

In savage life the condition of women is every where nearly the same, varying only in degree of degradation, from the brutal licentiousness of the Otaheitan, to the slavish drudgery of the females of more northern climates. To this state of relative depression there are exceptions, it is said, among the tribes of Indians on our north-west coast, where man appears to have sunk to a lower point of barbarity, than his companion, who seems thus to have mounted a little on his ruins. Perhaps, too, woman, in uncivilized life, retains and exercises more of the peculiar virtues of the sex, than we find, on the whole, in their inactive retreats among the polished nations of antiquity. Of the humanity and kindness of woman in savage life, Ledyard has left a testimony, which will never cease to be read with emotion, while there is an eye left to weep.

It might be previously supposed, that, as the character of our sex was, in the progress of civilization, refined and exalted, the condition of women would be correspondently meliorated, and their character elevated. No doubt, many are ready to believe, that christianity has done nothing for women, which it had not first done for men; that it has elevated them by raising us. But a very little attention to the private life of the Greeks and Romans, at the summit of their civilization and intellectual culture, will refute this suggestion. If we would find the wives and daughters of the Greeks, in the age of Pericles, we must look for them in the inmost apartments of the houses, where they were condemned to labour in obscurity at the distaff and the loom, in common inanity and eternal ennui. The only women of cultivated minds were then the females, who had thrown off the restraints of decency and domestic life; and the dreary vacancy of the female understanding is but sadly relieved, among this polished people, with the names of Sappho, Aspasia, and some other courtezans, who have come down to us with the titles of poets and philosophers. You cannot fail to comprehend the condition of your sex, when you read, that Socrates was compelled to resort for female conversation to the feet of Aspasia; and that Thucydides, the most philosophical of Grecian historians, lays it down as a maxim, that "the most virtuous woman is she, of whom the least can be said."

If we now pass to Rome, we find little variation in the relative condition or character of the sex. We are attracted by the great actions of some Roman women, in the days of their republican rudeness and severity. We repeat, with the admiration of school boys, the story of the Sabine matrons, and the names of Lucretia, Volumnia, Hortensia, Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, Portia, and Arria, the wife of Pætus; but the occasional deeds of female greatness,

which break out amid the austerity of the early, and the licentiousness of the later times, and which are chiefly remarkable from the very depression of the sex, serve now rather to point a moral and adorn a tale, than to throw any certain light on the condition and character of the Roman women. When we are told, however, that, for five hundred years, not a husband in Rome exercised his manly prerogative of divorce, we are tempted to lift up our hands in admiration, either of the virtues of one sex, or the forbearance of the other; but we soon recollect ourselves, and begin to suspect, with Gibbon,* "that the same fact evinces the unequal terms of a connexion, in which the slave was unable to renounce her tyrant, and the tyrant unwilling to relinquish his slave." Soon, however, the Roman matrons became, in consequence of a new jurisprudence, "the equal and voluntary companions of their lords." From that time, the corruption and misery of their private life incalculably increased. The women, from having been constant slaves, became the general corrupters of manners; and, as luxury increased, those, who had left the labours of the loom entirely to their slaves, had no other substitute for this engagement, than frequent marriages, capricious divorces, and licentious amours. The morals of the Roman women, in the time of the first emperours, are too well known from the satires of Juvenal; and of their intellectual condition it may be enough to remark, that not a single work of a female classical author has come down to us through the whole course of Roman literature.†

To heighten the dark colouring of this picture of paganism, it is not necessary to survey the vast continent of Asia, to explore the recesses of the haram,

* Chap. 44.

† That is, till after the introduction of christianity, when we find several female ecclesiastical writers.

and follow the Hindoo wife to the funeral pile of her husband. In that extensive region of the world, the manners and customs, which have been the same through many centuries, all proclaim the degradation of the sex. If we resort to the land of Judea, where all is singular and astonishing in the history of the inhabitants, we shall not find much to relieve the picture of woman. The laws of Moses, it is true, were, in many respects, more humane, impartial and favourable to the sex, than any thing we find in the rest of Asia; and we have left us, in the Proverbs of Solomon, a description of what the wisest man of the east conceived to be the perfection of a virtuous wife, whose price, he says, is above rubies. But though we may admit, that it is a picture of an excellent wife, yet, if the king were now to draw a portrait of ideal female perfection, he might gather, from some living excellence, traits of moral beauty, and of female glory, of which the princes of the east, in the days of Solomon, had a very faint conception.

We come now to the period, when the light of the gospel began to break upon the world, and woman was first raised to share with man the same destiny and duties, by being interested in the same redemption and the same hopes. The christian communities, in the first century, collected by a new and supernatural impulse from the corruption and degradation of humanity in the pagan world, were early filled with women, who, at once, preached and practised, ennobled and recommended the new religion. In the course of a few years, the christian martyrologies are full of the names of female sufferers, who, for Jesus' sake, went to the stake with all the courage and inflexibility of apostles.

From Judah's rocks the sacred light expands,
And beams and broadens into distant lands.

But O ye weak, beneath a master's rod,
Trembling and prostrate, own a helping God!
Ardent in faith, through bonds, and toil, and loss,
Bear the glad tidings, triumph in the cross!
Away with woman's fears! proud man shall own
As proud a mate on virtue's loftiest throne;
On to the death in joy---for Jesus' sake
Writhed on the rack, or blackening at the stake.
Scorn the vain splendours of the world below,
And soar to bliss, that only martyrs know!*

But the effect of christianity upon the character and condition of your sex did not terminate in raising the armies of martyrs, with which the annals of the church are crowded. The truly important and permanent influence of christianity arose from the check, which it gave to the licentiousness of divorce, and from the abolition of the practice of polygamy. By these sacred laws of the new dispensation man and woman were raised from the abyss of depravity, in which they were sunk together. By the prevalence of the gospel it was soon understood, that the souls of your sex were of an origin as high, a value as precious, a destination as lofty, and a duration as lasting, as our own. Woman then began to be the companion and the partner of man; the condition of domestic life was changed; and the household gods of the pagans were supplanted. It was understood to be one of the principles of christianity, that, while man was the head of the woman, woman was the glory of the man; the unbelieving husband was sanctified by the wife; and the holy spirit had been poured, without distinction of sex, on the male and female converts. Not only was the bond of marriage fastened indissolubly by the force of religion, as well as by its laws, and woman delivered from the caprices of divorce, and the miseries of polygamy; but,

* Lucy Aikin.

by the introduction of the gospel, a new impulse was given to the ideas, and a new direction to the pursuits of the sex. They were not only pure maidens and faithful wives, but they became, also, thinkers and students: apologists, as well as martyrs for christianity. Where the new faith was received, they often introduced it. They established it on the thrones of the northern nations, who were preparing to burst in upon the tottering empire of the west; and what our religion owes to them of its rapid extension, it abundantly repaid by its influence on their condition. It was, in fact, the regeneration of one half of the human race. The life, liberty, talents and virtues of mankind were doubled, as it were, by this wonderful moral revolution. New vigour was imparted to benevolence, a new charm given to social life, a new spring to the energies of the human mind, and a new and celestial character to the religion of the world. While christianity was accomplishing these benefits for the female sex, mahometanism arose from the corruptions, which began to obscure and deprave it, and formed, at the same time, a contrast to the effects of the pure, original religion of Jesus. As the religion of Mahomet extended and established itself in Asia, it sealed for ever the domestic slavery and relative degradation of women; while under the influence of christianity, even in its degenerating form, the sex continued to ascend to the condition, which they now enjoy in Europe. The parallel, which this new revolution suggests, might be drawn, perhaps, with effect; but the cause of christianity, before such an audience, does not, I hope, require illustrations from the condition of Asiatic females.

In fine, when we compare the condition of your sex, even under the present partial reign of the christian faith, with their condition under the best forms of paganism, it is not difficult to admit, that the gospel ought to have the honour of this renova-

tion. There may be those, however, who are inclined to attribute these favourable changes to what they would call, the influence of philosophy. If by this word is meant, a philosophy unenlightened by the gospel, the facts, we have already adduced, sufficiently refute the claim; for the progress of women, in the course of pagan refinement, was uniformly found to be from slavery to licentiousness. On this subject we, at least, may be satisfied with the memorable acknowledgment of Rousseau, "that philosophy has not been able to do any good, which religion could not have done better; and religion has done much, which philosophy could not have done at all." Or if by philosophy be meant, the best modes of thinking, which have prevailed in the most enlightened part of christendom, or that mental cultivation, to which modern Europe has attained, we must first determine, what christianity has done for all the true and sound philosophy, which now exists, before we pretend to ascribe to the latter alone those blessings of modern times, which are comprised under the general name of civilization.

There is, however, an institution, which arose in times of danger and confusion, to which an influence has been ascribed, highly favourable to the cause of politeness, humanity, and female dignity and virtue. But, when you would know, what chivalry has done for your sex, you must be careful, that you do not form your notions of its nature from the gorgeous and fascinating descriptions, with which the early romances and chivalrous bards abound. The true European lady of those gallant days was a being very little like the sweet female portraits, which Spenser has left us. It was not until after the revival of learning in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the fair lady, who figured in the pageant of knighthood, had any other brightness, than that, which radiated from her eyes, or sparkled in her ornaments.

The natural effect of the idolatrous homage, then paid to rank and beauty, must have been, to enfeeble the female mind, already perverted by the sight of scenes of blood and single combat, by which the favour of the sex was obtained. Chivalry, no doubt, did much for the general courtesy of christendom; but, whether it contributed much to the cultivation of the heart or of the understanding, in your sex, we may be allowed to doubt. The relics of chivalry, in modern days, are not often to be met with; nor is the little, we have left, of such a nature, as to induce us to wish, that more had been preserved; for to it we certainly owe that spurious gallantry, which has perverted the morals of the sex in a great part of Europe; and to it we trace those horrible notions of honour, which yet prevail among us, to the disgrace and condemnation of a christian people.

When we compare the influence of that gallantry, which grew out of this strange institution, with the influence of the monastic spirit, which was intended to counteract or repair its effects, we may, perhaps, find reasons for believing, that the convent was not always a step in the degradation, but often in the elevation of your sex. We may find, perhaps, that the schools, the charities, the studies, and the devotions, which these institutions encouraged, were some contributions to the progress of the female mind.

> Labour and rest, that equal periods keep,
> Obedient slumbers, that can wake and weep,
> Desires composed, affections ever even,
> Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven

were not all, that was to be found in those religious retreats. There, repentance not only found a place to weep, but charity found objects of its constant care; the mind received a kind of melancholy cultivation, and the heart enjoyed an enthusiastic exercise of some of its strongest affections.

Every favourable conclusion, which we have been disposed to form of the influence of christianity on the character of your sex, is confirmed by a survey of modern Europe. Notwithstanding the progress of what is called refinement in nations, wherever religion has been most corrupted, woman is yet most depraved, and shows a more sensible degradation, than our sex. It would be easy to refer you to modern Italy and Spain for illustrations of this; but it will be sufficient to confine ourselves to that country, where the dregs of chivalry seem to have settled in the form of gallantry, after the pure spirit of honour had evaporated. In France the female understanding has been as highly cultivated, as in any part of christendom. There your sex has often dictated the fashions of philosophy and taste, and exercised a sensible sway over the republic of letters; and if, with this high culture of the female imagination, and this invisible influence and authority in criticism, France had also produced the best female instructers of the world, and the purest examples in the walks of domestic usefulness, we should be obliged to relinquish some of the conclusions, which we have already embraced, and acknowledge, that the state of christianity in a country has little to do in the formation of female perfection. But, when we look over the roll of the female writers of France, how often are we compelled to pause, and wonder at their strange union of sentiment and affectation, of moral delicacy and voluptuousness, of philosophy and paradox, of exquisite sensibility and practical unprincipledness; so that there is hardly one of their most celebrated females, whose works you may venture to recommend without reserve, or to read without exception. It may be set down, perhaps, to the prejudices of a protestant education, or to national pride, that, though I am disposed to allow the singular merit and piety of the celebrated madame Dacier, I

could wish, that she had not translated Aristophanes and Anacreon; and must be allowed to prefer the severer accomplishments of the venerable Mrs. Carter, and even the curious learning and delicate ripeness of that modest prodigy, Elizabeth Smith. I have felt occasional sympathy with the devout and mystical genius of Madame Guyon, but I cannot give to her that homage, which I pay to the angelic vision of Klopstock's wife. I acknowledge the enchanting sensibility of Madame de Sevigné, the practical good sense of Madame de Genlis, the Delphic inspiration of Madame de Stäel, the passionate touches of Madame Cottin; but my admiration, at least of these latter writers, is often clouded with sorrow and disgust. I look in vain for one "sun—clad in perfect purity," and turn for relief to the sound philosophy of Elizabeth Hamilton, or delight myself with the exquisite elegance and hallowed fancy of Mrs. Barbauld, the exuberant diction and evangelical morality of Hannah More, the well-attempered maxims of the sensible Chapone, the practical sagacity and miraculous invention of Maria Edgeworth. These names, —except, perhaps, the last, who has not yet authorized us to class her,—all belong to christianity. They were nourished at the breast of protestantism; they are daughters of the christian family; and they have breathed, though a colder, yet a purer air, than their rivals. It is our glory to belong to the age, which they have illustrated by their genius, and our happiness to believe, that they will light the way for our children to glory, honour and immortality.

With these names I finish this division of my discourse; and if you are still asked, what christianity has done for your sex, you have only to repeat these names.

2. You have heard us with so much patience on the past condition and character of your sex, we hope you will not be wearied with what remains of this

discourse, in which we intend to explain, what you may and ought to do for christianity, which has done so much for you.

Nature, when she endowed you with superiour tenderness of frame and sensibility of mind, directed you to the almost instinctive exercise of the kind and compassionate duties. But christianity, by raising you to a community of rights and interests with the other sex, while it has still left you this sphere of action, has given you, in fact, the government of the world. To you is every where entrusted, in civilized christendom, that precious deposit, the infant's mind; and thus, while it has made your example of early and everlasting effect, it has also made the culture of your understandings of infinite importance. Still, it may be doubted, whether the influence, you have as mothers or as wives, is greater, than that, which you have already exercised, and which your daughters will exercise, in their turn, upon entering the world, awakening the love, and leading away the admiration of our sex. My young friends, who will hereafter give to many homes their charm, or change them into dens of horrour, when you know and feel, that christianity is every thing to you, you will make it every thing to us. Think, then, what you may do for pure, rational, unaffected, practical christianity. Is it not worthy of your ambition, instead of countenancing, by your youthful favour, the unprincipled of our sex, to attempt to raise the tone of masculine understanding and morals, and the standard of juvenile accomplishments?

To ensure these effects, is it not time, that female education were generally directed to a higher mark, not of accomplishments, as they are called, for of them we have enough, even to satiety, but of intellectual furniture and vigour? Is it not time, that a race of females should be formed, who may practise with intelligence and with confidence on those rules, which

have been given, and those ideas, which have been suggested in the immortal works on education, which we already owe to the extraordinary women of the present age? Is it not time, that some plan of more liberal and extensive female education were devised to form the mothers of your children's children; an education, which shall save many a ripening female mind from that feebleness, to which it might otherwise be destined, in this age of vanity and books; so that women may be more generally furnished with principles, as well as sentiments, with logic, as well as taste, with true knowledge, as well as with a morbid thirst for entertainment; to all which, should be superadded a religious fear and love of God and his Son, so that, as they draw toward the close of life, visions of celestial bliss may fill their minds, instead of those vanishing scenes of pleasure, which are now so frequently gliding before their idle fancies?

We look to you, ladies, to raise the standard of character in our own sex; we look to you, to guard and fortify those barriers, which still exist in society, against the encroachments of impudence and licentiousness. We look to you for the continuance of domestic purity, for the revival of domestic religion, for the increase of our charities, and the support of what remains of religion in our private habits and public institutions.

O, you, who are at the head of families, husbands and wives, you, who entrust each other with your closest secrets and your most important interests, let God be admitted to share your mutual confidence. Where there is no communication of religious sentiment and affection, believe me, the richest spring of social and domestic bliss is unopened and untasted. The subject of religion is one, on which the female mind feels more, perhaps, than on almost any other, a need of the most perfect confidence, in order to develop and keep alive its feelings. The perplexed

and doubting spirit loves to find a breast, where it can deposite them without fear or shame; and would to God, that, next to Him, you might always find that confidant at home! Husbands and wives, let not this be the only subject, on which you are ignorant of each other's meditations, or destitute of each other's confidence. Venture to disdain the false maxims and tyranny of the world, and try what religion will add to your domestic felicity.

Where the gospel is really received by you, as the source of your happiness, and the most important object of your consideration, it will soon be discovered by your children and your families, that you think it so. I have not recommended the duty of family religion, because it is expressly enjoined by Jesus Christ, but because I am sure, that it is the best support of every thing valuable in domestic life, and because I fear, that the living spirit of religion can hardly be preserved without it. One day, at least, ye mothers, may be selected from the seven, to impress upon your children the idea, that you think them destined for some other world than this. One day, at least, may bring your families on their knees before your Father, your Master, your God, and theirs. What! shall every thing be left to the public preacher? Ah, how little can he do! Shall the rising generation know nothing of their God and Saviour, or even of themselves and their destination, but what they may chance to gather from their schoolmasters or their ministers? How is it possible, that your children should not come out into the world ignorant of every thing, which relates to them, as religious beings, if those, who betray the strongest and dearest interest in every thing else, which relates to them, in their health, their establishments, learning and accomplishment, discover no interest in this? How can they avoid the inference—for it lies not very deep—that religion is the last thing, which needs

to be thought of? And is it, indeed, of such little importance? O, Son of God, who, when on earth, took'st those little ones in thine arms, gather these lambs of ours in thine arms, for their parents too often refuse or neglect to bring them!

But I feel checked in this career of advice, when I see what you have done, and what you are still disposed to do for the best interests of humanity and religion, and begin to fear, that I have been presumptuous. I look at these orphans, and see their grateful eyes directed to you, their patrons and deliverers; and I feel a degree of shame and of impatience to turn to my own sex, and beg them, in the words of my text, to help these women, who have thus laboured in the best of causes. Ye rich men, when you observe these few children rescued from want and destruction, or, what is more, snatched from the arms of fathers and mothers, who, with grief and rage, witnessed their undesired birth, and, with insensibility, saw them perishing by their own parental example and neglect; nay, when you are told, that many more such little creatures are now knocking for admission at the gates of this blessed asylum, and waiting for the first opening which this day's generosity may make for them, can you turn away with disdain from this call of compassion, honour and religion? Can you, by withholding your bounty, leave to perish in the wide common of a vicious world a multitude of female orphans, whom these good women are willing to receive? Wait but a few years, ye rich men, and some of those, whom you refuse now to provide for, will have grown up into life; they will have entered, perhaps, into the service of your own families accompanied with all their ignorance and original depravities; they will be the occasional companions, perhaps the instructers of your children, diffusing vulgarity and corruption over the tender minds of your offspring, disturbing the peace of your families, and

even dishonouring the purity of your domestic life. Wait but a few years longer, and you shall see some of these same orphans, whom your want of charity shall have, in their infancy, shut out from this asylum, patrolling our streets in all the effontery of mature vice, and with all the secret misery of lost virtue, gnawing consciences, corrupted health, and impending dissolution. Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see these same victims carried, in the arms of charity, to die in the infirmaries and hospitals, which you may be compelled, at last, to provide for the wretched and the guilty, whom a little additional bounty to this institution might have saved from the ruin of their health and morals, from a long life of sin, and from a death of horrour and despair.

It would seem, indeed, that all exhortation, on a subject like this, ought to be superfluous. The supreme value of that charity, which is bestowed upon the young, is too plain to be enforced upon such an audience. In comparison with it, every other mode of charity shrinks into unimportance. In the bounty, which is bestowed upon old age, infirmity, pain and sickness, the good is too often at an end, when their immediate relief is effected; but, for the good consequences of such an institution as this, we may look as far as the eye can reach in the long perspective of distant years and successive generations, and yet see new blessings continually evolved. For this is an asylum for the mind, as well as for the body. Its excellence consists, not so much in relieving or correcting, as in preventing evil; not so much in saving a child from want, as in rescuing it from the vices of a corrupt world; and, therefore, if you would know the full effects of such an institution as this, you must extend your view to the regions of eternal blessedness and charity, where, I trust, these children, and many more will live to bless you.

Look up, ye little ones, and let your countenances tell us, what these mothers have done for you. When you go out into the world, tell those, who will hear you, from what you have been saved, and to what you have been educated. May your good example, when you grow up, be felt among the numerous ranks of domestics, whom our riches and our luxury are continually multiplying. May you remember the story of the little Hebrew maid, who waited on Naaman's wife, and who was made, in the hand of Providence, an instrument of so much good to her master. Forget not the lessons of neatness, industry, frugality, honesty and piety, which you have been receiving here; and remember, that the only way, in which you can ever hope to repay your patronesses and benefactors, is, by preserving all the good, which you have learned here, and by imitating, as far as you can in your stations in life, their generous goodness.

What remains, then, my christian hearers, but that you should help these women? I beseech you, in the name of that sex, which you profess to admire; in the name of that religion, which has given you wives, whom you can respect, and children, of whom you hope every thing, send them not away empty. I beseech you, in the name of these little ones, of whom Jesus would say, Suffer these children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; I beseech you, in the venerable name of Jesus himself, the affectionate friend of this sex, who was always ready to lay his hands on their orphans and bless them, hear what our blessed Lord saith: Take heed, that ye cause not one of these little ones to offend—how much more, then, to perish—for, verily I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven. What! their angels do always behold the face of God? Perhaps, then, they are witnesses of this scene. Perhaps they

will carry up with them to their blessed seats the story of this hour's bounty. Perhaps they may consent to join in the songs of thanksgiving, which we send up to the ear of the Most High, in joy of this day's charity. Do you say, that these are only illusions of a heated or a benevolent fancy? Be it so—But this, at least, is certain, that, in a very few years, these orphans will themselves bid adieu to this world and its neglect, to this world and their benefactors. Children, may you carry with you to heaven the remembrance of this day's goodness; or, if your hopes and mine should now be disappointed, plead for us, dear children, at the feet of the God of mercy, and obtain our pardon from the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's Friend.

SERMON XXIV.

2 PET. I. 5—7.

ADD TO YOUR FAITH, VIRTUE; AND TO VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE; AND TO KNOWLEDGE, TEMPERANCE; AND TO TEMPERANCE, PATIENCE; AND TO PATIENCE, GODLINESS; AND TO GODLINESS, BROTHERLY KINDNESS; AND TO BROTHERLY KINDNESS, CHARITY.

THIS enumeration of graces or christian accomplishments gives us a fine picture of the various excellencies of the christian character, and particularly of the character to which the apostle wished his converts to attain. Though the text is not liable to any considerable misapprehension, yet, as the manner of expression appears to be, in some respects, tautological, it may not be amiss, to offer some remarks on the separate clauses.

As the text now stands, when the apostle exhorts his converts to add to their faith, virtue, and to virtue, temperance and patience, it would seem to be a looseness of expression, which we should not expect, because our definitions of virtue include the subsequent qualities of temperance and patience. In the same general English word, too, are included brotherly kindness and charity; and these two last qualities,

also, are generally supposed to be nearly the same. But there is not this want of discrimination in the original. The word, rendered virtue, here, accurately means, courage or fortitude; temperance, here, is properly, self-command; and brotherly kindness, as distinguished from charity, means, here, the peculiar affection of the converts to their christian brethren, in distinction from universal love, the perfection of all social virtue.

The apostle, then, addressing his converts, as believers in the gospel, exhorts them to take the most earnest care to add to their faith, or to their simple belief of the gospel, which, alone, was unprofitable, courage—a quality very necessary in those days, when an open profession of christianity was a dangerous, but an indispensable duty—and to their courage, knowledge—for, at that time, the miracles of the apostles might produce a sudden and irresistible conviction of the divine original of the gospel in many, who had never heard of it before, and who, therefore, had very little knowledge of its doctrines and duties—and to knowledge, self-command, or an habitual control of the affections, passions and appetites; and to self-command, patience under afflictions; and to patience, godliness, or piety; and to piety, brotherly kindness, or love of their christian brethren; and to love of the brethren, charity, or love to all men, the ultimate point, the perfection of all moral excellence. This view of the several qualities is, with some slight variations, given by most commentators.

Thus we find the text contains a copious enumeration of christian virtues in their connexion and mutual dependence. Perhaps they are not all placed in the precise order, in which they commonly appear, or in which they are most successfully cultivated; but it is enough to remark, that the apostle intimates their mutual connexion and influence, and that he represents faith and knowledge barren and unfruitful without

them. This is in perfect correspondence with the whole strain of the New Testament. For, if these things be in you, and abound, if you cultivate these dispositions, they will make, that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It would occupy too much time, to consider the text in all its parts, and to give all the dispositions here enumerated a distinct consideration, as well as to attend to their succession and intimate connexion. This, indeed, would require several discourses. We shall, therefore, take the liberty to lay out of our present view the personal graces of courage, temperance and patience, which, though unquestionably connected with the other dispositions enumerated, seem rather to form a distinct class, and shall proceed, after defining the terms, to consider the close connexion and reciprocal influence of knowledge, piety and charity. What, then, is the meaning of these terms?

It is sufficiently clear, that the knowledge, which the apostle recommends, is something beyond that faith, which he had first mentioned, and which he supposes his converts already to possess. Add to your faith, knowledge. Faith, therefore, even christian faith, does not supersede the acquisition, or diminish the value of knowledge. Neither are we authorized to say, that the faith of the text includes knowledge in any greater degree, than it includes the other accomplishments of temperance, patience, godliness or charity, which are, also, to be added to faith. If the faith here mentioned is nothing more, than a simple belief of the divine origin of the gospel, which is extremely probable, the knowledge, which is to be added, is, of course, such an enlarged acquaintance with religion or christianity, as shall render our faith intelligent, and contribute to its permanence, fruitfulness and value.

The knowledge, then, which the apostle exhorts his converts to seek, is, the knowledge of religion. This is to be acquired by the exercise of our reason, and especially by the study of the scriptures, which then were and will always remain the great repository of facts, precepts and doctrines, from which the man of God is to be thoroughly furnished to every good word and work.

The godliness, which we are required to add to our faith and knowledge, is not, here, the whole of our christian deportment, which the word sometimes expresses, but rather the principle of religious obedience, or the sentiment of religious fear, which is called, the beginning of wisdom. If this, however, should be considered as too comprehensive a meaning for the word, in the place, in which it stands, we may properly understand it of the disposition to piety, or those devout affections, of which God is the immediate object, which express themselves in the usual and edifying forms of private and public devotion, and which diffuse a sanctity and devotion over the whole character of the mind and manners.

By charity, here, we cannot fail to understand that consummate grace, which is the end of the commandment, and which is described in the well-known chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. It may, indeed, include the love of God; but usually expresses the love of mankind. It means, not merely the common feelings of consanguinity, or of local and occasional attachments, but universal good will. It is a sentiment superiour to generosity, superiour to compassion, and superiour to that enthusiasm, which often prompts to extraordinary sacrifices for particular purposes; a sentiment, which may exist between men of different opinions, parties, tempers and interests, and is not confined to their temporal or present concerns. It is that love, which, as the apostle says, is kind and forbearing; which envieth not;

which is not vain or proud; which doth not behave itself unseemly, or with indecorum, but consults the feelings of others; which seeketh not its own advantage; is not easily provoked; which thinketh no evil; nor rejoiceth in iniquity, that is in falsehood, but rejoiceth in the truth, wherever discovered; which, in fine, is full of hope, full of contentment, full of patience, and, like the mercy of God, which endureth for ever, survives our present knowledge, faith and hope in those regions of eternal charity and light, where the great God will be its perpetual exemplar and reward.

After these descriptions, then, of knowledge, piety and charity, we proceed, according to our plan, to offer some remarks on their inseparable connexion, and reciprocal influence.

1. Our first topic, then, may be, the influence of knowledge on piety and charity.

If any one is doubtful, whether the diffusion of christian knowledge promotes the growth of piety, it must be either, because he has formed mistaken notions of piety, as independent of knowledge; or, perhaps, because he believes, that religious knowledge is now extensively diffused, and yet that piety is on the decline; or because he has observed some men, who are engaged in the pursuit of what is called religious studies, deficient in godliness, or in devout habits and affections. In what follows these will be the subject of occasional remarks.

There is some reason to suspect, that many, even in the protestant world, have secretly adopted the degrading maxim, that ignorance is the mother of devotion. It is, indeed, the mother of devotion, if by devotion is meant a blind habit of religious services, of which the reason and the object are alike unknown. Ignorance is the mother of all that devotion, which is paid to any other, than the Supreme Being. It is the mother of that devotion, which attaches itself to times,

places, garments, words and ceremonies, and which consecrates every thing but virtue. It is the mother of that devotion, which consists of a conceited and self-righteous homage, and commences with excluding from God's complacent regard all but its own section of the religious world; of that devotion, which deals in false humiliation, exaggerated confessions, vain repetitions, ostentatious display, and unmeaning language. To all such piety religious knowledge is, indeed, fatal.

But, if it is of any importance to this great virtue of the christian character, that we should have the most exalted and comprehensive conceptions of the great object of worship; if it is of importance to the obedience of the will of God, that we should know what God requires of man in his word; if, in short, that devotion may be expected to be the most free, filial and happy, which is disburthened of those dishonourable and perplexing notions, and those superstitious fears, which have arisen in the christian world from misapprehension of the language of scripture, then the diffusion of every degree of rational principles and scriptural knowledge—however it may, in some cases, produce a local and temporary relaxation of certain forms and feelings, which have been accounted sacred—must be ultimately beneficial to real piety.

Nothing so much tends to multiply hyprocrites and infidels, as the mysterious suppression or discouragement of all attempts to make religion intelligible. Until men are every where exhorted and encouraged to extend their religious inquiries, every wind of false doctrine will shake, every bold blast of infidelity overthrow their convictions. Till they are provided with the means of knowing the true grounds and reasons of christianity, and of becoming familiar with the best interpretations of scripture, a great part of the real piety of the christian world will be an irrational

and inexplicable quality; men of great talents, and eminent acquisitions on other subjects, will fall or be driven, from their own ignorance or others' fury, into the ranks of hypocrisy and unbelief; the ambitious will avail themselves of our religious passion for political or interested purposes; and, while we shall be filled, even to loathing, with accounts from every sect of the prodigious progress of its own faith, ignorance will sit brooding over the land, warming into life and mischievous activity a thousand passions miscalled piety; and a religion will prevail, of which it is one of the characteristic duties to represent as infidel every intelligent and conscientious inquirer, who does not take the draught, as it is offered him, or who does not fill his cup at some one of the fountains, which party has consecrated. Indeed, it may be set down as a maxim, that all the advantages, which may, at any time, appear to be gained by making religion a passion, and faith an unenlightened principle, are completely counterbalanced by the inevitable increase of hypocrisy, infidelity, and bigotry, with which such a state of things is attended.

The effect of knowledge in diffusing charity is not less conspicuous, than its influence on piety. If we take charity in its common acceptation, we shall find, that an enlarged and cultivated mind often disposes men to acts of generosity. It extends the sphere of kind observation, and divests us of that sordidness and prejudice, which so often restrain the exercise of bounty, and directs us to proper objects of our good will and exertion. But it is in the promotion of charity, in opposition to what is called, uncharitableness, that religious knowledge is most eminently successful. Not that the most learned men have been uniformly the most catholic. There is often a pride of opinion among the learned, which learning alone will not cure. There is, also, a love of dominion in vigorous minds, which makes a bad use of the maxim, that

knowledge is power. But, if we would hope ever to correct that denouncing and dogmatizing spirit, which has been so disgracefully common in the christian world, it is only to be effected by giving men some conception of the difficulties, which attend the discovery of truth. He, who, deriving his faith from the unexamined authority of numbers, has never felt these difficulties, or, being persuaded of some private operations or influences, of which he thinks himself the favoured subject, cannot be made to feel them, must be expected either to pity or despise those, who do not admit these compendious ways of arriving at truth. If he is a good man, he will be tempted to pity those, who have not ceased to doubt; if he is a proud man, he will triumph in his own fancied superiority; if he is a weak man, he will suspect, avoid, or calumniate those, who are not so well established as himself in every article of faith. He, alone, cannot easily condemn others, whom it has cost much pains, and time, and prayers, to form his own opinions. Religious knowledge reveals to us this most important fact, which alone can cure our religious vanity, and consequent uncharitableness—the fact, that there is not a single communion in christendom without its wise men and its saints; neither is there a question among those, which have been most fiercely disputed in the christian world, which is not maintained and rejected by men of piety and intellectual endowments apparently equal. He, therefore, who undertakes to pronounce, in an unqualified manner, on the indispensable connexion of any mere opinion in theology with holiness here, or happiness hereafter, can only be cured by enlarging his sphere of inquiry, by being taught to feel the real difficulties, which attend on many of those articles of popular faith, which are often most confidently maintained, when they are least understood.

2. We proceed now to consider the influence of piety on knowledge and charity.

It was the uniform doctrine of our Saviour, that nothing so effectually promotes faith here, as a pious disposition; or unbelief, as a wicked or hypocritical mind. It is almost superfluous to observe, that these remarks of our Saviour on belief and unbelief may be applied to religious knowledge and ignorance. If any man will do my will, says our Saviour, he shall know of my doctrine, whether it be of God. This sentiment is thus expressed in other places: No man can come unto me, except the father, who has sent me, draw him; that is, unless he is induced to it by regard to God, or a principle of religious obedience. The wise, that is, the pious, shall understand, but none of the wicked shall understand.

This connexion, between religious knowledge and sentiments of piety, is entirely natural and intelligible. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That man only will preserve a mind open to conviction, and faithfully use every assistance within his reach for the discovery of truth, who lives under the habitual conviction, that he must give an account of himself, in this respect, to God. To such an one wisdom is the principal thing. The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all things, we can desire, are not to be compared to her. He, who has a deep and unaffected sense of the greatness and goodness of God, will receive with joy every new ray of divine truth; he will feel the impiety, as well as the uncharitableness, of closing the sources of religious inquiry; and feel the sacredness of that obligation, which lies on every man to form, without prejudice or interested motives, his religious opinions. He will rejoice in the extension of a spirit of research, confident that, under the government of God, the progress of inquiry will

be the progress of truth, and that truth cannot be ultimately unfavourable to virtue.

By this I do not mean, that piety alone will furnish us with an extensive knowledge of this religion; and much less, that he, who only prays over the scriptures, will thoroughly understand them, without the use of the requisite helps. But it is with the scriptures, as with every other book, he will best understand, who is most capable of entering into the spirit of the author; and if any one good affection rather than another may be said to predominate in the books of scripture, it is the spirit of piety. They are distinguished from all other writings by this character, that they are a history of the dispensations of God. He is the great object every where presented to our view. Every other agent, who appears in the scene, is subordinate; and the eternal relations of man to God and to the life to come, are the topics, on which every thing in scripture has an immediate bearing.

The influence of piety on the progress of charity, also, is great and important. It is true, the two sentiments may exist with different degrees of intensity in different minds; and some persons, from observing a mistaken zeal in many good men for the glory of God, and from hearing acts of devotion too often made the vehicle of uncharitable feelings, have been led to think these two qualities separable at least, if not some times irreconcilable. But far from us be the attempt, to put asunder what God hath joined together. Let us leave it to saints, who lived under a less generous dispensation of religion, to mingle imprecations with the accents of contrition. It is the uniform language of our Saviour and his apostles, that every christian must present to God his petitions for pardon, in peace with all men, and with wishes of salvation for all. I should think it entirely superfluous, to multiply proofs of the inseparable connexion, every where held out in the christian scriptures, between

charity, in all its forms, and the love of God, which is the sum of godliness. With regard to beneficence, that great branch of charity, let this passage suffice: But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

It is not easy to conceive, how any man addressing God, the common Father of all mankind, and considering, how little is known of God, except that he is our gracious parent, can bring to his prayers any other, than a heart of charity. But it sometimes happens, that we worship God, as altogether such an one as ourselves. We make him a party to our own prejudices. We clothe him with our own passions. We set up an idol, who smiles or frowns according to our wishes. Instead of imitating the almighty and impartial Father of all mankind, we make a God, who imitates ourselves. Thus, every odious quality of the human mind becomes associated with our religion. Our devotions become the nutriment of our passions; our habits of communion with God are become habits of excommunication of others. If we attend to God's providences, we interpret them all according to our own uncharitable principles; and the tower of Siloam always falls, where we had expected the blow. If we discern his footsteps, it is only in the narrow path, which our vain imaginations have marked out for him; and his cause is identified with the ebullitions of our own vanity and spleen. Now, when piety is thus degraded, as it sometimes is, every increase of piety is only an increase of ill-will; we shut up our bowels of compassion against those, whom, we think, God has shut out of his covenant, and engage in holy warfare—against what?—not against our own vanity, presumption, obstinacy and malignity, or the sins, which most easily beset us, but against the enemies of the true faith. These we call to choose—

not between the crucifix and the fire, for these are now out of repute—but between our creed and our anathema. Melancholy, indeed, that this spirit, which once prevailed all over christendom, is sometimes still called piety, even in the protestant world!

It is when such principles and feelings usurp the place of genuine love to God, that piety becomes the most dangerous of the weapons, which ambition may use to disturb the peace of the church, and of the world. How important, then, the union of piety and charity! This would defeat the cry of the bigot, and the sneer of the indifferent. Until this union is effected, the seamless coat of Christ will continue to be torn in ten thousand pieces by aspiring partisans and narrow-minded bigots, while the exulting infidel and profligate cast their reproaches on the exposed and dishonoured religion of our blessed Lord.

6. The time, which remains, will not allow us to be very copious on the third topic of discourse—to which, indeed, we have already occasionally adverted—the influence of charity on knowledge and piety.

Alas! the experiment has never yet been made upon a broad scale in the christian world. Among those great men, who have shone as lights in the world, and whose light has reached our own times, there are, indeed, a few, who give us an illustrious specimen of the rare and godlike union of knowledge, piety and love. I could enumerate some memorable names; but it has been the hard fate of many of them to be persecuted, and of others to be suspected, when alive, and to receive a kind of hollow admiration and a doubtful praise in later ages, especially from those who know them only by their reputation for catholicism. Yet their reputation will stand unshaken through the hottest and most malignant seasons of the church, and afford a cool shelter for the quiet christian, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

If we may ever expect religious knowledge generally to prevail, it will be only when the gentle voice of charity is heard throughout christendom encouraging men to follow the lights, which are held out to them, without apprehension of reproach from "hard unkindness' altered eye" on every change of opinion. When a spirit of true christian liberality shall prevail, a spirit, not of latitudinarian apathy, but of active benevolence, we shall be provided with the most ample means for thorough and unbiassed inquiry, and men will be invited, not only to read for themselves, but to form their conclusions for themselves with a manliness becoming intelligent creatures, who account it a light thing to be judged of man's judgment, for he that judgeth them is the Lord. When charity and zeal shall unite, truth will spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven; and christendom be like a well-watered garden, whose beauty and fertility appear together. Thy kingdom come, should be our prayer continually.

Do you ask, how charity will promote knowledge? It will do it by divesting us of those miserable prejudices, which lead us to take offence against a writer from his subject, his manner, or his sectarian name. It will promote knowledge by teaching men, that the differences in the christian world, where they are not allowed to produce alienation of affection, will infallibly produce good, by exciting attention, caution, inquiry, and, of course, truth. It will promote knowledge by removing that undue bias, which will always exist, where there is a fear of the results, to which our studies may lead us. Charity expands the mind, and prepares it to receive truth, from whatever quarter it may be presented. Charity is the genial warmth of a good heart, not unlike that of the spring, which first opens and loosens the soil, allows the seeds, which are scattered on the surface, to find a place, and encourages those to spring up, which have

been long struggling in vain for the light; prejudice is a rock, which refuses all hold, but to the short and barren mosses, with which it has been for ages covered, and which time only hardens and embrowns.

It is true, there is hardly a sect in christendom, which has not sometimes been uncharitable; and it is easy to see, that there is sometimes a bitter party arrayed against intolerance and bigotry. Indeed, the highest exercise of charity is, charity toward the uncharitable. But, whatever be the communion, in which it is found, nothing is so unfriendly to knowledge, as a narrow, exclusive, and censorious temper. This discovers itself, sometimes in a weak dread of novelty, sometimes in a petulant contempt of antiquity. It now puts in a caution against the character of an opponent, and now fastens on his doctrines consequences, which he rejects. It sometimes opposes ridicule to argument, feeling to fact, and names to reasons; and answers your statements by an appeal to its own personal experience, which can never be a reason to another, who has not the same internal sensation. The essence of this spirit is the same all over the world; and effectually bars the mind against the access of truth. When any sect makes its last appeal to authority, or to its own peculiar sensations, as a standard of truth, there is an end of religious inquiry. The mahometan is then able to bring the same reason for his belief in the koran, the papist for the traditions of his church, the quaker for his silent illuminations, and all sects, without distinction, for their own most diverse and contradictory formularies.

If any one imagines, that, what we have described as charity, is, in fact, indifference to truth, let such an one know, that their nature and tendency are altogether unlike. Indifference is always content with the degree of knowledge, which already exists; and is willing, that men should be ignorant on the most solemn and interesting subjects. Indifference is in-

dolent, contemptuous and conceited; charity is an active temper, which, for its own sake, and that of others, encourages every provision for the progress of knowledge, sensible that the love of truth is one of the noblest principles of human virtue. Indifference thinks the study of religion unworthy of a thought; but charity is always employed in finding those truths, in which the greatest number can agree, and the better they are established, the better is charity promoted.

From what has already been said, I deem it unnecessary to enlarge on the last branch of our subject, the connexion between piety and charity. The union of these qualities, however it may now be suspected to be doubtful or difficult, will be found practicable, at least in that world, and in that vast assembly, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, who shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with robes, and with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!

And, would we form on earth a congregation on the model of this, which the author of the book of Revelations saw in vision, we must come to God believing, that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him, and believing, also, that, with this faith and this diligence, it is not impossible for any man to please him. We must have the charity to banish from our devotions every thing, which does not properly belong to this holy and charitable employment. We must consent to make our prayers, not tests of doctrine, but expressions of love. We must beware of awakening passions by our religious services, which are unfriendly to christian fellowship. Especially must we beware of making God a party to our own feelings, and of converting acts of christian communion and worship into a confederation—if the

word may be pardoned—for purposes of private influence and religious domination. Piety, then, will most assuredly flourish, when we make our worship and our ordinances the means, and not the end of religion, and when that end is well understood to be love, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

To conclude, my christian brethren, are we among those, who seek after knowledge, and lift up our voices for understanding? Have we made religion an object of as much inquiry and attention, as its lofty claims and eternal importance demand? Is our charity the cloak of ignorance and indifference, or a genuine principle of philanthropy uniting, with tenderness and indulgence towards others, a sincere desire of their improvement? And are we careful to perfect and consecrate our love of truth and our charity by an inward and practical piety? My friends, we have much to do to wipe off the reproaches, which are continually cast upon one or the other of these blessed qualities; and we can do it only by uniting them in our own characters. It is the constant object of my wishes and prayers, and may it be the effect of my preaching, under the blessing of God, to contribute to the formation of that noblest of all characters, the christian, whose love, as the apostle describes it, abounds more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, who approves the things, which are excellent, and who remains sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

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RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. C. LOWELL, JAN. 1, 1806.

The decorum, which belongs to this place and to this occasion, does not allow me to express all the pleasure which I feel, upon being called to begin the year by greeting a friend and classmate under the new, but not unexpected relation, of a brother in the gospel. If, in offering you the fellowship of the churches, I should suffer myself to dwell with too much fondness on expressions of personal good-will, you I know would forgive me, but I should hardly have performed the duty, assigned me by this honourable council.

In their name, therefore, and by their direction, I now present you this right hand of fellowship. Interpret it as the symbol of union; as a pledge freely granted you of our co-operation, counsel, and support. But it intimates yet more. It signifies affection as well as concord. Take it then again, my brother, as a testimony of our christian charity, which we pray may never fail; of our joy, which we hope will never be abated; of our expectation, which we trust will not be disappointed. We and our churches are by this act united, not in the bonds of an ecclesiastical league, not under the dominion of an infallible superiour, not for the purpose of strengthening the secular influence of

our religious societies, nor in the spirit of any selfish and mercenary connexion; but in those equal and spiritual ties, which God has hitherto blessed and hallowed to the peace of the churches of New England. For we are united in the same faith and profession, in the same duties and hopes, in the same ordinances and liberties, and, as we trust, in the same spirit also, under one Lord even Jesus, and one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.

Are not these grand principles of common faith in the divine authority of our religion, and common desires to promote the holy influence of its laws, strong enough to bind our hearts together, though our speculations may sometimes warp asunder? Is there not, amidst all the varieties of discipline and faith, enough left to us in common to preserve a unity of spirit? What though the globes, which compose our planetary system, are at some times nearer than at others, both to one another and to the sun, now crossing one another's path, now eclipsing one another's light, and even sometimes appearing to our short sighted vision to have wandered irrecoverably, and to have gone off into boundless space; yet do we not know that they are still reached by some genial beams of the central light, and continue, in their widest aberrations, to gravitate to the same point in the system? And may we not believe, that the great head of the church has always dispensed, through the numerous societies of christendom, a portion of the healing influences of his religion; has held them invisibly together, when they have appeared to be rushing farthest asunder; and through all the order and confusion, conjunction and opposition, progress and decline of churches, has kept alive in every communion a supreme regard to his authority, when clearly known, as a common principle of relation to him and to one another?

It is not with you alone, my brother, that we express our fellowship, but with this church also, which has spread out her arms to receive you, as a gift of God. Brethren, we rejoice in your prospects, which, as they should be, are brilliant; for your history has been illustrious, and we respect you, when we venerate your pastors. Surely the desk, where such men as MAYHEW and HOWARD have stood, is privileged above the common walks of public instruction. May we not venture to express our fellowship

with them also, though departed? God grant, that we may some time join their communion! But their light has not yet vanished, though their orbs have set. Of MAYHEW we have heard and read only, but enough to know, that posterity will hear and read of him also. They will be curious to learn more of that intrepid spirit, which nothing could depress, of that vigorous understanding, which broke so easily the little meshes, which were spread to entangle it. However they may hesitate to follow him in all his speculations, they will never hesitate to admire his noble attachment to his country, its liberties, its churches, and its literature; they will not be interested to depreciate the independence of his virtue, the manliness of his piety, and his undissembled love for the cause of the Redeemer. HOWARD we have seen; and who that has seen him has forgotten the patriarchal simplicity of his character, united with a tenderness, which would have been admired even in a brother? Who that knew him is not eager now to assure us, that he had ingrafted the most sublime virtues and honourable accomplishments of his predecessor on the sound and uncorrupted stock of his own integrity? But we forbear, for we remember the words of one of their contemporaries: "he, who flatters the dead, would deceive the living."

Such, my brother, are the men who have gone before you. Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord. These have rested from their labours, and you have entered into the field, and I doubt not into the fruit of their labours. God grant you his presence and his smiles! and if I might be permitted now to express a wish for you and for myself, it would be this; that our gracious master, who, when he was on earth, sent forth his seventy evangelists by two and two, to preach the gospel in Judea, would send us forth together by his authority, would permit us to travel in company through the journey of a useful ministry, and would enable us to return to his presence at last, rejoicing to find that our names have been written, with the names of our people, in the book of life.

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