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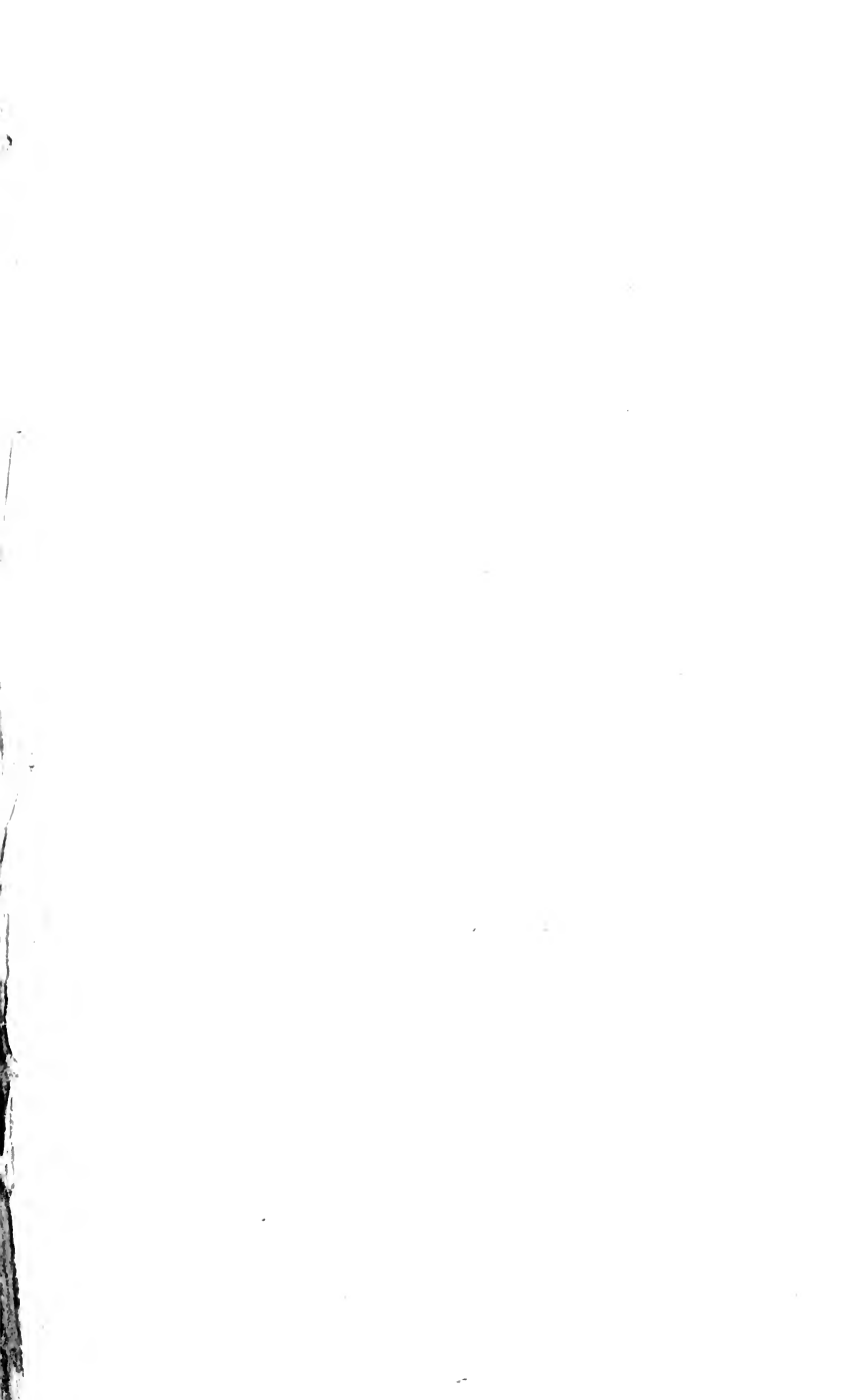
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LOGAN

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SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN LOGAN, F. R. S. EDINBURGH,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF LEITH:

INCLUDING

A COMPLETE DETAIL OF THE SERVICE

OF A

Communion Sunday,

ACCORDING TO

THE USAGE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF
THE AUTHOR.

VOLUME I.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following Volume is the work of a Man of Genius ; but as it is a Post-humous Publication, and was not prepared by the Author for the Press, the candid Public will make the proper allowances.

AMONG Mr LOGAN'S Papers were found a variety of PRAYERS, and of ADDRESSES to Communicants, at the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That these might not be lost to the Public, it was judged proper to give, from his Manuscripts, the whole service of a Communion-Sunday, in complete detail ; in which these Compositions form a part ; and are introduced, each in its place. This

will, at the same time, serve as a memorial of the Form, according to which that Solemn Ordinance is generally administered, in the present times, in Scotland; and may not be unacceptable to those of the neighbouring Church, who have a desire to be acquainted with the modes of our Service and Worship upon that occasion.

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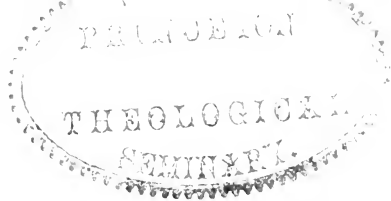
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A

SHORT MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

THE AUTHOR.

JOHN LOGAN was born at Soutra, in the parish of Fala, county of Mid-Lothian, about the end of the year 1747. His father, George Logan, rented a small farm at that place ; but afterwards removed to Gossford Mains, in the county of East-Lothian. His mother, Janet Watherstone, was daughter of John Watherstone, a respectable farmer in Lauderdale. Both parents belonged to that class of Scotch dissenters who at that time were commonly denominated BURGHERS ; and they were distinguished by the most unaffected piety and a conscientious and steady attachment to the religious community with which they were connected. They had two sons, of whom the subject of this memoir was the younger. The care of the farm, at an early period, devolved on the elder brother ; but he soon quitted it, and betook himself to the study of medicine. He afterwards settled as a surgeon in North America, where he died in 1785.

JOHN gave early indications of those talents which afterwards rendered him so distinguished ; and his parents determined to foster his love of learning and to educate him for the clerical profession. He received the earliest part of his education in the school of Musselburgh, at that time taught by Mr Jeffrey. From Musselburgh he removed to the University of Edinburgh in November 1762. The assiduity and success with which he prosecuted the study of the Latin and Greek classes soon procured the approbation of the Professors ; and on occasion of Principal Robertson's first visitation of the Greek class, he was one of those whom the Professor examined in his presence—a distinction which evinced the opinion his teacher entertained of his acquirements, and which, no doubt, had its influence in stimulating him to continued diligence. It does not appear that the physical sciences had presented to Logan's mind such attractions as the study of classical literature ;—that he had, however, devoted much of his attention to the science of morals, is obvious from his writings, which exhibit much knowledge of the human mind and the principles of action. In the study of Belles Lettres, he made singular proficiency ; and was particularly noticed and applauded by Dr Blair. He next applied himself to the study of Theology with the same ardour and diligence with which he had engaged in the preparatory pursuits ; and acquired that stock of professional knowledge, which enabled him to make such a distinguished figure as a preacher of the Gospel.

During this period, a friendship between Logan and Dr Robertson (late of Dalmeny), commenced, which continued through life with undiminished affection ; and it was not contaminated with any of those little jealousies which have sometimes marred and interrupted the intercourse of men of genius. Michael Bruce, too, whose literary career was so soon terminated, was then a student at the University of Edinburgh ; and the similarity of their genius and pursuits readily produced an

intimacy between him and our author, which continued till the amiable poet of Lochleven sunk immaturely into the grave. After the death of Bruce, Logan was engaged in preparing for the press the poems he had left; and in 1770 he published “*Poems on Several Occasions, by Michael Bruce,*” to which he added an account of the life and character of the author, and “*some poems written by different authors.*” The friends of Logan and of Bruce are divided in their opinions concerning the share which the latter had in the miscellany.

After Logan had completed that course of theological study which the laws of the church of Scotland prescribe to those who become candidates for her license to preach the gospel, he was employed, through the recommendation of Dr Blair, in assisting the studies of the son of Mr Sinclair of Ulbster, now Sir John Sinclair, Bart.—and in this situation he was treated with becoming kindness. The situation of a domestic tutor is not, however, the most congenial to the feelings of a young man of learning and genius; for, though he may be somewhat gratified with the civilities that are shown to him on account of his talents or his learning, yet it is impossible to separate from it the mortifying feeling of dependence and inferiority. In this situation Logan did not long remain. Whether from dislike to the situation of tutor, or from a desire to be nearer his friends, it does not appear that he was much above a year in the family of Ulbster. On his return, he was proposed to the Presbytery of Dalkeith as a candidate for license; and, after undergoing a long and particular examination, in which he gave the most satisfactory proofs of the assiduity with which he had applied to classical and theological learning, he was transferred to the Presbytery of Haddington, by whom, about the end of September 1770, he was licensed to be a preacher of the gospel. Although a certain degree of timidity characterised his first appearances in the pulpit, his fame, as an enlightened and impressive preacher, soon spread, and

he received an invitation from the Incorporations and Kirk Session of South Leith to the second charge of that church and parish ; and he was accordingly ordained in the year 1773. He continued to discharge his duties as a minister with steadiness and fidelity ; and while he prosecuted the studies connected with his profession, and was faithful in preparing for the instruction of his congregation, his leisure hours were employed in the cultivation of polite literature, for which he had a natural and powerful predilection.

During the session of College 1779-80, he read a course of lectures on the Philosophy of History, in St Mary's Chapel, Edinburgh ; an undertaking in which he was patronised by Principal Robertson, Dr Blair, and others, eminent for their taste in literature, and their encouragement of genius. He read the same course of lectures during the session 1780-81, with such universal approbation, as to be encouraged to offer himself as a candidate for the professorship of Civil History in the University of Edinburgh. In this, however, it is much to be regretted, he was disappointed ; as that chair, by a peculiarity for which it is difficult to account, had been always filled by one of the Faculty of Advocates. In the following session he met with a disappointment still more galling. That general approbation with which his lectures had, during the preceding sessions, been received, now began to veer ; and that patronage, with which he had hitherto been favoured, seems to have been withdrawn. He therefore determined, with a resoluteness peculiar to men of independent spirit, to try their fate with the public ; and accordingly, in 1781, published the substance of that part of his prelections which related to ancient history, in one octavo volume, entitled, "*Elements of the Philosophy of History.*" It would appear this performance received some encouragement ; for in the following year, he published one of his lectures on the manners and government of Asia. In

the same year he gave to the public a volume of poems, which were so favourably received, that a second edition was soon called for. Not only did he distinguish himself in the beaten track of lyric and elegiac poetry, he also cultivated the favour of the tragic muse; and, in 1783, he produced the tragedy of *Runnamede*; which, however, was never acted (except once in Edinburgh), on account of certain references which it was supposed to have to the politics of those times. But although it was never applauded in the theatre, yet it pleases in the closet, though unaccompanied with the magic charm of voice and gesture. Such disappointments could not fail to make a deep impression on his mind; and they increased that melancholy to which he was naturally subject—an effect which every friend to genius must lament, as it produced certain irregularities in conduct, rather incongruous with the sacredness of the ministerial character. His parishioners, who, it seems, could not distinguish between transient deviations from the path of rectitude, and determined wickedness, were highly enraged; and persecuted, with relentless fury, the man who had laboured with assiduity for their good, and whose learning and talents had been devoted for their improvement. Logan, foreseeing the storm that was gathering around him, perceived that it would be inexpedient for him to remain any longer among a people who so ill requited his labour; and, with a moderation which does him honour, agreed to withdraw from his office.

After this he went to London, and was engaged in writing for the “*English Review*.” He also wrote a pamphlet which attracted considerable notice, entitled “*A Review of the Principal charges against Mr Hastings*.*” His health now began to decline; and his literary career, and multiplied sorrows,

* The following curious fact is related by Dr Bisset, in his *History of the Reign of George III.* “The late Mr Logan,” says he, “well known for his

were terminated by his death, on the 25th of December 1788.

The death of Mr Logan was much lamented by his friends, to whom he was always warmly attached, and by whom he was sincerely beloved; the fury of his enemies seemed to have subsided, and they were willing to pay to his memory that respect which he looked for in vain while he lived. He was now, however, secure from the attacks of malice and the shafts of envy; and to him the praise or blame of mortals had become empty sounds.

By his will he bequeathed the sum of six hundred pounds Sterling, in small legacies, to his friends; and appointed Dr Robertson and Dr Grant his executors, to whom he entrusted his manuscripts. Accordingly, in 1790, a volume of his sermons was published, under the inspection of his friends, Dr Robertson, Dr Blair and Dr Hardy. In the following year a second volume was published, in which several of the discourses are not finished, either from the manuscript being incomplete, or not legible. The fourth edition of both volumes was published in 1800. Besides the works of Mr Logan, which we have mentioned in the course of our narrative, he left a variety of other papers, of which his executor, Dr Robertson, gives the following account, in a letter to Dr Anderson, dated Dalmeny, September 19, 1795.

“ literary efforts, and author of the most masterly defence of Mr Hastings, went that day (the day which the eloquence of Sheridan has rendered so memorable) to the House of Commons, prepossessed for the accused, and against his accusers. At the expiration of the first hour (of Mr Sheridan’s speech), he said to a friend, ‘ All this is declamation without proof;’ when the second was finished, ‘ This is a most wonderful oration;’ at the third, ‘ Mr Hastings acted most unjustifiably;’ at the fourth, ‘ Mr Hastings is a most atrocious criminal;’ and at last, ‘ Of all monsters of iniquity, the most atrocious is Warren Hastings.’ This I was told by Mr Peter Stewart, proprietor of the Oracle, who was present.” This fact does not affect the merits of the cause; but it is certainly an evidence of the susceptibility of Logan’s feelings, and a pleasing tribute to the eloquence of the speaker.

“ Those in verse consist of *Electra*, a tragedy ; the *Wed-*
 “ *ding-day*, a tragedy, being a translation into blank verse of
 “ the *Deserteur* of Mercier ; the *Carthaginian Heroine*, a
 “ tragedy, but of which there is only the first act finished ;
 “ and about half-a-dozen of short lyric poems. Those in prose
 “ consist of about eight numbers of an intended periodical
 “ paper called *The Guardian* ; the subject of one of the num-
 “ bers is a capital essay on the genius and writings of Addison.
 “ Besides these I have also in my possession Mr Logan’s MS.
 “ *Lectures on the Roman History*. His *Lectures on Roman*
 “ *History* begin with Romulus, and come down to the fall of the
 “ empire, and the establishment of the feudal system. In a
 “ small volume of poems, published under the title of ‘ *Poems by*
 “ *Michael Bruce*,’ the following were composed by Logan :
 “ *Damon, Menalcus, and Melibœus* ; *Pastoral Song*, to the
 “ tune of the *Yellow-hair’d Laddie* ; ‘ *Eclogue* in the manner
 “ of Ossian ; *Ode to a Fountain* ; two *Danish Odes* ; Chorus
 “ of ‘ *Anacreontic to a Wasp* ;’ the *Tale of Levina* (278 lines),
 “ in the poem of *Lochleven* ; *Ode to Paoli* ; *Ode to the*
 “ *Cuckoo**.” It is indeed matter of regret, that Dr Robertson
 did not publish a complete edition of the works of Logan, in-
 cluding the MS. mentioned above, which, we are told by Dr
 Anderson, he had meditated some time before his death. It
 would no doubt have been accompanied with a life of the in-
 genious but unfortunate author, by which we should have been
 made better acquainted with the dispositions and character of
 Logan, whom his friend and companion had better means of
 knowing than the distant biographer, who must collect his
 materials from the contradictory reports of tradition, from the
 censure of enemies, and the applause of friends.

Logan has left behind him imperishable monuments of his
 genius as a historian, a poet, and a preacher. In the remarks

† Dr Anderson’s edition of the *British Poets*, Vol. XI. p. 1050.

which we are now to suggest on his works, we shall confine ourselves to the order in which they were published. His first production was, "Elements of the Philosophy of History." This was merely an outline of his lectures, and intended, as the advertisement on the title-page informs us, for those gentlemen who heard his Prelections; although, however, it appears his scheme of lecturing had failed about the time of its publication. If we may be permitted to form an opinion of Mr Logan's lectures from this analysis, we would say that they contained a happy application of moral and political science to the history of mankind; that they were distinguished by the philosophical accuracy of his investigations, the clearness of the arrangement of his historical materials, the elegance of his diction, and the beauty of his imagery. For although this small volume contains only general hints, and is merely an exhibition of the order in which the different facts were detailed, or subjects investigated; yet it is obviously the production of a mind accustomed to take a comprehensive and philosophical view of human affairs, and, from the observation of particular facts, capable of forming general principles.

His *Poems* deserve a more minute criticism than the limits of this memoir permit us to bestow. It is impossible to read them without discerning, that he was animated with the true fire of genius; that with him poetry was not the frigid production of art, but the genuine offspring of a mind formed for relishing the beauties of nature, and guided by the inspiration of the muses; that his imagery is not the meretricious trappings of the plagiarist, but the production of a mind warmed with poetic enthusiasm; that his numbers are not merely produced by the laws of criticism, but are the natural dictates of his muse; and, in short, that he was fully qualified for "waking to ecstasy the living lyre." His hymns at the end of the volume are truly devotional, and seem to be the effusion

of a mind which felt the power of religious truth. The greater number of them have, very properly, been adopted into the psalmody of our national church. Logan's mind seems to have been peculiarly attuned to devotional and solemn themes; and his hymns are admirably adapted for exciting those feelings in his readers.

Runnamede, the only tragedy which Logan published, is founded on the occurrences which took place at that memorable spot, when Magna Charta was obtained, in the reign of King John. As this play is but little known, we shall lay before our readers a short sketch of it. The Norman and Saxon barons being assembled, sacrifice their mutual enmities to the common cause of freedom. They are informed, that the Dauphin of France, whom they had courted to their aid, intended to ruin them. The archbishop of Canterbury proposes to unite more closely the interests of the revolted barons, by the marriage of Arden, a Saxon Lord, to the daughter of Albemarle, a Norman; but the lady being betrothed to Elvine, a Norman chief, just returned from the holy wars, an obstacle to the wished-for union occurs. This, however, is removed, in the father's apprehension, by the intelligence that the lover had joined the Dauphin's army; but the lady remains unshaken in her attachment. In the midst of importunities to comply with the wishes of her father and the other barons, she writes a letter to Elvine, in the Dauphin's camp; but having omitted to address it, the Dauphin's ambassador, to whom she entrusted it, superscribed it to his master, in order to produce a division between Albemarle and Arden, the latter of whom he supposed would be disgusted at the lady's behaviour. The letter is intercepted; the lady condemned to die for her conduct; and Elvine, as her champion, saves her from the block, by killing Arden in single combat. The fidelity of Elvine to his country is discovered, and he is chosen the leader of the rebel host.

The conferences with King John are then exhibited. He consents to grant the rebels the exercise of their rights, in consideration of their pledging themselves to resist the French invader. Elvine, mean time, is thrown into despair, by the discovery, that the letter written by Elvina was addressed to the Dauphin; and, under the influence of this passion, he plunges into the hostile ranks; where, however, he discovers, from the treacherous ambassador, the truth with regard to the letter. Elvine returns successful and safe from the fight. The piece closes with joy, and the confirmation of liberty by Magna Charta.

It evidently has many blemishes; and is not certainly of the highest order of dramatic writing: but, although it has a double plot, although the characters are thread-bare, and although it be apparently without a catastrophe in which all our better passions are interested, it is unquestionably an admirable performance. There is a majesty and fire in the verse truly delightful; and the train of the incidents being natural, does not materially confuse the progress of the fable. It breathes that ardent and elevated glow of passion, which eminently shone in the character of Logan. The picture of public spirit, struggling with private attachments, is most exquisitely painted in the character of Albemarle; while the language of substantial patriotism blazes in every line.

As his *Sermons* were not prepared by himself, and probably not intended for the public, they want those embellishments, and that finished accuracy, which a man of genius, full of the hopes of transmitting his name with honour to posterity, never fails to bestow upon his compositions. This circumstance, however, is not without its advantages. Those sermons which are carefully prepared for publication—in which the author employs all his powers in pruning every exuberance, and retrenching every superfluity—in scrutinizing every figure, and suppressing every unnecessary epithet—in smoothing every ex-

pression, and adjusting the cadence of every period ; though they may please the eye and gratify the ear of the fastidious critic, are not to be regarded as specimens of the author's ordinary addresses to his congregation, but of his abilities as a writer. The discourses of Logan, on the contrary, are examples of his ordinary preaching ; for they come into our hands almost in the very same form in which they were delivered to his audience : and if we consider them in this view, we shall have the greatest reason to admire his genius. The subjects are well chosen. Removed, on the one hand, from the puzzling subtilities of controversial divinity, and, on the other, from the dry discussions of abstract morality, they treat of doctrines which are of the last importance, and of duties which are of eternal obligation. To describe the operation of human passion, and to exhibit interesting views of human life ; to enforce the obligation of virtue, and to shew the influence of religion on moral conduct ; to delineate the devout feelings of the pious heart, and to recommend love to God, and affection to the Redeemer, are the themes on which Logan delights to dwell. His sermons are characterised by a spirit of rational and elevated devotion ; by a vein of splendid imagery ; by a warm and impassioned eloquence ; by a simplicity and elegance of diction, which render them unrivalled specimens of pulpit oratory. It appears, however, he did not scruple to borrow occasionally from others. Besides the passages in the 4th and 11th sermons at the first part, which Dr Anderson mentions as borrowed from Dr Seed, there is another in the Sermon on Retirement, taken *verbatim* from Blair's on that subject. And there is a beautiful passage in the Evening Sermon after the communion, taken from Bishop Sherlock's discourse on the "Sufferings of Christ." This circumstance, in the case of Logan, argues on intellectual imbecility, since his own is always equal, if not superior, to what he borrows ; it only shews, that the most ardent genius will at times be in-

dolent, and that the most fertile imagination has its barren seasons.

From the facts and observations we have stated, the reader, it is presumed, will have formed an estimate of Logan's character. Formed by nature with tender and delicate feelings, he has displayed those feelings in the soothing strains of his delightful poetry. Endowed with vigour of intellect, and warmth of imagination, he has given proofs of his varied powers, in the comprehensiveness of his views as a historian, and the splendour of his eloquence as a preacher. His private character was distinguished by the sincerity of his friendship, and the ardour of his attachment. As a man, he was not free from failings; but charity will wipe away the stains which truth often obliges the biographer to record.

SERMON I.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

PSAL. XXVII. 4.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

DAVID, the author of this psalm, is much celebrated in the Sacred Scriptures. As a man, he was not without faults; but as a king, he shines with uncommon lustre. He distinguished himself in early youth, as the champion of his native land; in fighting the battles of Israel he became the hero of his age; and at last he ascended the throne, on which he sat with much splendour during many years. He was

the founder of the Jewish monarchy. From being separate tribes, he made the Jews a nation. Their judge in peace, as well as their leader in war, he secured by his counsels what he had gained by his arms, and gave to Judea a name and a renown among the kingdoms of the East. To the bravery of a warrior, and the wisdom of a statesman, he added what in all ages has been no less admired,—the accomplishments of a poet or bard. “The sweet Psalmist of Israel” consecrated his harp to the praises of the Lord, and composed to it sacred strains, that have ministered to the improvement and to the devotion of succeeding times, till this day.

Notwithstanding all his other engagements, he found time for the exercises of religion: notwithstanding all the pleasures and honours of a throne, he found his chief happiness in the house of the Lord. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” Whenever his favourite subject presents itself, he takes fire, and speaks of it, not only with zeal but with transport. “How admirable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

It becomes then a subject worthy of our attention, to inquire, *What there is* in the public institutions of religion, to have rendered them an object of so great importance to the king of Israel? This will appear, if we consider their influence on men with respect to their religious capacity; with respect to their moral character; with respect to their political state; and with respect to their domestic life.

In the *first* place, let us consider the influence of religious institutions upon men, with respect to their *religious capacity*.

There are many qualities which we share in common with the inferior animals. In the acuteness of the external senses, some of them excel our species. They have a reason of their own; they make approaches to human intelligence, and are led by an instinct of nature to associate with one another. They have also their virtues, and exhibit such examples of affection, of industry, and of courage, as give lessons to mankind. But in all their actions they discover no sense of Deity, and no traces of religion. It was reserved to be the glory of man, that he alone should be admitted into the presence of his Creator, and be rendered capable of knowing and adoring the perfections of

the Almighty. As piety is the distinguishing mark of the human race, a tendency to the exercise thereof is in some degree natural to the mind. When we look up to heaven, and behold the sun shining in glory, or the moon and the stars walking in brightness, untaught nature prompts us to adore him that made them, to bow down and worship in the temple not made with hands. When we are surrounded by dangers on every side, and overwhelmed with deep affliction, by the law of our nature we tend to some superior Being for safety and relief: or when we are surprised with a sudden flow of unexpected prosperity, spontaneously we lift up our eyes and hands to Heaven, to pour forth the grateful effusions of the heart to our unseen Benefactor.

As there are principles, then, in human nature, which incline men to religion, and principles also which incline them to society, it would not have been extraordinary, if the combined influence of the religious and associating principles had been so strong as to have prompted men to have assembled in public, for the purposes of devotion, although no law had been given to that end. But it was not left to this. Among all the nations of the world, the public interested itself in the cause; the

legislative authority interposed its sanction, and kings and lawgivers encouraged the propensity of the people to religion. It required no profound wisdom to foresee the manifold advantages that the public worship of a Deity would introduce among men. Accordingly, temples were everywhere built, sacred ceremonies were instituted, an order of men was appointed to officiate in holy things, and certain days were set apart for the people to join in the celebration of divine worship. Indeed, as to the objects, and the manner of worship, little care was taken. The magistrate gave his authority to the current belief, though ever so absurd and ridiculous, and established that form of religion which the people were best disposed to receive. It was thought sufficient, if by public and solemn acts of piety, a sense of Deity, and feelings of religion, could be impressed, and frequently renewed in the minds of men. But in some nations this practice, so highly beneficial to mankind, was enjoined by an authority superior to that of human governors. God himself, in the system of laws which he delivered to his ancient people, hallowed the seventh day, and appointed other festivals in which the people should assemble together in order to join in the services of the

sanctuary. In what concerns the celebration of the Sabbath, Christianity confirms the Mosaic law. Our Saviour, whose practice ought to be a rule of life to Christians, attended upon the public worship in the Jewish synagogues; and the Apostles followed his example, till by their labours in the ministry, they had gathered together in one place, a sufficient number of converts to form a church. Then they constituted regular assemblies of Christians, they ordained proper persons to preside in the public worship, and both by their precept and example, recommended a constant attendance on these meetings of the faithful.

That there must be an established religion in every state, is a principle in which not only Christians, but infidels, have been agreed. In order that the public religion may be productive of any good effects, it is necessary that it make a deep impression upon the minds of the people. But if it were not for our assembling together on the Lord's day for public worship, that form of Christianity which is established in this country would perhaps take too feeble a hold of the mind to produce its proper effects. The Christian religion is very different from those systems of superstition which prevailed in the Pagan world. The

heathen religion had attractions for every feeling of the human frame. It contained every thing that could strike the senses, or please the imaginations of men. All the apparatus of false religion, which at once amuses and engages the mind, was exhibited: ceremonies, pompous festivals, costly sacrifices, were continually passing before the eyes of the worshipper. In the majesty of the temple and the splendour of the worship, the Deity seemed to be present. Ancient superstition introduced the fine arts into her train, called the powers of genius to her aid, and employed the painter and the poet to hold out her charms to the world.

Very different was that religion of which Jesus Christ was the author. When the Son of God descended, he appeared not like the idols of the nations. The Christian religion is pure, spiritual, divine. It is the religion of the mind and the heart ; the worship of God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth. There is nothing here but the simplicity of truth, and the majesty of reason, to persuade the world. Man, however, is not a pure intelligence, and reason is not the only attribute of his nature. Were it not, therefore, for the mode of communication by discourse in public assemblies,

Christianity, in its simplest form, could never be a popular religion. It might employ the leisure of philosophic men; it might operate its effect upon the few who are given to inquiry; but it never could engage the generality of mankind. They who have not considered the subject, cannot possibly conceive the astonishing difference that there is between written and spoken language; between the dead letter that appears to the eye, and the living voice that comes to the heart. The same discourse that, in a popular assembly, would raise the passions of the audience to the highest pitch; send it abroad in print, and it will often have no effect at all. Add to these, that it is to the meetings of the faithful, that the promise of the divine presence is made. In the gates of Zion, God delights to dwell: and when his disciples are gathered together, Jesus has promised to be in the midst of them. True piety indeed is not confined to the sanctuary. High is the pleasure, and great the benefit of private devotion. But sure I am that they who have entered into the spirit, and tasted the pleasures of devotion in secret, will not be thereby prevented from approaching to God in the ordinances of public worship. Society heightens every feeling, and

improves every delight. All that charms the eye, or the ear, or the imagination, or the heart, is attended with double pleasure, when we share it in the company of others. In the presence of striking and exemplary piety, the careless worshipper will become devout, and the devout will become fervent. A holy emulation will rise in the bosoms of the faithful: the ardour will spread from breast to breast, and the passions of one inflame the passions of all. May I not appeal to your own experience, and ask, When you have been in the spirit on the Lord's day, when the word of life was spoken from the heart to the heart, have you not felt that there was a divinity in virtue?—have you not found yourselves as if translated from earth to heaven, and experienced the emotion of mind which the Patriarch felt, when he awoke from his dream, and cried out in rapture, “ Surely the Lord is in this place! “ This is none other than the house of God, “ and this is the gate of heaven.”

Secondly, Let us view the effect of religious institutions upon men, with regard to their *moral character*.

Whatever brings men together, and connects them in society, has a tendency to ci-

vilize and improve them. Especially when they assemble together for such important purposes as the worship of a Deity, this will be the effect. There is something in the very idea of drawing nigh to God, that inspires virtue. When men accustomed to meet together as busy and as social creatures, assemble at stated times as rational and immortal beings, a sense of propriety will prompt them to act up to that high character. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, whatever is displeasing to God, and hostile to men, will vanish from their mind. The connection between such exercises of piety, and the practice of virtue, is nearer and more intimate than superficial reasoners are apt to imagine. There are indeed pretences to religion, without any virtue, as there are pretences to virtue without any religion; but whoever in reality possesses the fear of God, will be thereby determined to keep his commandments. It must be obvious, at first view, that the sense of a Supreme Being, the inspector of human affairs, the patron of virtue, the avenger of sin, and the rewarder of righteousness, has a powerful tendency to strengthen moral obligation, to annex a new sanction to the laws, and to inspire purity into the manners of a people.

By the operation of such a principle, open violence will be restrained, and secret enmity would be checked. Society will assume a happier form, the insolence of the oppressor will be humbled, and the wild passions of the licentious be subdued. What the Scripture calls, “the power of the world to come,” is felt strongly through every corner of this world. Heaven improves the earth; and the life which is to come, is a source of happiness to the life which now is. There are, indeed, I acknowledge, to the honour of the human kind—there are persons in the world who feel that the possession of good dispositions is their best reward; who would follow goodness for its own sake, and do their duty, because it is their duty, although there were neither rewards nor punishments to come. But I know as well, that the world is not composed of such persons. Men in general are governed by their passions, their interest, the prevailing bias of their minds; and whenever their passions, their interest, or the bias of their mind stand in one scale, and their duty in the other, it is very evident where the balance will incline. To such persons you might declaim for ever, to no purpose, on the beauty of virtue, and the harmony of a well-governed mind:

they hear you not ; they are deaf to the voice of the moral charmer : Nothing less than “ Thus saith the Lord,” will influence their conduct. The unjust judge in the parable represents and characterizes the great body of mankind ; if they fear not God, neither will they regard men.

Thus, if the public institutions of religion were laid aside, private virtue would not long remain behind. Men in general have no principle of moral conduct but religion, and if that were taken away, they would work all impurity with greediness, whenever they could withdraw from the public eye. Human laws would often be of little avail, without a sense of divine legislation ; and the sanctions of men have little force, unless they were enforced by the authority of God. There would then be no security for the public peace ; the mutual confidence between man and man would be destroyed ; the bond which keeps society together would be broken ; oaths would become mere words of course, and an appeal to the Great God of Heaven no more regarded than if he were an image of stone. Human life would be thrown into confusion, the safety of mankind would be endangered, and the moral world totter to its ruin, if such a pillar were to fall. And what

is it that maintains and spreads religious principles in the world? What is it that keeps alive on the minds of the people, the fear of God and the belief of his providence? It is the public institutions of religion; it is the observance of the Lord's day; it is our assembling together in this place for the celebration of divine worship. The people, in general, have no religious principles, and no rule of life, but what they learn here; and if these churches were once shut up, the hand of the civil magistrate would soon force them open, in order to reclaim the criminals that would thus be let loose upon the world.

In the *third* place, let us view the effect of religious institutions upon men, with regard to their *political state*.

The political systems that take place in the world, the facility with which the many are governed by the few, is one of the most wonderful things in the history of man. That mankind in all ages, and in all countries, should allow a few of their number to divide this globe among them; to appropriate to themselves the possessions, distinctions, and honours, and leave nothing to the majority but burdens to bear, if we had not beheld it from

the first, would have appeared one of the most astonishing of all events. Would it be at all surprising, to hear a man, struck with a sense of this state of things, complain thus: “ Is Nature unequal in the care of her children? “ A mother to some, and a stepmother to “ others? Has she appointed me to labour in “ the sweat of my brow, and another to riot “ in the fruit of my labours? No. The fault “ is not in Nature. She has no favourites. “ She gives to all her sons an equal right to “ inherit the earth. The fault is in them “ who tamely bend their necks to the yoke, “ who kneel and kiss the rod which the haugh- “ ty lord waves over their heads. It never “ surely was the will of heaven, that the “ worthy should be scorned by the vile, and “ the brave be trampled upon by the cow- “ ard. Cannot I then find a band of men as “ valiant and as determined as myself, to “ rectify these caprices of fortune, to vindi- “ cate the rights of Nature, and restore man- “ kind to their original inheritance. By doing “ violence at first, this usurpation on nature “ was made; and by a similar violence, Nature “ requires that her reign be restored.” What is it that prevents such a spirit, as I have been now describing, from frequently break-

ing out? What prevents bloodshed and devastation, and all the evils of war? What prevents the world from being turned upside down?—Nothing so much as the influence of religious principles upon the minds of men. Christianity gives honour to civil government, as being the ordinance of God, and enjoins subjection to the laws, under its own awful sanctions.

And not only by particular precepts, but by its secret and less visible influence, it prepares the minds of men for submission to lawful authority. When we meet together in this place under the sanction of law, and under the protection of the civil magistrate, we are put in mind of our relation to the state, and of our duty to the higher powers. *Fear God and honour the King*, have more than a local connection in scripture.* Obedience to spiritual authority paves the way for subjection to the civil power. Hence wise legislators have, even on this account, favoured the progress of religion: hence those who have attempted innovations in government, applied, in the first place, to the ministers of religion, and endeavoured to gain the pulpit on their side. Julian, known by the name of the Apostate, the most formi-

* See 1 Pet. ii. 17.

dable enemy the Christians ever had, was so sensible of the influence, and of the effects of preaching to the people, that he appointed a similar institution among the heathens.

“ My son, fear thou the Lord and the king,” (said the wisest of mankind,) “ and meddle not with them that are given to change.” In confirmation, we may observe, that men, characterized as given to change, have, either from infidelity, not attended upon ordinances, or from enthusiasm, been above them? For, who have been innovators and disturbers? who have been the authors of seditions and rebellions? who have been the enemies of order and civil government, in many an age?—a mixture of atheists and fanatics; two classes of men, who, though seemingly opposite, have been found in close bonds of union.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, we have to consider the influence of religious institutions upon men with respect to *domestic life*.

It is chiefly on account of their domestic situation, that we can pronounce men happy or miserable. Here the pleasures are enjoyed which sweeten life; here the pains are felt which embitter our days. No uneasiness abroad will sit heavy on a man, when the

pleasing reflection rises in his mind, that he has happiness at home: No enjoyment from without will give real and lasting satisfaction, when he knows that he has a curse in his own house.

It is no small advantage attending the institutions of divine worship, that they minister to the happiness of domestic life. A new bond will be added to the conjugal union, when those whom it connects walk to the House of God in company, take sweet counsel with one another, and set out jointly in the way that leads to life. Watered by the dews of heaven, which fall here, the olive plants will flourish round your table. What sacred sensations will fill the bosom of a parent, when, viewing his family sitting at the feet of Jesus, he says, in the fulness of a grateful heart,—
“ Lord! behold me, and the children whom
“ thou hast given me!”

There is a beauty, also, when the rich and the poor, when the high and the low, who seldom meet together on other occasions, assemble here in one place, one great family, in the presence of their common Lord, when they are stripped of every adventitious circumstance, and where virtue makes the only distinction among them. It is the image of those golden

times when society began ; it is the image of the state which is to come, when God shall be all in all.

Such are the effects of religious institutions upon men, with respect to their religious capacity, their moral character, their political state, and their domestic life.

Whoever, therefore, habitually absents himself from attending on public ordinances, has to answer for it to his God,—to his neighbours,—to his country,—and to his family. He partakes with other men in their sins ; he associates with the enemies of mankind ; and does what in him lies to undermine the basis on which the order and happiness of civil society is built. He teaches the false swearer to take the name of God in vain ; he directs the midnight robber to his neighbour's house ; and he delivers into the hand of the assassin, a dagger to shed innocent blood.

But, blessed be God ! that, corrupted as the world is, there are not wanting instances of exemplary piety in every station of life ; not only in the middle, the lower, and the higher, but in the highest of all. While piety shines, as it now does, from the throne ; while it has the beam of Majesty to adorn it ; let

none of the subjects fail in copying the pattern: and while we meet together in this place, let us remember, that many who have worshipped, in times past, within these walls, are now in the Higher House, in the Church of the First-born, in the Assembly of Angels, and in that Temple where the beatific presence of the Lord displays his glory, in a manner which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

SERMON II.

ON THE PRACTICE OF DEVOTION,

ROM. xii. 11.

——— *Fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord.*

THE manners of mankind are perpetually varying. Two nations differ not more from one another, than the same nation differs from itself, at different periods of society. This change of customs and manners has given rise to two opinions, both of them generally received, and both of them founded on mistake. These are, that we are always improving upon our ancestors in art and in science, and always degenerating from them in religion and morals. When we talk of any work of ingenuity or of industry, composed or performed by our forefathers, from the highest liberal science, to the lowest mechanic art, if

we allow it any praise at all, our panegyric runs in this style: "It is very well for the time in which it was done." On the other hand, we always allow our ancestors the preference in virtue. For these five thousand years past, the philosophers and moralists of every nation have extolled the times of antiquity, and decried the age in which they lived, as the worst that ever was known. "These wicked times,"—"This degenerate age," are phrases that have rung in the public ear almost since the general deluge. The ages of antiquity are always ages of gold; the present always an age of iron.

The origin of these opinions I take to be this. As customs and manners are perpetually fluctuating, the reigning mode is always reckoned the best, because they have no other standard but fashion. But fashion is not the standard of morals. The hand of the Almighty hath written the moral law, the standard of virtue, upon the living tablets of every human heart. Here then the standard is fixed and eternal. Accordingly, as quite a different set of virtues and vices prevail in one age, from what prevail in another; as we are naturally disposed to bury the faults of our forefathers in oblivion; as we insensibly con-

tract a veneration for what is great in antiquity ; hence arises the opinion, that the virtues of a former age are greater than those of a following one. We think we degenerate from our fathers, because we differ from them. But were I to pronounce of the times in which we live, I would say that the present age is not inferior in virtue to the past. We have improved upon our ancestors in humanity, charity, and benevolence ; we have exchanged the rage and rancour of animals of prey, for the meek and gentle spirit of the dove. The gall of asps is transformed into the milk of human kindness. Great and enormous crimes are less frequent than they have been ; we are better members of society, better neighbours, better friends than our ancestors were. People of different opinions and sects in religion, who some hundred years ago would have been putting one another to death, now live together in amity and peace.

Would to God I could carry on my panegyric, and add, that we are more religious and devout than our ancestors were ; that our zeal for the honour of God, and the interests of religion, shines with a brighter lustre, and burns with a purer flame. But alas ! my brethren, I must here change my strain. Your

own eyes, your own hearts, will tell you the dismal truth. Is it not a deplorable fact, that instead of being fervent in spirit to serve the Lord, an indifference about religion almost universally prevails? The very face of seriousness is banished from society, and were it not for this day, on which we assemble together to worship the God of our fathers, the very form of godliness would be exterminated from the earth.

To induce you to the practice of devotion, it is proposed, in the *first* place, to illustrate the importance and the advantage of serving the Lord; and, in the *second* place, to explain and to enforce, with a few arguments, the duty of serving the Lord with fervency of spirit.

In the *first* place, let us consider the importance and the advantage of serving the Lord.

We are urged to the practice of some virtues, by our strong sense of their inviolable obligation; we are allured to the love of others, by the high approbation of their native beauty, which arises in every well-disposed mind; we are engaged to the performance of others, by our experience of their utility and influence upon the public good. Piety is equally enforced in all these respects. Its ob-

ligation is indispensable ; its beauty is supreme, and its utility is universal. It is not so much a single virtue, as a constellation of virtues. Here reverence, gratitude, faith, hope, love, concentrate their rays, and shine with united glory. Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, are honest, or of good report ; if there be any merit, any praise in human action, piety comprehends the whole. There is not a disposition of the mind which is more noble in itself, or is attended with greater pleasure than piety. It is accompanied with such inward satisfaction, that the duty is sufficiently rewarded by the performance ; and it hath such grandeur in it, that when duly performed, it exalts us to a state but little lower than the angels. The most illiterate man, under the impressions of true devotion, and in the immediate acts of divine worship, contracts a greatness of mind that raises him above his equals. Thereby, says an admired ancient, we build a nobler temple to the Deity than creation can present.

Piety is adapted to the notions of happiness and chief good which all men entertain, although these notions were as various in themselves as the theories of philosophers have been

about their object. If we are actuated by the mild and gentle affections, lovers of nature, willing to retire from the bustle of the world, and to steal through the vale of life with as little noise, and as much peace as possible, religion sanctifies our choice, and doubles all the joys of life with the peace of heaven. Are we lovers of society, delighting to enlarge the sphere of our acquaintance in the world, and to cultivate universal friendship with all ranks and degrees of men? Here, too, religion befriends us, as it unites all men under one common interest, that of being probationers for eternity. Are we ambitious of fame and honour among men? This is indeed the universal passion. Nothing more distinguishes the nature of man, than this restless desire of rising above his fellows, of becoming famous, and acquiring a name. But it does not lie in the way of every one to rise in the world, by being advanced to honour and distinction, and commanding the applause of attending multitudes: Fame unbars the gates of her temple but to a chosen few; the candidate will infallibly meet with many a disappointment and many a downfall in climbing the steep ascent; but the paths of religion, that lead to glory, honour and immortality, are ever open

and safe ; by piety we already enjoy a reputation among the just, and the approbation of our own hearts, and have the certain expectation of that immortal honour which cometh from God only, who writes our name in the book of life. Hither let the man of the world turn, that he may find durable riches, more to be desired than gold and all earthly possessions. Here the man of pleasure may find a perpetual fund of enjoyment, in drinking of that stream which proceeds from the river of life ; a stream whose fountain never fails, which has no sediment at bottom, and which runs for ever unmingled with the waters of bitterness.

Piety is the foundation of virtue and morality. True devotion strengthens our obligations to a holy life, and superadds a new motive to every social and civil duty. Upon an impartial observation of mankind, it will be found, that those men who are the most conscientious in the public and private exercises of divine worship, will be most diligent in performing the duties they owe to their neighbour, and in observing the rules of morality. Our holy religion lays us under strong obligations to duty ; the spirit of Christianity dwelling in the heart, must of necessity inspire it with an ardent desire to perform what-

ever things are virtuous and praiseworthy ; and the example of Jesus Christ, which the true Christian sets continually before his eyes, will engage him, by all the laws of love, to walk as he also walked, who, according even to the testimony of his enemies, “ did all things well.” On the other hand, impiety and immorality naturally go together, as cause and effect. Who is it that is altogether corrupt, and a worker of iniquity ? It is the fool, who has said in his heart, There is no God. When we read of the unjust judge in the Gospel, who feared not God, we naturally infer that he regarded not man. Under this particular, we may likewise take notice, that serving the Lord with sincere piety, is the most successful method of becoming publicly useful in the world. Man, fallen as he certainly is, is still a benevolent being. Formed for society, he delights in the exercise of his social faculties, he aspires to be eminently useful in the station in which he is placed, and is in his proper element, when he is dispensing happiness around him. The sympathetic emotions that rise in the bosom at the sight of an object in distress, the smile that wakens on the cheek, the tear that starts spontaneous from the eye, at the representa-

tion of scenes of human joy or sorrow, are indisputable indications of the benevolence of our nature. But the low station of many, checks the benevolence of their hearts, and circumscribes it to a narrow sphere. Few have it in their power to become useful to their country, by contriving or effectuating public-spirited designs; few have it in their power to save their country from the miseries of war, by being its shield in the day of battle; few can act as the instruments of Providence, in bringing about national happiness. But all of us can be pious, and by serving the Lord with fervency of spirit, can become universally useful to our country and to the world. By piety, like the prophets of old, we can shield our country from the wrath of heaven; we can interest Omnipotence on its side, and even derive blessings to ages unborn. A good man is the guardian angel of his country.

I shall only add on this head, that by serving the Lord here, we have an earnest and anticipation of the happiness of the heavenly state. It is a pleasant reflection, and well worthy of our most serious thought, that we are now entering upon a course of life that will be our employment through eternity. As

man is a progressive being, gradually tending to perfection, it is a law of his nature, that he should endeavour to act beforehand, the part to which he is destined in a higher state of being. The child, from his earliest years, anticipates in sport the employment of maturer age, loves to imitate the actions of men, and is pleased with the name. We are all of us children, with respect to our future existence; and should it not be as natural for him who is born from above, to act over the exercises and enjoyments of that state of being to which he is advancing? Piety is the beginning of heaven in the mind: Here the sun faintly beams, as in the dubious twilight; there he shines forth in full meridian glory. What an inestimable privilege then is this, which God hath put into our power? A life sacred to piety, and to the observance of true and undefiled religion, introduces us beforehand into the world to come, and gives us an acquaintance with the state and society of the angels and blessed spirits who dwell in light.

I come now to the *second* thing proposed, which was, to explain that fervour of spirit, so requisite in the exercises of devotion, and enforce it with a few arguments.

By fervour of spirit, in general, is meant an uncommon application of mind in the performance of any thing, a warmth bordering upon transport, that moves every spring of the heart, and carries all before it, to gain its end. So that by fervency of spirit in serving the Lord, must be understood, an ardent and active desire of loving the Lord, of worshipping him in sincerity, and obeying his commands with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. It consists not in a few transient fits and starts of natural devotion when we are in jeopardy, without help of man; neither is it a wild blaze of religious passion, that flashes and vanishes; much less shall it be profaned by confounding it with those furies, *Enthusiasm* and *Superstition*, who would drench a country with innocent blood, under pretence of serving the Lord. “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel. O my soul enter not thou into their secret.”

True fervour of spirit proceedeth from above. It is a beam from the father of lights, pure and benign, which at once enlightens and warms the mind. It is a ray from the Sun of Righteousness, bright even at the beginning, and which shineth more and more

unto the perfect day. It is a temper wrought into the heart by the Holy Spirit, compounded of love to God, and of zeal for his honour, attended with charity to man.

This fervour of mind, in its full extent, is one of the brightest ornaments of the Christian. It enters into the heart, and engages the whole man on the side of devotion; it gives a double measure of force and alacrity to that religion which before was sincere. In a word, it is to the spiritual life, what health is to the natural; it makes that spirited and cheerful, which otherwise would only breathe and move. Conscious that religion is his grand concern, the fervent Christian will set about the duties of it with suitable ardour and intenseness of mind. The passions and affections which God hath given man, as the springs of action, will in him be exerted to their noblest purpose, to inspire him with alacrity and cheerfulness in the ways of the Lord. He will be in pain till he has performed his duties of devotion, and labours of love, holding nothing too dear which will procure to him that robe of holiness, which is beautiful in the eyes of Heaven.

He feels in his heart all the devout affections and desires so passionately described by the holy Psalmist, which we know not whether

to admire most as beautiful strains of poetry, or raptures of devotion. “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea, the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, fainteth for the courts of the Lord. For, a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.—The desire of my soul is to thee, O God, and to the remembrance of thy name. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. My soul waiteth for thee, O Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; yea, more than they that watch for the morning.”

To engage us more effectually to the performance of this part of our duty, let us consider the general obligations we lie under, as rational creatures, to serve the Lord with fervency of spirit, and then the particular obligations that arise from Christianity.

And, in the *first* place, As the Almighty is the Creator of the world, and the Father of the human race, he is likewise their Preserver, and the author of order and harmony in the universe.

In his Providence, he takes us, the children of men, into his particular tuition, in giving us, from his immediate hand, all things requisite for our subsistence, well-being, and delight in this world, our well-ordered habitation; in making nature spontaneously unlock to us her hidden stores; in causing the wide creation, one way or other, administer to our pleasures, as if heaven and earth contended which should be most liberal of their favours to happy man; and, in fine, admitting us, above all the other inhabitants of our earth, into the plan of his creation, and making us spectators of that beauty, original and supreme, the image of himself, which he hath poured forth over all his works.

But when we consider his particular Providence, with respect to every one of us, our obligations will be infinitely heightened. Here we discern the finger of God. His goodness lent a favourable ear to all our feeble cries and complaints, when we were upon the breast; he guarded us from a thousand dangers and diseases which hung over our heads, and cut off more than one half of our equals in age; he hath led us, as it were, by the hand, through the various stages of life, affording us many de-

liverances, and many tokens of his loving kindness, which only ourselves and Heaven were privy to; and when all things in the world seemed to combine against us, he was a friend that never failed. Seeing, then, he upholds our existence, and is the parent of so many mercies, has he not, as our Supreme Benefactor, a title to the service of 'our whole lives, and to all the fervour of our spirits?

This will appear still more, in the *next* place, when we consider the superior obligations which we are laid under by Christianity. While many nations are sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death, on us hath the Sun of Righteousness arisen, in full glory. We are let into the mystery kept hid from ages. We have seen the Deity, in human form, descending upon earth, to teach the benighted nations the knowledge of salvation; to set a pattern of goodness and perfection for the world to imitate; and, by expiating the guilt of sin upon the cross, to finish our redemption. We have now a new and living way opened into the Heaven of Heavens, by the blood of Jesus. Life and immortality are brought to light, and promised to all who sincerely believe and obey the gospel. So that we may now rejoice with the Poet of Israel,—

“ As the heaven is high above the earth, so
“ great is the mercy of the Lord towards us ;
“ for as far as the east is from the west, so far
“ hath he removed from us all our iniquities :
“ He redeemeth our lives from destruction,
“ and crowneth us with loving-kindness and
“ tender mercies.”

When we are obliged to any of our fellow-creatures for an important favour, what pleasure is it to a generous heart to be able to make the least return ! If our benefactor be above us in his station in life, if he bestowed the favour without any solicitation on our part, and promises still to continue our friend, shall we not take every occasion of shewing that we are not ungrateful, and search for opportunity of serving him, as for hid treasure ? What thanks, what praises, what services, shall we not then render to our Supreme Benefactor, who had translated us from his kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his Son ; who delivered up his Son unto the death for us, and with him freely gives us all things !

We have abundance of ardour and zeal in our temporal concerns. We rise early, and sit up late : we deny ourselves the pleasures and comforts of society : we forego our native country, and all the dear connections of early

life : we traverse the whole terraqueous globe, expose ourselves to the mercy of winds and waves, and bear alternately the extremities of heat and cold : we breathe in the regions of infection and of death,—to amass a few pieces of shining dust, whose acquisition costs us such sore trouble, and whose possession gives us so little happiness. Almighty God ! shall we be thus fervent and zealous in every temporal, in every trivial concern, and remain cold and dead unto thee ! If thus we continue, my brethren, the very heathens issuing forth from their regions of darkness, will set up a tribunal and call us before them : “ The men of Nineve
“ shall rise up in judgment with us, and shall
“ condemn us ; because they repented at the
“ preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than
“ Jonas is here ! The Queen of the South shall
“ rise up in judgment with us, and shall con-
“ demn us ; for she came from the uttermost
“ parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of
“ Solomon, and behold a greater than Solo-
“ mon is here ! ”—“ Verily, it shall be more
“ tolerable for the land of Sodom and Go-
“ morrha, in the day of judgment, than for our
“ city.”

Do you consider, my brethren, the dignity and importance of that religion, to which

your attachment is required? Do ye reflect, that this is the masterpiece of infinite wisdom; that here the Almighty made bare his holy arm, and put forth all his strength? The introduction of this religion was the object of all the dispensations of the Deity upon earth. This is the centre in which terminates every line in the great circle of Providence. If one nation was victorious, and another put under the yoke; if war was commissioned to ravage and lay desolate the earth, or peace to make the joyful inhabitants sing beneath the vine; if kings were crowned, or were dethroned; if empires rose or fell, all was preparatory and subservient to this grand event. The monarchies which prevailed in the world, whether Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, or Roman, were erected as introductory to the Messiah, whose kingdom was to be without bounds, and whose reign was to be without end. That great image which the Monarch of the East beheld in his dream, whose head was of gold, whose breast was of silver, whose thighs were of brass, and whose feet were of iron, was set up by Providence, to prepare the way for the Stone which was cut out without hands, which was destined to smite the image, become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. All

events, whether prosperous or adverse, whether malignant or benign, have co-operated towards the advancement of our religion. Saints have established it by their lives : martyrs have confirmed it, by their deaths : hypocrites have added strength to it, by their dissimulation : tyrants have purified it, by their persecutions : infidels have corroborated it, by their opposition : the arrows of its enemies have served for its protection : the resistance which it has met with, from the combined wit and genius and malice of mankind, have brought forth those illustrious and immortal defences, which establish its truth upon the basis of demonstration.

Shall we not, then, reckon ourselves eternally indebted to the infinite goodness of God, and stir up all that is within us to bless his holy name ?—saying in the language of true fervour of spirit, “ We will praise thee, O
“ God ! we will praise thee with our whole
“ heart ! our lives shall be thy sacrifice ! we
“ will adore thee in death, and through eter-
“ nity ! ”

God, from his throne in heaven, doth not behold an object more noble, and more worthy of his view, than a pious man ; a man who, conscious of the dignity and immortality of

his nature, employs himself with fervour and zeal, in those devout exercises which assimilate him to the Divinity, who, measuring time by his improvements in devotion and virtue, never loses a day. He is the favourite of Heaven. The arm of the Almighty is stretched out in his behalf. The Lord loves him, and keeps him as the apple of his eye; he gives his angels charge concerning him, to preserve him in all his ways, lest at any time he should dash his foot against a stone. He delights to speak his praise in the assemblies of his saints and angels above: he writes his name in the book of his remembrance, and gives him the honourable title of the friend of God. He makes all things work together for his good in this world, and, in the dark vale of death, opens his eyes to discern the dawning of heavenly day. In fine, he holds his very ashes sacred; and, raising him up at the last day, carries him to his throne in heaven above, with the glorious company of the redeemed, to be made partaker of his own happiness.

These are thy palms, O piety! thine is the kingdom prepared above, thine the power with God and with man, and thine the crown of glory that fadeth not away!

SERMON III.

ON EARLY PIETY.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

WHEN Solomon, in early youth, had ascended the throne of Israel, the God of his fathers appeared to him in a dream. The Almighty was graciously pleased to condescend thus to visit his creature. He put in his offer all the pleasures of the world, and desired him to ask, and he should receive; to wish, and he should enjoy. The young king possessed a wisdom beyond his years, and a greatness above his crown. He did not ask to have his palace filled with the beauties of the East, to have his treasury stored with the gold of Ophir, or to wear the laurel of victory

over the nations. He asked a greater boon than all these. "Give thy servant, O Lord," replied the wise prince, "Give thy servant wisdom and understanding." What he then made the object of his own choice, he recommends to you under another name, in the words of the text: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

This is the last chapter of the works of Solomon, and these words may be regarded as his dying advice to the young. The philosophers of antiquity, who held out the lamp of wisdom to the heathen world, gave the same advice to their followers. But between them and Solomon, there is this remarkable difference; they, from the obscure retirement of the schools, declaimed against pleasures which they had never tasted, and affected to despise honours to which they never had it in their power to ascend. But Solomon, a great and powerful prince, in the pleasurable time of life, had in his own person tried the experiment. He made the tour of the sensual world. He went in quest of happiness through all the scenes of life. He extended his search over the broad and flowery way, as well as in the narrow path, as it should seem by a particular permission of Providence, to save the

pains of future inquirers. Solomon acted the libertine upon a principle of inquiry. The result of his researches was, that all unlawful pursuits began with vanity, and ended in vexation of spirit, and that the true happiness of man consisted in that understanding which teaches us to depart from evil, and in that wisdom which instructeth us to fear the Lord.

It is common in Scripture, to express all the acts of devotion and virtue by some part or principle of religion, sometimes by wisdom and understanding; at other times, by faith, love, the fear of God, walking with God, and many other phrases; all of which express the same meaning, and denote the whole economy of a religious life. So that remembering our Creator in the days of our youth, implies an early and an entire dedication of ourselves to the service of God.

In further discoursing upon these words, I shall enforce the exhortation in the text, and endeavour to persuade you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, from the peculiar suitableness of religion to the early period of life. And, in the *first* place, let me exhort you now, in the days of youth, to remember your Creator, from your being as yet uncorrupted by the world.

Although both Scripture and experience testify that man is fallen, and that our nature is corrupted, yet it is equally certain, that our earliest passions are on the side of virtue, and that the good seed springs before the tares. Malice and envy are yet strangers to your bosom. Covetousness, that root of evil, hath not yet sprung up in your heart; the selfish, the wrathful, and the licentious passions, have not yet obtained dominion over you. The modesty of nature, the great guardian of virtue, is not seduced from its post. You would blush, even in secret, to do a deed of dishonesty and shame. High sentiments of honour and of probity, expand the soul. The colour comes into the cheek at the smallest apprehension of blame; the ready lightning kindles in the eye at the least appearance of treachery and falsehood. Hence, says our Lord to his followers, Unless you become as a child; unless you assume the candour, the innocence, and the purity of children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Therefore, whilst you are yet an offering fit for heaven, present yourselves at his altar; devote yourselves to his service. How beautiful and becoming does it appear for young persons, newly arrived in this city of God, to remember the end for

which they were sent into it, and to devote to their Maker's service the first and the best of their days? When they are in the prime of youth and of health, when the mind is untainted with actual guilt, and alive to every generous impression, to consecrate to religion the vernal flower of life? The virgin innocence of the mind, is a sacrifice more acceptable to the Almighty, than if we should come before him with the cattle upon a thousand hills, and with ten thousand rivers of oil. If there be joy in heaven over a great and aged sinner that repenteth, how pleasing a spectacle will it be to God, to angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to behold a person in the critical season of life, acquit himself gloriously, and despising the allurements, the deceitful and transitory pleasures of sin, choose for himself that better part which shall never be taken away!

Dare, then, O young man, to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Have the courage to be good betimes. Beware of falling into the usual snare of the inexperienced; beware of thinking that you have time enough to be religious, and for that reason may defer the work of your salvation to maturer age, when, as you foolishly imagine, seriousness

and sanctity will come of their own accord. In answer to this, let me ask you, my friends, How often have you observed time reform any one? Did time reform Saul? Did time reform Ahab? Did time reform Jezebel? On the contrary, did they not grow bolder in wickedness? You generally, indeed, observe a greater decency in maturer age. The ebullition of youth is then spent, its turbulence is over; but, too often, I am afraid, the wild passions have only given place to an external sobriety, whilst the heart is far from God, and as carnal as ever. If you suspect this to be a hasty decision, examine what passes in the world. Do you not observe great part of men in the decline of life as earthly-minded as before? The passion for pleasure has indeed abated, but the love of lucre, the most sordid of all passions, hath come into its place. If such persons have any regret for their past life, it is only because it *is past*. Even then they look with envy upon the gay and the flourishing state of the young. With what joy and triumph do they talk over the excesses of their early days, and seem to renew their age in the contemplation of their youthful follies? Alas, my friends, is not God the Lord of all your time? Is there one of your days which doth

not pertain to him? Why would you then take the flower of life, and make it an offering to the enemy of souls? Is your time too long to be all employed in the service of God? Is the prime of your days too precious to be devoted to heaven? And will you only reserve to your Maker the refuse of life,—the leavings of the world and the flesh? If you would speak it out, the language of your heart is this: That whilst you are good for any thing, you will mind the world and its pleasures; that you will crown yourselves with rose-buds before they are withered, and let no flower of the spring pass away; but if at any time the world shall forsake you, if your passion for pleasure shall have left you, you will then seek the comforts of religion; any part of your time, you think, is good enough for God; you will apply yourselves to the work of your salvation, when you are fit for nothing else; and when you cannot make a better of it, you will seek the kingdom of heaven.

Is it thus that ye requite the Lord, O people, foolish and unjust? Is this your gratitude to your benefactor? Is this your love to your Father? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Whilst he now calls upon you in the sweetest language of Heaven, “ My son, give me thy

“heart,” ought it not to be the natural movement of your heart, to answer, with the good man of old, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night ; with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early:”—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee.”

In the *second* place, Let me exhort you to early piety, from the consideration of those evils which await you in your future days.

Now is your golden age. When the morning of life rejoices over your head, every thing around you puts on a smiling appearance. All nature wears a face of beauty, and is animated with a spirit of joy. You walk up and down in a new world ; you crop the unblown flower, and drink the untasted spring. Full of spirit, and high in hope, you set out on the journey of life : visions of bliss present themselves to view : dreams of joy, with sweet delusion, amuse the vacant mind. You listen and accord to the song of hope, “To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” But ah ! my friends, the flattering scene will not last. The spell is quickly broken, and the enchantment soon over. How hideous will life appear, when experience takes off the

mask, and discovers the sad reality! Now thou hast no weariness to clog thy waking hours, and no care to disturb thy repose. But know, child of the earth, that thou art born to trouble, and that care, through every subsequent path of life, will haunt thee like a ghost. Health now sparkles in thine eye, the blood flows pure in thy veins, and thy spirits are gay as the morning: but, alas! the time will come when diseases, a numerous and a direful train, will assail thy life; the time will come, when pale and ghastly, and stretched on a bed, “chastened with pain, and the multitude of thy bones with strong pain, thou wilt be ready to choose strangling and death rather than life.”

You are now happy in your earthly companions. Friendship, which in the world is a feeble sentiment, with you is a strong passion. But shift the scene for a few years, and behold the man of thy right-hand become unto thee as an alien. Behold the friend of thy youth, who was one with thine own soul, striving to supplant thee, and laying snares for thy ruin! I mention not these things, my friends, to make you miserable before the time. God forbid that I should anticipate the evil day, unless I could arm you against it. Now re-

member your Creator, consecrate to him the early period of your days, and the light of his countenance will shine upon you through life. Amid all the changes of this fluctuating scene you have a Friend that never fails. Then let the tempest beat, and the floods descend, you are safe and happy under the shelter of the Rock of ages.

Thirdly, The season of youth devoted to piety, will yield you a comfortable old age.

When the fire and spirit of youth are decayed; when sober age retires from the noise and bustle of a busy world, and loves to spend in peace the tranquil Sabbath of life, what joy will it afford to be able to look back with pleasure on the actions of other years! Worn out and weary of his pilgrimage, the traveller now entertains himself by recalling the times that are past, and recollecting the scenes of his early days. In particular, he now loves to recall the period of childhood and of youth, when he wandered up and down, a stranger to care and sorrow, and passed his days in innocence. Often does the fond idea recur; often the pleasant period return. It will add much, my friends, it will add much to the pleasures of the reflection, if you have it in your

power to recall to mind that your early days were not only innocent but useful, and devoted to the service of your Creator. To look back on a life, no season of which was spent in vain; to number up the days, the months, and the years, spent in the service of God, will be inward rapture only to be felt. This will cause the evening of life to smile, and make your departure like a setting sun.

I shall conclude with one consideration, which I hope will have weight, and that is, if you seek God now in the days of youth, you are certain of success. Go out in the morning of youth, and you are sure to gather the manna of everlasting life. God himself will bend from his throne, and teach your spirits to approach unto him. They who seek him early shall find him, and shall be guarded from evil on his holy mountain.

SERMON IV.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

COLOSS. iv. 5.

— *Redeeming the Time.*

AMONG those who have their time most at their own disposal, there prevails a maxim very different from that which is recommended in the text. The maxim of the world is, to spend time in idleness and folly, or, to speak in their own language, “to kill time” by dissipation and amusement. Life, which appears so short upon the whole, is nevertheless so long in particular parts, that vast numbers of men are overstocked with its days and hours; their time hangs heavy on their hands; they know not how to employ it, or what to

make of themselves. As they have no fund of entertainment within, and for that reason no happiness at home, they naturally look out for it abroad. Hence every pastime is greedily sought after, that can banish thought, and save them from their own company. Hence places of public entertainment are frequented, parties of pleasure are formed, plans of dissipation are concerted; and amusement, frivolous amusement, becomes the serious occupation of life. Only look around you into the world! Observe what policy and contrivance are continually put in practice by men, for pre-engaging every day in the week for one idleness or another; for doing nothing, or worse than nothing, and that with so much ingenuity and forecast, as scarce to leave an hour upon their hands to reproach them.

Such, my brethren, is the life of what is called the *world*, a repetition of the same childish conceptions, a perpetual round of the same trifling amusements. If you had been sent on earth to play the fool; if your pilgrimage through life were merely a jaunt of pleasure; it would be cruel and injurious to awaken you from the delusion. But as you profess to be Christians, and believe this life to be a state of moral discipline and proba-

tion for the next, it will be proper and reasonable to warn you of the folly of such a course, and to point out a nobler and a happier path, where at once you may see the world, and may adorn it; where at once you may improve your time, and enjoy life.

In order to this, I shall, in the *first* place, give you some directions for redeeming or improving the time; and, in the *second* place, set before you the obligations to the practice of this duty.

We begin with directions for redeeming the time. In the *first* place, Treasure up in your memory a store of useful knowledge, as a proper foundation of employment to the mind.

It has been the complaint of discontented men in all ages, that life is a scene of dulness, not worth a wise man's care, where the same things come over and over like a tale that is told, which, however entertaining it may appear when it is new, yet, by frequent repetition, at last becomes tedious and insipid. The consequence of which has been, that many, viewing the picture in this disagreeable light, have been inclined to throw off all serious concern about their duty, to give themselves up to habits of indolence and languor,

and to make no other use of their time, but to study how to trifle it away. True it is indeed, that the days of many have thus been spent in vain ; that their life has been a barren circle, within which they have been enchanted, going round and round, ever in motion, but never making any advances. But although many have made life a dull round of insignificant actions, yet no man had ever occasion to make it so. It is indeed so to the brutes, who soon arrive at that pitch of perfection which is allotted to their natures, where they must stop short without a possibility of going farther. Sense, which is their highest power, moves in a narrow sphere ; its objects are few in number, and gross in kind, and therefore not only come more quickly round, but also grow more insipid at every revolution.

But man is endowed with nobler faculties, and is presented with nobler objects whereon to exercise and employ them. The contemplation of all divine truth to engage his understanding ; the beauties of the natural and moral world to attract and captivate his affections ; the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, manifested in the works of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption, to exalt his admiration, and call forth his praise.

What employment can be more worthy a rational being, or better adapted to the faculties of an immortal spirit, than thus to search out the order, the beauty, and the benevolence of nature; to trace the Everlasting in his works, and to mark the impression of his creating hand, yet recent, on a beautiful world? Or if we turn our eyes towards the moral system, to observe a higher order of things, and a greater exertion of Divinity, in adjusting the plan of Providence, in bringing light from darkness, and good from evil, in causing the most unconnected and contrary events co-operate to one great end, and making all to issue in the general good. Here is a noble path for a rational creature to travel in. Whilst day unto day thus teaches wisdom, night unto night will increase pleasure. The man who is thus trained up to the admiration of the works of God, and who has tasted the spirit of these sublime enjoyments, will not complain of the insignificance and languor of life. These studies will afford an occupation at all hours. They will make your own thoughts an entertainment to you, and open a fountain of happiness at home. They will diffuse somewhat of heaven over the mind; they will introduce you before-hand into the society of angels and blessed spirits above, and

already prepare you to bear a part of that beautiful hymn of heaven : “ Great and marvellous
“ are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just
“ and true are all thy ways, thou King of
“ Saints.”

Secondly, Have some end in view ; some object to employ the mind, and call forth its latent powers.

In devising, or in executing a plan ; in engaging in the whirl of active life, the soul seems to unfold its being, and to enjoy itself. Man is not like the soil on which he lives, which spends its powers in exercise, and requires repose, in order to recruit its wasted strength, and prepare it for new exertions. Activity is an essential attribute of mind. Its faculties exist only when they are exercised ; it gains a new accession of strength from every new exertion, and the greater acquisitions it makes, it is enabled to make still greater. It is not a brook formed by the shower ; it is a living fountain, which is for ever flowing, and yet for ever full. This will account for an observation that we have often occasion to make in life, that none have so little leisure as those who are entirely idle ; that none complain so much of the want of time as those who have nothing to do. The fact is, they want that

energy of soul which is requisite to every exertion, and that habit of activity which applies to every thing. Indolence unmans the faculties ; impairs and debilitates the whole intellectual system. Those who, under its influence, become a kind of perpetual sleepers, degrade themselves from the honours of their nature, and are dead while they live. A habit of activity is a most valuable acquisition. He who is possessed of it is fit for all events, and may be happy in every situation. This habit is only to be acquired by pursuing some great object that may agitate the mind. Think not that your labour may be spent in vain. Nothing is in vain that rouses the soul ; nothing is in vain that keeps the ethereal fire alive and glowing. The prospect of something coming forward ; the pleasure and the pride which the mind takes in its own action, beget insensibly that habit of industry which will abide through life.

Thirdly, Set apart fixed and stated hours for the important duties of life.

It is the misfortune of great part of men, that they have no fixed plan of acting. They live *extempore*. They act at random. They are always led by instantaneous impulse, and are driven to and fro as inclination varies.

Their life rolls on through a course of mispent time, and unconnected years, and appears upon review like the path of a cloud in the air, which leaves no trace behind it. It was the custom of the great Alfred, one of the English kings, to divide the day into three parts, which he measured by the burning of tapers. One part he employed in the cares of the government; another part he dedicated to the cultivation of the liberal arts; the third he devoted to religion. It would be happy for you, my brethren, if, in this respect, you would imitate such an illustrious example. Let, at least, one part of your time be devoted to the service of God. When the morning ascends from the east, let it be your first care to offer up your earliest thoughts as incense to heaven; to add your praises to the hymns and hosannahs of the angels in light, and spirits of just men made perfect. When the shades of the night fall around you, let it be your constant care to implore the pardoning mercy of God for the errors of the past day, and to commit yourselves to the protection of His Providence who slumbers not nor sleeps. In particular, let this day, which is sacred to the memory of a Saviour's resurrection from the dead; which is a memorial of the full ac-

complishment of our redemption;—let this day be set apart for holy contemplation on the wonders of redeeming love, on the height, and depth, and breadth, and length of the love of Jesus to our race, which passeth all understanding; which prompted him to forego the glories of his divine nature for a time, to take upon him the robe of humanity, to lead a life of sorrows upon earth, and to suffer a cruel and ignominious, and an accursed death. Let us contemplate this amiable and divine love, till we are changed into the same image, and feel within ourselves an earnest and anticipation of that everlasting Sabbath of joy which is reserved for the righteous in the world to come, when time shall be no more.

In the *fourth* place, Endeavour to distinguish your days by some good deed.

As those who are intent to amass a fortune, attend to small sums, in like manner, if you would wish to improve your time, you must take care not to lose a day. Many are the ways, and frequent the occasions, which daily present themselves, of adding to your true happiness, of improving your natures, and promoting the interests of society. You have all the world before you where to act, and the whole of human life as a theatre of virtue. Through the

assistance of divine grace, conquer the excess of passion, correct some irregular desire, and obtain a victory over the vices that war against the soul. Let your goodness extend to society, and spread over the land like the light in the morning. Can there be any employment so agreeable to a benevolent mind, and so congenial to the spirit of Christianity, as to assuage the boisterous passions, and reconcile the jarring interests of men; to open the eye which prejudice has shut; to charm down the spirit of party, and to unite all your neighbours in one great family of love? Is not the employment god-like; is not the joy divine, to brighten up the face that was overcast with sadness; to wipe the tears from the cheek of sorrow; to turn the voice of mourning into the notes of joy; to make misery and woe vanish before us like darkness before the sun; to refresh with showers of blessings the dry and barren land wherein no water is, and, cooperating with a beneficent Providence, to watch for the happiness of the world? Where is there any one so destitute of the gifts of grace, of nature, and of fortune, as to have no mite to throw into the public treasury? He who cannot pretend to enlighten or reform the world, may instruct his ignorant, or com-

fort his afflicted neighbour: he who cannot communicate instruction, may give alms. If even these are not in your power, the gate of heaven is ever open; the throne of grace is ever accessible; and by your intercession with God, society may reap more benefit, than from the bounty of the opulent, or the labours of the learned. It was thus that Job improved his time, as we learn from his affecting complaint, when he reviewed the days of his prosperity: “O that I were as in months past, as in
“ the days when God preserved me; as in the
“ days of my youth, when the candle of the
“ Lord shined upon my head, when the Al-
“ mighty was yet with me, when my children
“ were about me; when the ear heard me,
“ then it blessed me; when the eye saw me,
“ it gave witness to me; because I delivered
“ the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him
“ that had none to help him. I was eyes to
“ the blind, feet was I to the lame: I was a
“ father to the poor, and the cause which I
“ knew not, I searched out. The stranger
“ did not lodge in the street; I opened my
“ doors to the traveller. The loins of the
“ naked blessed me, and were warmed with
“ the fleeces of my flock. The blessing of
“ him that was ready to perish came upon me,

“ and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for
“ joy.”

In the *last* place, Accustom yourselves to frequent self-examination.

Call yourselves to an account at the close of the day. Inquire what you have been doing; whether you have lost a day, or redeemed the time. Have you learned any useful truth; treasure it up in your heart, as a valuable acquisition; make it a principle of action, and bring it into life. Have you done a good deed? then enjoy the self-approving hour, and give thanks unto God for the pleasures of virtue, and the testimony of a good conscience. Have you been led astray by temptation, and overtaken in a fault? repent sincerely of your past transgression; implore the mercy of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and resolve, through divine grace, to be more guarded in the time to come. Did we, my brethren, thus make a study of a holy life; were we as much in earnest about improving the soul in piety and virtue, as we are about many trifling concerns, to what high degrees of sanctity might we ascend! How pleasant would it be, at the close of any period of time, to look back on a life, no season of which was spent in vain; to number up the days, the

months, the years, that are marked with good deeds; to behold our youth, our manhood, and our age, as so many stages in our journey to the land of Emanuel? This would inspire us with that peace of God which passeth all understanding. This would cheer the traveller in the decline of his days. His evening would be bright and pleasant, and his sun go down in glory. Life thus spent would make us triumph in death. Time thus improved, would make us rejoice through all eternity.

I have thus given you some directions for the proper improvement of time.—The second thing proposed was, to set before you the obligations to the practice of this duty; which I shall do by considering, in the *first* place, your nature as men, and, in the *second* place, your expectations as Christians.

In the *first* place, Let us consider our nature as men.

It is a study full of instruction to the curious or the pious mind, to contemplate the appearances in the universe, and trace the laws by which it is governed. All nature is busy and active. Something is ever coming forward in the creation; in the moral world, as well as in the natural, there is a design going

on. The great purpose of nature in our system is to diffuse existence ; to multiply all the forms of matter and classes of being. Every element is stored with inhabitants. Even the loneliest desert is populous, and putrefaction is pregnant with life. Worlds are inclosed in worlds, and systems of being going on, that escape the eye of sense.

Such is the plan of Providence in this inferior world. The order established at the first of time is still advancing. The divine Spirit, who at the beginning moved upon the face of the deep, and turned a chaos into a beautiful world, still continues to move, inform, and actuate the great machine. Nothing in nature is at rest ; all is alive, all is in motion in the great system of God. Thou, too, O man ! art appointed to action. The love of occupation is strongly implanted in thy nature. One way or another, thou must be always employed. Woe to the man who, by his own folly, is doomed to bear the pains and penalties of idleness. Rest is the void which mind abhors. An idle man is the most miserable of all the creatures of God. He falls upon a thousand schemes to fill up his hours, and rather than want employment, is contented to lie upon the torture of the mind, while the cards are shuf-

fling, or the die is depending. The glory of our nature is founded upon exertions of activity. From the want of them, those in the more affluent stations of life, whose fortune is made at their birth, so often fail in attaining to the higher improvements and honours of their nature. Have you not, on the other hand, seen men, when business roused them from their usual indolence, when great occasions called them forth, discover a spirit to which they were strangers before, and display to the world abilities and virtues which seemed to be born with the occasion? While there are so many splendid objects to allure the mind, why trust your character to be evolved by accident? Why leave your glory in the power of fortune?

This activity is not only the source of our excellence, but also gives rise to our greatest enjoyments. Even the lower class of enjoyments, animal pleasures, are not only consistent with a life of activity, but also derive from it additional sweets. Hours of leisure, suppose hours of employment; they alone will relish the feast, who have felt the fatigues of the chase. But mere animal pleasures are not of themselves objects for a wise or a good man. Unless they are under the direction of

taste ; unless they have the accompaniments of elegance and grace ; unless they promote friendship and social joy ; unless they come at proper intervals, and have the additional heightening of being a relief from business, they soon pall upon the appetite, and disgust by repetition. Has sensuality a charm when thy friend is in danger, or thy country calls to arms ? Who listens to the sound of the viol, when the trumpet sounds the alarm of battle ? When the mind is struck with the grand and the sublime of human life, it disdains inferior things, and, kindling with the occasion, rejoices to put forth all its strength. Obstacles in the way only give additional ardour to the pursuit ; and the prize appears then the most tempting to the view, when the ascent is arduous, and when the path is marked with blood. Hence that life is chosen, where incentives to action abound ; hence serious engagements are the preferable objects of pursuit ; hence the most animating occasions of life are calls to danger and hardship, not invitations to safety and ease ; and hence man himself, in his highest excellence, is found to pine in the lap of repose, and to exult in the midst of alarms that seem to threaten his being. All the faculties of his

frame engage him to action : the higher powers of the soul, as well as the softer feelings of the heart ; wisdom and magnanimity, as well as pity and tenderness, carry a manifest reference to the arduous career which he has to run, the difficulties with which he is destined to struggle, and the sorrows he is appointed to bear. Happiness to him is an exertion of soul. They know not what they say, who cry out, “ Let us build tabernacles “ of rest.” They mistake very much the nature of man, and go in quest of felicity to no purpose, who seek for it in what are called the enjoyments of life ; who seek for it in a termination of labour, and a period of repose. It is not in the calm scene ; it is in the tempest ; it is in the whirlwind ; it is in the thunder that this Genius resides. When once you have discovered the bias of the mind ; when once you have recognised your path in life ; when once you have found out the object of the soul, you will bend to it alone ; like an eagle when he has tasted the blood of his prey, who disdains the objects of his former pursuit, and follows on in his path through the heavens.

Thus have I set before you your obligations as men, to make a right use of life, and have shewed you, from the principles of nature a-

lone, without having recourse to Christianity, that the excellency and the happiness of man consists in a virtuous course of action, and in making a proper improvement of time. Let us now, in the *second* place, take in the considerations suggested by the Christian religion, and see what new obligations arise from it, to urge us to redeem the time.

It is the doctrine of revelation, then, that the present life is a state of probation for the life to come; that we are now training up for an everlasting existence; and that, according to our works here, we shall be judged in a future world. According, therefore, as you now sow, hereafter you shall reap. The time is now passing that decides your fate for ever. The hours are at this instant on the wing, upon which eternity depends. In this view, let me exhort you to look back upon your past life. Call your former hours to an account. Ask them what report they have carried to Heaven. Is there any thing in your life to distinguish it from mere existence? Do you discern any thing but shadows in that mirror which remembrance holds up? Is the book of memory one vast blank, or blotted all over? If this be the case,—and I am afraid it is the case with a great part of men,—*What*

better are *ye* than the animals of the field or the forest? Like you they sleep and they wake; like you they eat and they drink; like you they perform the various functions of nature. Alas! my brethren, did Almighty God create you after his own image, that you might sink that image to the resemblance of a beast? For what have you done since you came into being to distinguish yourselves from the brutes that perish? Have you glorified God in all your actions? Have you made your calling and election sure, by a lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by repentance from dead works, and by universal purity of heart and life? Have you enriched your mind with the treasures of wisdom? Have you adorned your life with the beauties of holiness? Have you laid up many deeds of piety and charity, as a good foundation against the time to come? Unless you have done these things, you have done nothing. You have been blanks in the universe. You are as if you had never been. You have been fast asleep; nor has your sleep been the less sound, that you have dreamed you were awake.

I now call upon you to arise, or be for ever fallen. It is now high time to awake. Almighty God now calls upon you to finish the

work which he hath given you to do. Glory, and honour, and immortality are set before you. Up then and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee. With such views of your duty, and upon these principles of action, you will never join in the apology which some make for themselves, that the general tenor of their life is innocent, and that they have at least the negative merit to do no harm. Perhaps this account may be true ; but let me ask such persons, have you ever considered the parable of the master who called his servants to account ? He delivered talents to each of them, according as he saw fit, with this charge, “ Occupy till I come.” The servant who received the one talent was negligent and slothful. He wrapt up his talent in a napkin, and hid it in the earth. He thought he did well, if he secured the capital till his Lord’s return. But the master received the talent with indignation. He cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness, and condemned him to weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The poor wretch was neither a thief nor a murderer. He had not wasted his Lord’s goods. He had your plea,—he had done no harm. But he was found guilty of idleness and sloth ; he received his sentence, and was condemned to

punishment. That which is the ground of your security, could not save him from condemnation.

But, in good earnest, do you no harm? Is it no harm to wander from the cradle to the grave, in a labyrinth of amusements, either vain or childish? Is it no harm to waste in dissipation and expensive pleasure, that wealth which might have saved an honest family from beggary and want? Is it no harm to squander in one continued round of vanity and folly, those precious hours on which your future happiness depends? If there be harm in human actions, *this* is harm. It is a criminal negligence which will turn the scale of your eternal doom.

To you, my younger friends, this duty recommends itself under the most interesting claims. You are now in that period when time can be improved to the best advantage. With you every hour of life is precious. The misimprovement of youthful days is more than the loss of time. It were of little consequence to throw away a few days from your life; but along with these, you cut off the substantial improvements, the real joys of maturer age. Figure to yourselves the loss which the year would sustain, if the spring

were taken away;—such a loss you sustain. No tears, nor lamentations, nor bitter upbraidings, will ever recall that golden period. The star sets to rise no more; the flood rolls away never to return.

Your own experience, my aged brethren, will urge the instant necessity of redeeming the time. Consider the fate that awaits you soon: A few steps will bring you to the threshold of that house which is appointed for all living. Man that is born of a woman is of few days. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he flieth as a shadow, and continueth not. By the unalterable law of nature, all things here hasten to an end. An irresistible rapidity hurries every thing to the abyss of eternity; to that awful abyss, to which all things go, and from which nothing returns. The great drama of life is perpetually going on. Age succeeds to age, and generation to generation. Not long ago our fathers trod the path which their fathers had trodden before them; we have come into their room, and now supply their places. In a little time we must resign to another race, who in their turn also shall pass away, and give place to a new generation. The race of men, saith a Jewish writer, is like the leaves of the trees.

They come forth in the spring, and clothe the wood with robes of green. In autumn they wither; they fall; the winter wind scatters them on the earth. Another race comes in the season, and clothes the forest again.

Consider the world, my friends, as you saw it at first, and as you see it now. You have marked vicissitude and alteration in all human affairs. You have seen changes in almost every department of life. You have seen new ministers at the court, new judges on the bench, and new priests at the altar of the Lord. You have seen different kings upon the throne. You have seen peace and war, and war and peace again. How many of your equals in age have you survived? How many younger than you, have you carried to the grave? Year after year hath made a *blank* in the number of your friends. Your own country hath insensibly become a *strange* land, and a *new* world hath arisen around you, before you perceived that the old had passed away. The same fate that hath taken away your friends, awaits you. Even now the decree is gone forth. The king of terrors hath received his commission, and is now on his way. If you have misemployed your time, that talent which God hath put into your hand; if your

life is marked with guilt or folly, how will you answer to your own heart at that awful hour? For, previous to the general doom, Almighty God hath appointed a *day of judgment* in the *breast* of every man. The *last* hour is ordained to pass sentence on all the rest. The actions of your former life will there meet you again. How will you then answer at the bar of your own heart, when the collected crimes of a lengthened life at *one view*, shall *flash* upon the mind; when the *ghosts* of your departed hours, of those hours which we have *murdered*, shall rise up in terrible array, and look you in the face? What would you then give for that time which you now throw away? What would the wretch who lies on a bed of agony, extended and groaning, who feels in his heart the poisoned arrow of death; who, looking back on his past life, turns aside from the view; who, looking forward to futurity, discerns no beam of hope to break that utter darkness which overwhelms him; what would he then give for those hours which you now despise, to make his peace with Heaven, and fit him for his passage into the world unknown? Remember, my friends, that this is no imaginary case; it is a case which may soon be your

own. Be wise, therefore, while wisdom can avail, and save yourselves from the agony of repenting in bitterness of soul, when all repentance may be in vain.

To sum up all: My friends, the time is short. We are as guests in a strange land, who tarry but one night. We wander up and down in a place of graves. We read the epitaphs upon the tombs of the deceased. We shed a few tears over the ashes of the dead; and, in a little time, we need from our surviving friends the tears we paid to the memory of our friends departed.

Time is precious. The time is now passing that fixes our fate for ever. The hours are, at this instant, on the wing, which carry along with them your eternal happiness or eternal misery.

Time is irrecoverable. The clock is wound up once for all; the hand is advancing, and, in a little time, it strikes your last hour.

SERMON V.

ON REVERENCE AND HOLY FEAR.

PSALM iv. 4.

— *Stand in awe.*

WHEN the Patriarch Jacob departed from his father's house, and entered on that state of pilgrimage, which only terminated with his life, he lighted on a certain place, where he tarried all the night. Agreeably to the simplicity of the ancient world, he laid himself down to rest upon the open plain; without any pillow but a stone of the field; and without any covering but the curtains of heaven. A stranger he was to the elegance and luxury of after times, but he enjoyed pleasures of a higher kind. The God of his fathers was with

him. In the patriarchal ages, before a public revelation was given to the world, the Deity frequently appeared to holy men in dreams and visions of the night. Accordingly, Jacob, in his dream, beheld a ladder set upon the earth, the top of it reaching unto the heavens, and upon it the angels of God ascending and descending: and behold! the Lord stood above, and said, “I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; thou shalt spread abroad to the east and to the west; to the south and to the north; and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Did the Patriarch awake in a rapture of joy, when he had been thus so highly favoured of the Lord? You shall hear:—“And Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not: and he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Though he had ascended in the visions of God, and beheld scenes of glory which few are admitted to see; though he had received the

most gracious promises of personal safety, of prosperous increase to his descendants, and of the Messiah who was to spring from his race, nevertheless an impression of reverence and awe was the last which remained upon his mind.

In like manner, my friends, although you have the near prospect of commemorating the most joyful event which signalizes the annals of time, yet if, at the approaching solemnity, God shall be in this place, you will experience that state of mind which the Patriarch was in when he awoke from his dream, and an impression of seriousness and awe will keep its hold of your heart. There is a degree of reverence and holy fear which ever attends religion. Even when God manifests his mercy, it is that he may be feared. Hence we are called to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with reverence. All objects make an impression upon the mind correspondent to their own nature. A beautiful object calls forth pleasing ideas, and excites a gay emotion. A grand object leaves upon the mind an impression of grandeur. In all sublime scenes, there is a mixture of the awful. The view of the skies by night; the moon moving in the brightness of her course; and the host

of heaven in silent majesty performing their eternal rounds, strike an awe and adoration into the mind; we feel divinity present; we bow down and worship in the temple which the Most High God hath built with his hand, and hath filled with his presence. The presence of a respectable character raises a similar impression on the mind; and the man who sets the Lord always before him, will feel his heart impressed with that mixture of seriousness and holy fear, which the Psalmist here recommends, when he says, "Stand in awe."

In further treating upon this subject, I shall, in the *first* place, point out the advantages of this seriousness and reverence which we ought to maintain upon our minds; and, in the *second* place, shew you the suitableness of this temper of mind to our present state.

The *first* thing proposed is, to point out the advantages of this seriousness and reverence which we ought to maintain upon our minds.

The great art of happiness consists in regulating, with propriety, the various offices of human life. To allow no duty to interfere with another; to prevent devotion from growing austere; and to restrain enjoyment from being criminal, is the mark of true wisdom and of true piety. Every department of life

is beautiful in its season. There is a time to be cheerful, and a time to be serious; an hour for solitude, and an hour for society. Providence hath appointed a great part of our happiness to consist in society. We find, in every situation of life, that it is not good for us to be alone. Hence, civil society at first was instituted; hence attachments are daily formed; and man is cemented to man by every feeling of nature, and every tie of the heart. But, as we abuse and corrupt every thing, the blessing of society is often turned into a curse. To innocent cheerfulness, a wanton levity succeeds, which banishes sober thought, and laughs at every thing that is serious. How often, in life, do we meet with the sons and daughters of folly, whose sole business is amusement; whose life is one continued scene of idleness and dissipation; everlasting triflers, whose volatile minds are perpetually on the wing, as if they had been sent to this earth merely to play the fool.

Not that I condemn cheerful society and innocent enjoyment. When God gives, let man enjoy. Let us drink from the fountain of joy, when we are sure there is no poison in the cup. But, my brethren, I must remind you, that but a narrow interval, often but a

single step lies between enjoyment and excess ; between the voice of mirth and the roar of riot ; between innocent entertainment and a loose and licentious indulgence. Look back on your past life, and tell me, O man ! when was it that you felt yourself most strongly inclined to go astray ? When was it that you found yourself seduced in thought, to wander from the paths of purity and uprightness ? Was it not in the hour of levity and indulgence ? Did not your heart betray you when your spirits were elevated ; when you had banished sober recollection, and delivered yourself over to the delirium of excessive joy ? Here then is the advantage of seriousness and reverence. It places a guard upon the heart. It keeps the world and its temptations at a due distance. It consecrates the mind in which it resides, as with the presence of the Deity. A heart thus impressed with the fear of God, will not so readily be assaulted by the tempter, nor so easily yield to the temptation. An impure and profane guest will hardly venture upon hallowed ground, or dare to violate the sanctity of a temple. The presence of a good man is a check upon the turbulence and uproar of the giddy ; they are inspired with a reverence for his charac-

ter ; they feel how awful goodness is, and restrain themselves from those indecent levities to which they are accustomed. If a regard for man has such influence upon the mind, what may the fear of God be supposed to have? The man who is possessed of this holy fear, sets the Lord always before him. He enters beforehand into heaven, and dwells in the presence of God. And canst thou, O man ! defile the purity of heaven with the deeds of hell? Darest thou violate the law in the presence of the Lawgiver? Darest thou sin in the very face of thy Maker? Wilt thou make the Judge of all the earth the witness of thy wicked actions, the beholder of thy loose moments? No. In such a presence thou wilt banish all impure thoughts, and all unhallowed affections, like Moses at the burning bush, because the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Thus, of itself, this serious frame of mind is the guardian and the protector of religion ; and it also associates with other virtues which belong to the Christian character. Those who are acquainted with the nature of the mind, know the influence and extent of association upon human life and manners. It is not a single quality that marks and characterizes a

mán; the virtues and the vices come in a train; it is the temper of the soul which is all in all in the conduct of human life. But to the temper and disposition here recommended, the most respectable attributes of the mind, and the most amiable qualities of the heart, are allied and peculiar.

In the first place, this serious frame of mind cherishes those higher virtues of the soul, which, in the emphatic language of the Sacred Scripture, are called "the armour of God." In the solemn silence of the mind are formed those great resolutions which decide the fate of men. That magnanimity which rises superior to the events of life; that fortitude which bears up under the pressure of affliction; and that Christian heroism which, neither moved with the threatenings of pain, nor with the blandishments of pleasure, holds on rejoicing to the end; are all of them but expressions of this character, varied and diversified according to the occurrences of life. They are the light, the giddy, and the volatile, who are the sport of caprice or the prey of passion. Persons of such a character have no permanent principle of action; they are the sinners or the saints of accident; and assume every folly to which the fashion

of the world gives its sanction. Very different is the serious man who communes with his own heart. He follows not the multitude. He possesses that strenuous and steady mind, which walks by its own light, which holds its purpose to the last ; that self-deciding spirit which is prepared to act, to suffer or to die, as duty requires. Being thus, by the grace of God, the master of his own mind, he is above the world ; and through prosperity or adversity, through life or death, goes forth conquering and to conquer. He is not guided by events like the giddy multitude, who fall into any form by the fortuitous concourse of accidents ; but, imitating the Providence of Heaven, he takes a direction of events, and makes the course of human affairs bend to his purposes, and terminate in his honour.

Further, this temper and disposition is no less favourable to the milder virtues of humanity. A serious mind is the companion of a feeling heart. It is akin to that virtuous sensibility, from which all the sympathetic emotions are derived ; and readily associates with those good affections which constitute the most amiable part of our nature. The thoughtless and the dissipated are unconcerned spectators of human happiness or misery ;

they mar not their enjoyments by rushing into foreign woe ; and are never so much in earnest, as to give a tear to the distresses of mankind. “ They lie upon beds of ivory,” saith the prophet ; “ they stretch themselves “ upon their couches ; they chant to the “ sound of the viol ; and they anoint themselves with the chief ointments ; but they “ are not grieved for the affliction of their “ brethren.” But he who feareth God, will also regard man. The hour of incense has always been the hour of alms-giving. Whilst the heart is lifted up in devotion to God, the hands will be stretched out in beneficence to man. Think not, my friends, that these are duties of inferior importance, and not proper to be called up to your remembrance upon this occasion. The ordinance which you are soon to celebrate, is the communion of saints, and the feast of love. The cup of blessing which we bless, saith the Apostle, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? As we are all partakers of that one bread, so by that participation, we being many, become one body. Being thus the members of one body, the great law follows, which he afterwards lays

down, That if one member suffers, all the members should suffer with it; and if one member rejoices, all the members should rejoice.

The *second* thing proposed, was to shew the suitableness of this temper of mind to our present state.

And, in the *first* place, it is suited to that dark and uncertain state of being in which we now live. Human life is not formed to answer those high expectations which, in the era of youth and imagination, we are apt to entertain. When we first set out in life, we bid defiance to the evil day; we indulge ourselves in dreams and visions of romantic bliss; and fondly lay the scene of perfect and uninterrupted happiness for the time to come. But experience soon undeceives us. We awake, and find that it was but a dream. We make but few steps in life, without finding the world to be a turbulent scene; we soon experience the changes that await us, and feel the thorns of the wilderness wherein we dwell. Our hopes are frequently blasted in the bud; our designs are defeated in the very moment of expectation, and we meet with sorrow, and vexation, and disappointment, on all hands.

There are lives besides our *own*, in which we are deeply interested; lives in which *our* happiness is placed, and on which our hopes depend. Just when we have laid a plan of happy life; when, after the experience of years, we have found out a few chosen friends, and have begun to enjoy that little circle in which we would wish to live and to die, an unexpected stroke disappoints our hopes, and lays all our schemes in the dust. When, after much labour and care, we have reared the goodly structure; when we have fenced it, as we fondly imagine, from every storm that blows, and indulge the pleasing hope, that it will always endure, an invisible hand interposes, and overturns it from the foundation. Who knoweth what awaits him in life? Who knoweth the changes through which he is destined to pass? Son of prosperity! Thou now lookest forth from thy high tower; thou now gloriest in thine excellence; thou sayest that thy mountain stands strong, and that thou art firm as the cedar of Lebanon,—*But stand in awe.* Before the mighty God of Jacob, and by the blast of the breath of his nostrils, the mountain hath been overturned, and the cedar in Lebanon hath fallen like the leaf before the whirlwind. At this very moment of time, the wheel is in

motion that reverses the lot of men,—that brings the prosperous to the dust, and lays the mighty low. Now, O man! thou rejoicest in thy strength, but know, that for thee the bed of languishing is spread; pale, ghastly and stretched on thy couch, thou shalt number the tedious hours, the restless days, the wearisome nights, that are appointed to thee, till thy soul shall be ready to “choose death rather than life.” Thou now removest from thee the evil day, and sayest, in thy heart, thou shalt never see sorrow; but remember the changes of this mortal life; for thee the “cup of trembling” is prepared, and the “wine of astonishment is poured out.” How often, in an instant, doth a hand unseen shift the scene of the world! The calmest and the stillest hour precedes the whirlwind, and it hath thundered in the serenest sky. The monarch hath drawn the chariot of state in which he was wont to ride in triumph, and the greatest who ever awed the world have moralized at the turn of the wheel.

In the *second* place, the propriety of this temper will appear, if we consider the scene that soon awaits us, and the awful change of being that we have to undergo. The sentence of the Lord is passed upon all flesh. Man,

who art born of a woman ! one day thou must die. The decree is gone forth, and the time appointed for its fulfilment is approaching fast. Short is the period which is allotted to mortal man. In a little time the scene changes, and the places that knew us shall know us no more. We bid an eternal adieu to all below the sun ; we enter on a new state of being, and appear in the immediate presence of God. After death comes the judgment. Thou must answer, O man ! to the Searcher of hearts, for the deeds done in the body. The actions of the past life shall rise up to thy remembrance ; the secrets of thy soul shall be disclosed ; and thy eternal doom be fixed by God, the Judge of all. In thy last moments thou *wilt be serious, and stand in awe*. The most thoughtless sinner will stand aghast, and the stoutest heart will tremble at that awful, that parting hour, when, to the closing eye, God appears, with as full conviction, as if the curtain between both worlds was withdrawn, and the Judge in very deed descended to his tribunal. How serious wilt thou be when, surrounded by the sad circle of thy weeping friends, thou readest in their altered looks that thy hour is come ; when, cut off from all connection with mortality, thou takest the last

look of what thou heldest dear in life ; when the cold sweat, the shivering limb, and the voice faltering in the throat, announce thy departure into the world unknown ! What manner of persons ought we to be, who have such events awaiting us ! Ought we not to stand in awe ; to join trembling with our mirth ; to commune with our hearts alone, and be still as in the presence of that God, before whose tribunal we have soon to appear ?

In the *third* place, this frame of mind is peculiarly proper for you now, as a preparation for that solemnity which you are soon to celebrate. Holy is every ordinance of the Lord ; but this is the holiest of all, and should inspire us with reverence and godly fear. You are to be engaged in the most solemn ordinance of our religion. You are to be employed in the most important work of your lives, to seal your vows in the faith of everlasting redemption. You are going to transact with the God of Glory, before whom ten thousand times ten thousand angels and archangels bow down and admire and adore. You are about to commemorate the most tremendous event which is to be found in the records of time ; that scene which made the sun grow dark, and which the earth trembled to behold. God

shews himself to be awful, even when he manifests his mercy, and causes all his goodness to pass before you. When he blesses men with the greatest testimony of his love, it is by smiting his own Son ; when the gate of heaven is set open to the world, it is opened by *the blood of one who is higher than the heavens*. Whilst thou rejoicest, therefore, at the remembrance of thy redemption, think with wonder upon the ransom by which it was accomplished, and implore the assistance of the Divine Spirit, that you may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

SERMON VI.

ON DEATH.

JOB, xxx. 23.

*For I know that thou wilt bring me to death,
and to the house appointed for all living.*

THIS book of Job contains the history of a righteous man, fallen from the height of prosperity, into scenes of great distress. Almost every affliction which falls to the lot of mortal man, embittered his life. His goods were taken away by robbers; his body was smitten by a loathsome and tormenting disease; his family was cut off, and all his company made desolate by a sudden stroke from heaven; his surviving friends proved miserable comforters, and, instead of relieving, added to his afflictions. His head was bare to every blast of adversity, and his heart bled with all the va-

rieties of pain. In the course of his complaint, he utters the genuine voice of sorrow, and pours forth his soul in lamentation and woe. He sets before us the evil day; he shews us the dark side of things, and presents to view those shades in the picture of human life, which must one day meet our eye. From these calamities, he passes, by a natural transition, to the consideration of the last evil in human life:—"I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

Man is a serious being. There is a string in the heart which accords to the voice of sorrow, and impressions of grief take the strongest hold of the mind. There is a time when solitude has a charm; when cheerfulness gives place to melancholy; and when the house of mourning is better suited to the soul than the house of mirth. Even our amusements often partake of a serious turn. For the sake of amusement, we give our attention to histories of woe; we sit spectators to the scene of sorrow, and devote the hours to melancholy and to tears. And yet, by a strange perversion of mind, though we rush into foreign woe, and take delight in weeping for the fate of others, yet our own departure excites little attention

or regard, notwithstanding the many warnings which tell us that here we have no continuing city ; although few weeks elapse without being marked with the funeral of a neighbour or a friend, we remain in a criminal indifference ; the tear is soon dried upon our cheeks, and we muse upon the fate of our friends with unconcern. If, by removing the thought of death, men could remove the day of death, their conduct would admit of an excuse. But whether you think of it or not, death approaches, and the want of preparation will only serve to sharpen the sting, by the surprise with which it may strike.

Since we know then, assuredly, that God will bring us to death, and to the house appointed for all living, let us consider, in the *first* place, the certainty of its approaching soon ; *secondly*, the time and manner of its arrival ; and, *thirdly*, the change which it introduces.

In the *first* place, Let us consider the certainty of death's approaching soon.

All the works of nature, in this inferior system, seem only made to be destroyed. Man is not exempted. There is a principle of mortality in our frame, and, as if we were

only born to die, the first step we take in life is a step to the grave. It was not always so. Adam came from the hands of his Creator perfect and immortal. The Almighty created man after his own image. He planted in his frame the seeds of eternal life, to grow and flourish through a succession of ages. This noble shoot, which the hand of the Most High had planted, was blasted by sin. When man became a sinner, he became mortal. The doom was pronounced, that, after few and evil days, he should return to the dust from whence he was taken. Since that time, as soon as our eyes open on the light, we come under the law of mortality, and the sentence of death is passed. In the morning of our day, we set out on our journey for eternity; thither we are all fast tending : and day and night we travel on without intermission. There is no standing still on this road. To this great rendezvous of the sons of Adam we are continually drawing nearer and nearer. Our life is for ever on the wing, although we mark not its flight. Our motion down the stream of time is so smooth and silent, that though we are for ever moving, we perceive it not, till we arrive at the ocean of eternity. Even now death is doing his work. At this very mo-

ment of time, multitudes are stretched on that bed from which they shall rise no more. The blood is ceasing to flow ; the breath is going out ; and the spirit taking its departure for the world unknown.

When we look back on our former years, how many do we find who began the journey of life along with us, and promised to themselves long life and happy days, cut off in the midst of their career, and fallen at our side ! They have but gone before us ; one day we must follow. O man ! who now rejoicest in the pride of life, and looking abroad, sayest in thy heart, thou shalt never see sorrow, for thee the bed of death is spread ; the worm calls for thee to be her companion ; thou must enter the dominions of the dead, and be gathered to the dust of thy fathers. If then death be certainly approaching fast, let us learn the true value of life. If death be at hand, then certainly time is precious. Now the day shines, and the master calls us ; in a little time the night cometh, when no man can work. To-day, therefore, hear the voice which calls you to heaven. “ Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation.” —“ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor

“ device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the
“ grave, whither thou goest.”

In the *second* place, We may consider the time and manner of the arrival of death.

Death is called in Scripture *the land without any order* ; and without any order the king of terrors makes his approaches in the world. The commission given from on high was, “ Go into the world : Strike so, that the dead may alarm the living.” Hence it is, that we seldom see men running the full career of life ; growing old among their children’s children, and then falling asleep in the arms of nature, as in the embraces of a kind mother ; coming to the grave like a shock of corn, fully ripe ; like flowers that shut up at the close of the day. Death walks through the world without any order. He delights to surprise, to give a shock to mankind. Hence he leaves the wretched to prolong the line of their sorrows, and cuts off the fortunate in the midst of their career ; he suffers the aged to survive himself, to outlive life, to stalk about the ghost of what he was, and aims his arrow at the heart of the young, who puts the evil day far from him. He delights to see the feeble carrying the vigorous to the grave, and the father build-

ing the tomb of his children. Often, when his approaches are least expected, he bursts at once upon the world, like an earthquake in the dead of night, or thunder in the serenest sky. All ages and conditions he sweeps away without distinction; the young man just entering into life, high in hope, elated with joy, and promising to himself a length of years; the father of a family from the embraces of his wife and children; the man of the world, when his designs are ripening to execution, and the long expected crisis of enjoyment seems to approach. These, and all others, are hurried promiscuously off the stage, and laid without order in the common grave. Every path in the world leads to the tomb, and every hour in life hath been to some the last hour.

Without order too, is the manner of Death's approach. The king of terrors wears a thousand forms; pains and diseases, a numerous and a direful train, compose his host. Marking out unhappy man for their prey, they attack the seat of life or the seat of understanding; hurry him off the stage in an instant, or make him pine by slow degrees; blasting the bloom of life, or, waiting till the decline, according to the pathetic picture of Solomon, "They make the strong men bow themselves,

“ and the keepers of the house tremble ;
“ make the grinders cease ; bring the daugh-
“ ters of music low ; darken the sun, and the
“ moon, and the stars ; scatter fears in the
“ way, and make desire itself to fail, until the
“ silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl
“ be broken, when the dust returns to the
“ dust as it was, and the spirit ascends to God
“ who gave it.”

In the *third* place, We have to consider the change which Death introduces.

Man was made after the image of God ; and the human form divine, the seat of so many heavenly faculties, graces, and virtues, exhibits a temple not unworthy of its Maker. Men, in their collective capacity, and united as nations, have displayed a wide field of exertion and of glory. The globe hath been covered with monuments of their power, and the voice of history transmits their renown from one generation to another. But when we pass from the living world to the dead, what a sad picture do we behold ! The fall and desolation of human nature ; the ruins of man ; the dust and ashes of many generations scattered over the earth. The high and the low ; the mighty and the mean ; the king and

the cottager, lie blended together, without any order. The worm is the companion, is the sister of him, who thought himself of a different species from the rest of mankind. A few feet of earth contain the ashes of him who conquered the globe; the shadows of the long night stretch over all alike; the monarch of disorder, the great leveller of mankind, lays all on the bed of clay in equal meanness. In the course of time, the land of desolation becomes still more desolate; the things that were, become as if they had never been; Babylon is a ruin; her heroes are dust; not a trace remains of the glory that shone over the earth, and not a stone to tell where the master of the world is laid. Such, in general, is the humiliating aspect of the tomb; but let us take a nearer view of the house appointed for all living. Man sets out in the morning of his day, high in hope, and elated with joy. The most important objects to him are the companions of his journey. They set out together in the career of life, and, after many mutual endearments, walk hand in hand through the paths of childhood and of youth. It is with a giddy recollection we look back on the past, when we consider the number and the value of those, whom unforeseen disaster

and the hand of destiny hath swept from our side. Alas! when the awful mandate comes from on high concerning men, to change the countenance, and to send them away, what sad spectacles do they become! The friends whom we knew, and valued, and loved, our companions in the path of life; the partners of our tender hours, with whom we took sweet counsel, and walked in company to the house of God, have passed to the land of forgetfulness, and have no more connection with the living world. Low lies the head that was once crowned with honour. Silent is the tongue to whose accents we surrendered the soul, and to whose language of friendship and affection we wished to listen for ever. Beamless is the eye, and closed in night, which looked serenity, and sweetness, and love. The face that was to us the face of an angel, is mangled and deformed; the heart that glowed with the purest fire, and beat with the best affections, is now become a clod of the valley.

But shall it always continue so? If a man die, shall he live again? There is hope of a tree if it be cut down; but man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Has the breath of the Almighty, which animated his frame, vanished into the air? Is he who triumphed in the hope of immortality, inferior to the worm, his

companion in the tomb? Will light never rise on the long night of the grave? Does the mighty flood that has swept away the nations and the ages, ebb to flow no more? Have the wise and the worthy; the pious and the pure; the generous and the just; the great and the good; the excellent ones of the earth, who, from age to age, have shone brighter than all the stars of heaven, withdrawn into the shade of annihilation, and set in darkness to rise no more? No. While "the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel of Christ. "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The periods of human life passing away; the certainty of the dissolution which awaits us, and the frequent examples of mortality, which continually strike our view, lead us to reflect with seriousness upon the house appointed for all living. Death is the great teacher of mankind; the voice of wisdom comes from the tomb; reflections, which shew us the vanity, will teach us the value of life. Such meditations are particularly suited to beings like us, who are subject to infirmities

and defects. For such is the weakness of human nature in this imperfect state ; such is the strength of temptation in this evil world, that frail man is often led astray before he is aware. The enemy of the soul attacks us in every quarter ; approaches often under false colours, and tries every disguise, to deceive and to destroy. Vice often borders on virtue ; the narrow path and the broad way lie so near, that it is difficult to distinguish them, so as to order our goings aright. Inadvertence may frequently betray ; the impetuosity of passion may precipitate, and the gentleness of our own nature mislead us into steps fatal to our peace. I speak not of wicked men, who acknowledge no guide but their passions, and submit to no law, but what one vice imposes upon another. I talk of the sincere and the good. The most watchful Christian has his unguarded moments ; the most prudent man speaks unadvisedly with his lips, and the meekest lets the sun go down upon his wrath. Alas ! man in his best estate is altogether vanity, and always stands in need of the lesson from the tomb. “ O that they were wise,” said Moses, “ that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !”

SERMON VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VICTORY OVER DEATH.

1 COR. XV. 55, 57.

O death! Where is thy sting? O grave! Where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE Messiah is foretold in ancient prophecy, as a magnificent Conqueror. His victories were celebrated, and his triumphs were sung, long before the time of his appearance to Israel. "Who is this," saith the prophet Isaiah, pointing him out to the Old Testament Church, "Who is this that cometh from Edom; with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his

“ strength ? ” — “ I have set my King upon
 “ my holy hill of Zion. — I shall give him
 “ the heathen for his inheritance, and the
 “ uttermost parts of the earth for his posses-
 “ sion.” As a Conqueror, he had to destroy
 the works of the great enemy of mankind ;
 and to overcome Death, the king of terrors.

The method of accomplishing this victory
 was as surprising as the love which gave it
 birth. “ Forasmuch as the children are par-
 “ takers of flesh and blood, he himself like-
 “ wise took part of the same, that through his
 “ own death he might destroy him that had
 “ the power of death, that is the devil, and
 “ deliver them, who, through fear of death,
 “ were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”
 Accordingly, his passion on the cross, which
 you have this day commemorated, was the
 very victory which he obtained. The hour in
 which he suffered was also the hour in which
 he overcame. Then he bruised the head of
 the old serpent, who had seduced our first
 parents to rebel against their Maker ; then he
 disarmed the king of terrors, who had usurped
 dominion over the nations, then, triumphing
 over the legions of hell, and the powers of
 darkness, he made a shew of them openly.
 Not for himself, but for us did he conquer.

The Captain of our salvation fought, that we might overcome. He obtained the victory, that we may join in the triumphal song, as we now do, when we repeat these words of the Apostle: "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it abounds with consolations under all the evils of life; nor is its benign influence confined to the course of life, but even extends to death itself. It delivers us from the agony of the last hour; sets us free from the fears which then perplex the timid; from the horrors which haunt the offender, though penitent, and from all the darkness which involves our mortal state. So complete is the victory we obtain, that Jesus Christ is said in Scripture to have *abolished* death.

The evils in death, from which Jesus Christ sets us free, are the following: In the *first* place, the doubts and fears that are apt to perplex the mind, from the uncertainty in which a future state is involved. *Secondly*, the apprehensions of wrath and forebodings of punishment, proceeding from the consciousness of sin. *Thirdly*, the fears that arise in the mind upon the awful transition from this world to the next.

In the *first* place, Jesus Christ gives us victory over death, by delivering us from the doubts and fears which arose in the minds of those who knew not the gospel, from the uncertainty in which a future state was involved.

Without Divine Revelation, men wandered in the dark with respect to an after life. Unassisted reason could give but imperfect information on this important article. Conjectures, in place of discoveries, presumptions, in place of demonstrations, were all that it could offer to the inquiring mind. The unenlightened eye could not clearly pierce the cloud which veiled futurity from mortal view. The light of nature reached little farther than the limits of this globe, and shed but a feeble ray upon the region beyond the grave. Hence, those heathen nations, of whom the Apostle speaks, are described as *sorrowing* and *having no hope*. And whence could reason derive complete information, that there was a state of immortality beyond the grave? Consult with appearances in nature, and you find but few intimations of a future life. Destruction seems to be one of the great laws of the system. The various forms of life are indeed preserved; but while the species remains, the

individual perishes. Every thing that you behold around you, bears the marks of mortality and the symptoms of decay. He only who is, and was, and is to come, is without any variableness or shadow of turning. Every thing passes away. A great and mighty river, for ages and centuries, has been rolling on, and sweeping away all that ever lived, to the vast abyss of eternity. On that darkness light does not rise. From that unknown country none return. On that devouring deep, which has swallowed up every thing, no vestige appears of the things that were.

There are particular appearances also which might naturally excite an alarm for the future. The human machine is so constituted, that soul and body seem often to decay together. To the eye of sense, as the beast dies, so dies the man. Death seems to close the scene, and the grave to put a final period to the prospects of man. The words of Job beautifully express the anxiety of the mind on this subject. "If a man die, shall he live again? "There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, "that it will sprout again, and that the tender "branch thereof will not cease. Though "the root thereof wax old in the earth, and "the stock thereof die in the ground; yet

“ through the scent of water it will bud, and
“ bring forth boughs like a plant : but man
“ dieth, and is cut off ; man giveth up the
“ ghost, and where is he ? As the waters fail
“ from the sea ; as the flood decayeth and
“ drieth up : so man lieth down, and ris-
“ eth not ; till the heavens be no more, they
“ shall not awake, nor be raised out of their
“ sleep.” But what a dreadful prospect does
annihilation present to the mind ! To be an
outcast from existence ; to be blotted out from
the book of life ; to mingle with the dust, and
be scattered over the earth, as if the breath
of life had never animated our frame !—Man
cannot support the thought. Is the light
which shone brighter than all the stars of
heaven set in darkness, to rise no more ? Are
all the hopes of man come to this,—to be ta-
ken into the councils of the Almighty ; to be
admitted to behold part of that plan of Pro-
vidence which governs the world, and when
his eyes are just opened, to read the book,—
to be shut for ever ? If such were to be our
state, we would be of all creatures the most
miserable. The world appears a chaos with-
out form, and void of order. From the throne
of nature, God departs, and there appears a

cruel and capricious being, who delights in death, and makes sport of human misery.

From this state of doubts and fears, we are delivered by the Gospel of Jesus. The message which he brought was life and immortality. From the Star of Jacob, light shone even upon the shades of death. As a proof of immortality, he called back the departed spirit from the world unknown; as an earnest of the resurrection to a future life, he himself arose from the dead. When we contemplate the tomb of nature, we cry out, "Can these "dry bones live?" When we contemplate the tomb of Jesus, we say, "Yes, they can "live!" As he arose, we shall in like manner arise. In the tomb of nature, you see man return to the dust from whence he was taken. In the tomb of Jesus, you see man restored to life again. In the tomb of nature, you see the shades of death fall on the weary traveller, and the darkness of the long night close over his head. In the tomb of Jesus, you see light arise upon the shades of death, and the morning dawn upon the long night of the grave. On the tomb of nature it is written, "Behold thy end, O man! "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou re-
"turn. Thou, who now callest thyself the

“ son of heaven, shalt become one of the
“ clods of the valley.” On the tomb of Christ
is written, “ Thou diest, O man ! but to live
“ again. When dust returns to dust, the spi-
“ rit shall return to God who gave it. I am
“ the resurrection and the life ; he that be-
“ lieveth in me, though he were dead, yet
“ shall he live.” From the tomb of nature, you
hear a voice, “ For ever silent is the land of
“ forgetfulness ? From the slumbers of the
“ grave shall we awake no more ? Like the
“ flowers of the field, shall we be as though
“ we had never been ?” From the tomb of
Jesus, you hear, “ Blessed are the dead that
“ die in the Lord, thus saith the Spirit, for
“ they rest from their labours, and pass into
“ glory :—In my father’s house there are many
“ mansions ; if it were not so, I would have
“ told you : I go to prepare a place for you,
“ and if I go away, I will come again, and
“ take you unto myself, that where I am, there
“ ye may be also.”

Will not this assurance of a happy immor-
tality, and a blessed resurrection, in a great
measure remove the terror and the sting of
death ? May we not walk without dismay
through the dark valley, when we are conduct-
ed by a beam from heaven ? May we not

endure the tossings of one stormy night, when it carries us to the shore that we long for? What cause have we to dread the messenger who brings us to our Father's house? Should not our fears about futurity abate, when we hear God addressing us with respect to death, as he did the Patriarch of old, upon going to Egypt, "Fear not to go down to the grave; I will go down with thee, and will bring thee up again."

Secondly, Our victory over death consists in our being delivered from the apprehensions of wrath, and forebodings of punishment, which arise in the mind from the consciousness of sin.

That there is a God who governs the world, the patron of righteousness, and the avenger of sin, is so manifest from the light of nature, that the belief of it has obtained among all nations. That it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked; that God will reward those who diligently seek him, and punish those who transgress his laws, is the principle upon which all religion is founded. But whether mercy be an attribute in the Divine nature to such an extent that God may be rendered propitious to those who rebel

against his authority, and disobey his commandments, is an inquiry to which no satisfactory answer can be made. Many of the Divine attributes are conspicuous from the works of creation; the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, appear in creating the world; in superintending that world which he has made; in diffusing life wide over the system of things, and providing the means of happiness to all his creatures. But from no appearances in nature does it clearly follow, that the exercise of mercy to offenders is part of the plan by which the universe is governed. For any thing that we know from the light of nature, repentance alone may not be sufficient to procure the remission of sins, the tears of contrition may be unavailable to wash away the stains of a guilty life, and the Divine favour may be implored in vain by those who have become obnoxious to the Divine displeasure. If, in the calm and serene hour of inquiry, man could find no consolation in such thoughts, how would he be overwhelmed with horror, when his mind was disordered with a sense of guilt? When remembrance brought his former life to view, when reflection pierced him to the heart, darkness would spread itself over his mind,

Deity would appear an object of terror, and the spirit, wounded by remorse, would discern nothing but an offended Judge armed with thunders to punish the guilty. If, in the day of health and prosperity, these reflections were so powerful to embitter life, they would be a source of agony and despair when the last hour approached. When life flows according to our wishes, we may endeavour to conceal our sins, and shut our ears against the voice of conscience. But these artifices will avail little at the hour of death. Then things appear in their true colours. Then conscience tells the truth, and the mask is taken off from the man, when our sins at that hour pass before us in review. Guilty and polluted as we are, covered with confusion, how shall we appear at the judgment-seat of God, and answer at the bar of eternal justice? How shall dust and ashes stand in the presence of that uncreated Glory, before which principalities and powers bow down, tremble, and adore? How shall guilty and self-condemned creatures appear before Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly? This is the sting of death. It is guilt that sharpens the spear of the king of terrors. But even

in this view we have victory over death, through Jesus Christ our Lord. By his death upon the cross, an atonement was made for the sins of men. The wrath of God was averted from the world. A great plan of reconciliation is now unfolded in the gospel. Under the banner of the cross, pardon is proclaimed to returning penitents. They who accept the offers of mercy, and who fly for refuge to the hope set before them, are taken into favour; their sins are forgiven, and their names are written in the book of life. Over them death has no power. The king of terrors is transformed into an angel of peace, to waft them to their native country, where they long to be.

Thus, O Christian! the death of thy Redeemer, is thy strong consolation,—thy effectual remedy against the fear of death. What evil can come nigh to him for whom Jesus died? Does the law, which thou hast broken, denounce vengeance against thee? Behold that law fulfilled in the meritorious life of thy Redeemer. Does the sentence of wrath, pronounced against the posterity of Adam, sound in thine ears? Behold that sentence blotted out, that *hand-writing*, as the Apostle calls it, cancelled, nailed to thy Saviour's cross, and

left there as a trophy of his victory. - Art thou afraid that the cry of thy offences may rise to heaven, and reach the ears of Justice? There is no place for it there; in room of it ascends the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Does the enemy of mankind accuse thee at the judgment-seat? He is put to silence by thy Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of thy Father. Does Death appear to thee in a form of terror, and hold out his sting to alarm thy mind? His terror is removed, and his sting was pulled out by that hand, which, on mount Calvary, was fixed to the accursed tree. Art thou afraid that the arrows of Divine wrath which smite the guilty, may be aimed at thy head? Before they can touch thee, they must pierce that body, which, in the symbols of divine institution, was this day held forth crucified among you, and which at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, is for ever presented in behalf of the redeemed. Well then may ye join in the triumphant song of the Apostle, "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?"

In the *third* place, Jesus Christ gives us

victory over death, by yielding us consolation and relief under the fears that arise in the mind upon the awful transition from this world to the next.

Who ever left the precincts of mortality without casting a wishful look on what he left behind, and a trembling eye on the scene that is before him? Being formed by our Creator for enjoyments even in this life, we are endowed with a sensibility to the objects around us. We have affections, and we delight to indulge them: we have hearts, and we want to bestow them. Bad as the world is, we find in it objects of affection and attachment.—Even in this waste and howling wilderness, there are spots of verdure and of beauty, of power to charm the mind, and make us cry out, “It is good for us to be here.” When, after the observation and experience of years, we have found out the objects of the soul, and met with minds congenial to our own, what pangs must it give to the heart, to think of parting for ever? We even contract an attachment to inanimate objects. The tree under whose shadow we have often sat; the fields where we have frequently strayed; the hill, the scene of contemplation, or the haunt of friendship, become objects of passion to

the mind, and upon our leaving them, excite a temporary sorrow and regret. If these things can affect us with uneasiness, how great must be the affliction, when, stretched on that bed from which we shall rise no more, and looking about for the last time on the sad circle of our weeping friends,—how great must be the affliction, to dissolve at once all the attachments of life; to bid an eternal adieu to the friends whom we long have loved, and to part for ever with all that is dear below the sun! But let not the Christian be disconsolate. He parts with the objects of his affection, to meet them again,—to meet them in a better world, where change never enters, and from whose blissful mansions sorrow flies away. At the resurrection of the just; in the great assembly of the sons of God, when all the family of heaven are gathered together, not one person shall be missing that was worthy of thy affection or esteem. And if among imperfect creatures, and in a troubled world, the kind, the tender, and the generous affections, have such power to charm the heart, that even the tears which they occasion delight us, what joy unspeakable and glorious will they produce, when they exist in perfect minds, and are improved by the purity of the heavens!

Christianity also gives us consolation in the transition from this world to the next. Every change in life awakens anxiety; whatever is unknown, is the object of fear; no wonder, then, that it is awful and alarming to nature, to think of that time when the hour of our departure is at hand; when this animal frame shall be dissolved, and the mysterious bond between soul and body shall be broken. Even the visible effects of mortality are not without terror. To have no more a name among the living; to pass into the dominions of the dead; to have the worm for a companion, and a sister, are events at which nature shudders and starts back. But more awful still is the invisible scene, when the curtain between both worlds shall be drawn back, and the soul, naked and disembodied, appears in the presence of its Creator. Even under these thoughts, the comforts of Christianity may delight thy soul. Jesus, thy Saviour, has the keys of death; the abodes of the dead are part of his kingdom. He lay in the grave, and hallowed it for the repose of the just. Before our Lord ascended up on high, he said to his disciples, “ I go to my Father, and to your Father, to my God, and to your God;” and when the time of your departure is at hand, you go to

your Father and his Father, to your God and his God.

Enlightened by these discoveries, trusting to the merits of his Redeemer, and animated with the hope which is set before him, the Christian will depart with tranquillity and joy. To him the bed of death will not be a scene of terror, nor the last hour an hour of despair. There is a majesty in the death of the Christian : He partakes of the spirit of that world to which he is advancing, and he meets his latter end with a face that looks to the heavens.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

PSALM xcvi. 1.

The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.

TO thinking men, the universe presents a scene of wonders. They find themselves brought into the world, they know not how. If they look around them, they behold the earth clothed with an infinite variety of herbs and fruits, subservient to their use, or administering to their delight. If they look above them, they behold the host of heaven walking in brightness and in beauty; the sun ruling the day; the moon and the stars governing the night. If they attend to the course of nature, they behold with wonder the various revolutions of the year; the gradual return of

the seasons, and the constant vicissitude of day and of night. Whilst thus they are employed, they behold in the heavens the glory of their Creator; they discover in the firmament the handiwork of Omnipotence, and they hear the voice that nature sends out to the ends of the earth, That all things are the workmanship of a supreme and intelligent Cause. As from these events they conclude the Almighty to be the Maker of the world; from the same events, they conclude that he is the Governor of the world which he hath made, and that Divine power is as requisite to preserve the order and harmony of the world now, as it was necessary to establish it at the first. But when experience unfolded to them the powers of natural bodies; when they saw machines contrived by human skill, exhibiting motions, and producing effects, similar to those which they observed in nature, by the impulse of matter upon matter; and when they saw these machines regularly exhibiting such motions, regularly producing such effects, although the head that contrived, and the hand that put them together, were removed from them; this raised an opinion, in some speculative minds, that the world resembled such machines; and that, as a clock will shew the

hour of the day, in virtue of its original frame and constitution, without any further interposition of the artificer that framed it, so nature, in virtue of its original frame and constitution, may and does produce every effect which we see around us, without any further interposition of its Divine Author.

This opinion is frequently mentioned and confuted in the Sacred Scriptures. Those men are condemned whose belief it was, that, in the course of human affairs, the Lord would not do good, neither would he do evil. Although I seldom choose to carry you through the barren and unpleasant fields of controversy, yet, as this question affects so deeply our religious comfort in this state, and our hopes of happiness in a future world, I shall consider it at large, and shall, in the *first* place, shew you the absurdity of that opinion which would exclude God from the government of the world.—*Secondly*, establish and confirm the doctrine of a *particular Providence*. *Thirdly*, shew you the grounds of joy arising to the world from such a Providence.

In the *first* place, I am to shew you the absurdity of that opinion which would exclude God from the government of the world.

It has been thought by some, "That the Creator of the universe formed the constitution of nature in such a manner at the beginning, as to stand in need of no succeeding change; that he established certain laws in the material and in the moral world, which uniformly and invariably take place, producing all the effects which he ever intended they should produce; as when an artist frames a machine for certain purposes, and for a limited duration, the effects which result from it spring not from the immediate direction and influence of the artist, but from the original frame and composition of the machine." Such is the opinion of those who hold what they call a *general Providence*. We, on the other hand, maintain, that "Almighty God, upon special occasions, directs and overrules the course of events, both in the natural and moral world, by an immediate influence, to answer the great designs of his universal government."

With respect to a general Providence, this mechanical system, this engine by which some persons would throw out the superintending Providence of Heaven, is a creature of the brain. It is a mere presumption. It is by its own nature incapable of proof. From whence should

the evidence arise? Art thou, who excludest God from his works, entrusted with the secrets of Heaven? Wert thou present when God laid the foundations of the world? Wert thou privy to his councils? Or do you now see, or can you shew, that original cause, or those original causes, established by God at the creation, from which all the various effects in nature may be deduced, and into which they may mechanically be resolved? Can you shew the immediate cause of lightning or of rain, or of any other phenomenon in nature, and from the immediate cause ascend to the second, from the second to the third, and so upward till you come to the last link of the chain, which hangs immediately upon the throne of God? This can be done in the works of art. An artist will shew you the dependence of all the movements in a machine upon one another; and when you are as well acquainted with the fabric of the world, as you may be with the structure of a machine, you may then speak of your chain of mechanical causes and effects. But, alas! the most improved philosophy can do no more but skim the surface of things; and in its progress from the immediate visible to the first invisible

cause, at one or two removes, it finds its period, beyond which it cannot go.

Further, this mechanical system of governing the world without the immediate interposition of the Deity, undermines the foundation of all religious worship. When we pray for our daily bread, what do we ask but the blessing of God upon the earth, to yield her fruits in due season? When we ask the blessing of God upon our meals, what do we less than recognise his supreme power, and implore him to make the gifts of his Providence the means of our sustenance and refreshment? This disclaims every notion of natural causes and effects that shuts out God; it supposes his concurrence and co-operation directing all the operations of nature. Again, when we pray for the graces and virtues of the spiritual life, what do we ask but the Divine aid to strengthen the good dispositions he hath already given us, and so to direct and order the course of events, that we may be kept from temptation, or not be overcome when we are tempted? But this supposes the superintendence of God over us; supposes his interposition in human affairs; supposes his Providence continually exerted in administering to the wants of his creatures, according as their cir-

circumstances require. If this account be just, then our worship is a reasonable service. But if these are vain words, then our worship also is vain. Then every one that goes into his closet to pray, goes only to act foolishly ; then all the good and the pious, everywhere over the face of the whole earth, that are calling upon the Most High God, are as uselessly, as absurdly employed, as if they were falling down before a dumb idol, and paying their devotions to images of wood or stone.

Further still, this mechanical system, in a great measure, annihilates the moral perfections of the Divine nature. It places the Almighty in a state of indolence, which is inconsistent with every idea of perfection ; it makes him an idle and unconcerned spectator of his own works, and represents him as beholding virtue and vice, the sinner and the saint, with an equal eye. There are many scenes in human life, at which, if we were present, it would be criminal for us not to take a part. Did we see the hands of the violent raised to shed innocent blood, and not rush to prevent the horrid deed ; did we know the retreats of the robber and the murderer, and not endeavour to bring them to public justice, we would be reckoned in part guilty of their

crimes, as, by a criminal omission, we should endanger the peace of the public, and the interests of society. If we, being evil, would abhor such a character, shall we impute it, can we impute it to Him who is infinite in goodness, and who is possessed of absolute perfection? To what purpose is God every where present, if he is not everywhere employed? Whereto serves infinite power, if it must be for ever dormant? Whereto serves infinite wisdom, if it is never to be exercised? To what purpose are the Divine goodness, and the divine justice, if we only hear of their names? Are all the attributes of the Godhead in vain? How false, how absurd, how blasphemous, is an opinion that would destroy every Divine perfection!

I have thus shewn you the absurdity of that system which would exclude God from the government of the universe, and I am now, in the *second* place, to establish and confirm the doctrine of a particular providence. This doctrine is founded both upon reason and the Scriptures.

Reason and true philosophy never attempt to separate God from his works. We must own him in the sky to hold the planets in

their respective orbits ; we must own him in the earth, and in the seas, to keep them within their proper bounds, and we must own him through the whole system of nature, to support and maintain that gravitating force which gives consistency and stability to all material things. Reason tells us, that it is not probable that the Creator of the universe would forsake that world which he had made ; that it is not probable that a Being, possessed of infinite perfection, can be an idle and unconcerned spectator of his own works.

But our chief evidence for this doctrine rests upon Revelation. Mankind obtained early notices of the Divine superintendence, by peculiar interpositions. In the history of the Old Testament, we have an account of the loss of Paradise by sin ; of the banishment of Cain for the murder of his brother ; of the translation of Enoch, as the reward of his righteousness ; of the wickedness of the old world, and its destruction by the deluge, Noah and his family only excepted, who, by the eminence of his piety, found grace in the sight of God to become the Father of the new world. When this new world revolted from God, and ran into idolatry, we see Abraham called out to be the head of a mighty nation,

which grew up and flourished, by a series of the most wonderful Providences ; governed by laws of God's own appointment ; with promises of protection and blessing, so long as they should be obedient, and threatenings of punishment and destruction, if they fell off to serve other gods ; which in the event were punctually verified. This was a visible and a standing evidence of a governing Providence. The doctrine was thus established upon a higher authority than reason, and upon better evidence than the light of nature. God revealed himself to men as the Governor of the world, the avenger of the wicked, and the protector of the good. But although, in administering the affairs of the universe, the object of Providence should be to depress the bad and to favour the good ; yet an exact retribution of rewards and punishments was none of the ends of his administration in this scene of things. This would have defeated the plan of his Providence, and superseded the necessity of a day of judgment. Nevertheless, he would frequently interpose to punish signal wickedness, or reward illustrious virtue. Thus, in the early ages of the world, he did often miraculously interpose, to let the nations understand that he took notice of their righteous or

unrighteous deeds ; that he had power to vindicate the honour of his laws ; and to make examples whenever it was requisite, for the correction and reformation of men. Miraculous interpositions were not intended to be permanent or perpetual ; yet the Providence of God was not to cease. Accordingly, he took care to inform us, that what in the first ages he had done visibly, and by miracles, he would do in the latter ages by the invisible direction of natural causes. The Scriptures are so full of this notion, that it would be endless to be particular. You may read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, where you will see all the powers of nature summoned as instruments in the hands of the Almighty, to execute the purposes of his will ;---where you behold them commissioned to favour the good with national prosperity, with domestic comforts, with safety from their enemies, with fruitful seasons, with a numerous offspring, and with an abundance of all blessings :--- commissioned to punish the wicked with national distresses, with indigence, with slavery, with destructions and molestations of every kind, by war, by famine, and by all sorts of diseases. From all which, the plain inference is this, that the most common and most familiar

events, are under the direction of God, and by him are used as instruments, either for the hurt or for the good of men.

How this particular Providence operates, may, in some degree, be conceived by us. Man, in his limited sphere, can take some direction of natural causes. You can direct the element of fire either to warm or to consume; the elements of air and water to cherish and to annoy: does not that power, then, in a more illustrious manner, belong to God? Is it not as easy for *Him*, think you, to give laws to the tempest, where to spend its force; to direct the meteor flying in the air, where to fall, and whom to consume? Are the elemental and subterraneous fires bound up? he can let them loose. Are they broken loose? he can collect them as in the hollow of his hand. And all this he performs without unhinging the general system, and without any visible tokens to us, that he is at all concerned, though, in truth, he is the effective agent. In like manner, we may comprehend, in some measure, how God may direct, not only the motions of the inanimate and passive part of the creation, but also the determinations of free agents, to answer the purposes of his Providence. 'The hearts of men are in

the hand of the Lord, as much as the rivers of water. This does not in the least destroy the freedom of human actions. Every one knows that the acts of free agents are determined by circumstances; and these circumstances are always in the hand of God. The dispositions and resolutions of men are apt to vary, according to the different turns or flow of their spirits, or their different situations in life, as to health or sickness, strength or weakness, joy or sorrow; and by the direction of these, God may raise up enemies or create friends, stir up war, or make peace. Take, as an instance, the history of Haman. That wicked man had long meditated the destruction of Mordecai the Jew, and rather than not satiate his vengeance upon him, would involve the whole Jewish nation in utter destruction. He at last obtained a decree, sentencing this whole people to the sword; and the day was fixed. In this crisis of their fate, how was the chosen nation to be delivered? Was God visibly and miraculously to interpose in favour of his own people? This he could have done; but he chose rather to act according to the ordinary train of second causes. He who giveth sleep to his beloved, withheld it from Ahasuerus, the monarch of

Persia. In order to pass the night, he called for the records of his reign. There he found it written, that Mordecai had detected a conspiracy formed against the life of the king, and that he had never been rewarded for it. By this single circumstance, a sudden reverse took place. Mordecai was advanced to honour and rewards; the villany of Haman was detected; the decree fatal to the Jews was revoked; and the nation of the Jews was saved from instant destruction. In like manner, in the history of Joseph, and other histories of the Old Testament, you see the most familiar events made instruments in the hand of God to effect the purposes of his will.

There is, then, a particular Providence. The arm of the Almighty, reaching from heaven to earth, is continually employed. All things are full of God. In the regions of the air; in the bowels of the earth; and in the chambers of the sea, his power is felt. Every event in life is under his direction and controul. Nothing is fortuitous or accidental. Let me caution you, however, against abusing this doctrine, by judging of the characters of persons from their outward circumstances. It is to be remembered, that the present life is not a state of recompence, but a state of trial;

consequently, men are not dealt with in outward dispensations according to their true character. The goods of Nature and Providence are distributed indiscriminately among mankind. The sun shines, the rain falls, upon the just and the unjust. It is a dangerous error, therefore, to judge of moral character from external condition in life. This was the error of Job's friends; this the foundation of the censures they cast against this excellent person, and for which they were reprov'd. The intention of the book of Job is, to shew the falseness of that supposition, by representing the incomprehensible Majesty of God, and the unsearchable nature of his works. Many instances in Scripture confirm the truth of this observation. Who, that saw David reduced to straits, wandering for refuge in the rocks and dens of the wilderness, would have believed him to be the prince whom God had chosen? Who, that beheld Nebuchadnezzar walking in his palace, surrounded with all the pomp and splendour of the east, would have believed him to be the object of Divine displeasure, and that the decree was gone out, that he was to be driven among the beasts? Who, that beheld our Lord in the form of a

servant, would have believed that he was the Master of Nature?

I am, *lastly*, to deduce the practical consequences from the doctrine, by shewing you the grounds of joy and consolation that it gives to the world.

In the *first* place, the doctrine of a superintending Providence yields us joy and consolation with respect to our lot in life. Many persons are accustomed to complain concerning their situation and circumstances in the world. Their desires and their fortune do not correspond; they think that they are misplaced by Providence, and look upon the lot of their neighbours as more eligible than their own. It is impossible, in the present system of things, that all men can be alike. Nature, through all her works, delights in variety. Though every flower is beautiful, and every star is glorious; yet one flower excelleth another in beauty, and one star exceedeth another in glory. There are also diversities in human life, and a beautiful subordination prevails amongst mankind. The Father of spirits hath communicated himself to men, in different degrees. But although all men cannot be alike; yet all men may enjoy a great mea-

sure of happiness. Every station in life possesses its comforts and advantages. In those comparisons you make of your life with that of others, when you would wish to exchange places with some of your more fortunate neighbours, do you not always find something in which you have the superiority? Is there not some talent of the mind, some quality of the heart, something where you think your strength lies, some one source of enjoyment which you would wish still to retain? Is not this the testimony of nature, that you are happier in that path of life, than you would be in another? Wherever you are placed by Providence, the station appointed is the post of honour. A general, in the day of battle, marshals his army according as he sees proper, and distributes the posts of danger and importance, according to the courage and the conduct of his soldiers. Your Commander knows your abilities better than you do yourselves: he prescribed to you the duty you have to execute; and he marked out the path in which you are to seek for honour and immortality. It is from your discharge of these offices assigned to you, that the happiness of your life, and the perfection of your character, are to arise. It is not from the sphere they hold in life, but from the

lustre they cast around them in that sphere, that men rank in the Divine estimation, and figure in the annals of eternity. If, with five talents, you gain five more, or if, even with one talent, you gain another, you are as praiseworthy as he who, with ten talents, gaineth other ten talents.

Further, as in a kingdom, every high-way leads to the capital; as in a circle, every line terminates in the centre; so, in the wide circle of nature, every line terminates in heaven; and every path in life conducts alike to the great city of God. The present state is intimately connected with the future; the life which we now lead, is an education for the life which is to come. If your mind were enlarged to comprehend all the connections and dependencies of things; if your eyes were opened to take in the whole of your immortal existence, you would then see and acknowledge, that Providence had assigned to you the very station you would have wished to fill,—the very part you would have chosen to act. Trusting, therefore, in that God who presides over the universe; assured of that wisdom and goodness which direct the whole train of the Divine administration, each of us may express our joy in the words of the Psalmist: “The lines have fal-

“ len to me in pleasant places ; I have a good-ly heritage : The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance ; the Lord will command the blessing, even life for ever more.”

In the *second* place, this doctrine will yield us consolation during the afflictions which we meet with in life. If we believed that the universe was a state of anarchy, confusion, and uproar, that the Governor of the world was a cruel and malignant being, who made sport of human misery, and took pleasure in punishing his unhappy creatures ; such a thought would overwhelm the mind ; it would turn the gloom of adversity into the shadow of death, and mingle poison in the cup of bitterness which we are doomed to drink. But the Scriptures inform us, that the dark dispensations of Providence are part of that plan which has the good of the world for its object ; take their rise from the goodness of our Father in heaven ; are intended for the reformation and final blessedness of his children. The same word of life which says, “ Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and makest approach unto thee,” says also, “ Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.” So far from being marks of the Divine wrath, the afflictions of life are tokens of the Divine love.

While heedless and unthinking we go astray, God interests himself in our favour, and sends these his messengers to bring us to himself. It is but a narrow and imperfect view we take of afflictions, when we consider them only as trials. They are not so much intended for the trial as for the cultivation of virtue. They are sent by Providence, to mortify your unruly passions ; to wean you from the world ; to prepare you for heaven : They are sent for the improvement of your nature ; for the increase of your graces, and for the superabounding of your joy to all eternity. When under the afflicting hand of Heaven, therefore, you are standing a candidate for immortality ; you are singled out by Providence to exert the part of a Christian, and you are called forth to exhibit to the world a pattern of the suffering virtues. He is but a novice in the school of Christ who has not learned to suffer. The best affections of the heart, the noblest graces of the soul, the highest virtues of life, the offering that is most acceptable to Heaven, arise from the proper improvement of adversity. The blessed above, whom the prophet saw arrayed in white before the throne, came out of great tribulation ; the blessed above, whom he heard singing the song of Moses and

the Lamb, learned the first notes of it on the bed of sorrow.

Such is the intention of the afflictions which Providence sends, and even under these afflictions God is with his people. You are ever under the hand of a merciful Creator, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men: He knoweth your frame; he remembereth that you are but dust; he will afflict you no further than you are able to bear; and as your days are, he hath promised that your strength shall be. Nay, in all your afflictions he is present with you, and the hand that bruised you binds up the wound. Let not then your hearts be troubled. Bear up under the pressure of woe. Rejoice because the Lord reigneth, and exult in the language of the prophet: "Although
" the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be
" found in the vine; though the labour of the
" olive should fail, and the field should yield
" no meat; though the flocks should be cut
" off from the fold, and there shall be no herd
" in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
" I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Thirdly, With respect to the appearances of moral evil and disorder, it is afflicting to the mind to behold disorder in the universe of

God ; bad men often exalted, while the good man's lot is bitterness and pain ; virtue depressed, and vice triumphant. He who caused light to arise out of darkness, and order and beauty to spring from chaos and confusion, can correct these irregularities. He not only restrains, and says, " Hitherto, and no further : " He also over-rules and makes the wrath of men to praise him. Hear how he gives commission, and sends Sennacherib against Israel, as a general sends a weapon of war. " O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath, to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so ; " that is, neither doth his heart think that he is a mere instrument in the hand of God. David was raised to the throne of Israel by those steps which his foes devised against him. The enemy of mankind seducing our first parents, was the means of their being elevated to a greater degree of happiness and glory.

Lastly, With respect to our departure from this world, and entering upon a new state of being : We know that the time is appointed when dust shall return unto dust, and the

spirit unto God who gave it. But it is awful, it is alarming to nature, to call up the hour when the union between soul and body shall be dissolved; when our connection with all that we held dear in life shall be broken off; when we shall enter upon a new state of existence, and become inhabitants of the world unknown. But even then the providence of God will give us comfort. The Lord reigneth king for ever and ever. The dominions of the dead are part of his kingdom; time and eternity, the world that now is, and the world that is to come, confess him for their Lord. When thou goest through the dark valley, he will go with thee: In the hour of dissolving nature, he will support thy spirit. Thou canst not go but where God is. Around thee is infinite love, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms.

SERMON IX.

ON A LIFE OF PROGRESSIVE VIRTUE.

PROVERBS iv. 18.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

HUMAN life has been often compared to a journey, for this, as well as for other reasons, that we are always making progress in our way. In whatever path we set out, there is no standing still. Evil men wax worse and worse: the corruptions of their nature gather strength: the vices which they have contracted grow into habit; the evil principle is for ever on the increase, till, having attained the ascendant over the whole man, it subjects him entirely to its own power, the willing and

obedient servant of sin. Good men, on the other hand, make advances in the paths of righteousness. The grace of God, which is given unto them, lies not dormant. The better mind with which they are endowed, incites them to virtue: the new nature which they have put on, pants after perfection. They give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue temperance, and to temperance brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, until, having abounded in every good work, they perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Such a life is here called the *path of the just*. By the just in Scripture, are not meant those who merely abstain from doing unjust and injurious things to their neighbours. The just man is he who possesses that sincerity of heart, and that integrity of the whole life which God requires of man.

The life of such a man is here compared to the light of the morning. Nothing in nature is more lovely than the light. When the Spirit began to move upon the face of the deep, light was the first effect of his creating power; and when the six days' work was finished, light collected and centred in the sun, continued to be the grandest and most beautiful work of nature; so grand and beau-

tiful, that among many of the heathen nations it was worshipped as the visible divinity of the world. What light is to the face of external nature, the beauty of holiness is to the soul. It is the brightest ornament of an immortal spirit; it throws a glory over all the faculties of man; and forms that robe of beauty with which *they* shine, who walk in *white* before the throne of God.

But it is chiefly on account of its progressive nature, that the path of the just is here compared to the shining light. In order to illustrate this, I shall, in the *first* place, shew you how we shall know if we have made progress in the paths of righteousness. *Secondly*, give you some directions how to make further progress. *Thirdly*, exhort you to a life of progressive virtue.

I am first, then, to shew how we shall know if we have made progress in the paths of righteousness.

In the *first* place, Let me ask you, are you sensible of your faults and imperfections? The first indication of wisdom is to confess our ignorance, and the first step to virtue is to be sensible of our own imperfections. The novice in science is puffed up with his early

discoveries ; when the first ray of wisdom is let in upon his mind, he thinks that by it he can see and know all things : deeper views and maturer reflections convince him how little he knows. In like manner, he knows little of religion, and has been but a short time in the school of Christ, who is blind to his own imperfections. Our fall from innocence was by pride, and we must rise by humility.—“ He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” is the doctrine which our Lord delivered upon all occasions. Till we feel our own weakness, we can never be strong in the Lord ; we never can rise in the Divine sight, till we sink in our own estimation. We often meet with persons in life, who talk very strangely upon this subject. They tell us that they are as good as ever they expect to be ; that in looking back upon their past life, they see nothing done which they would wish undone ; and that if they were to begin life anew, they would act precisely as they have acted. Concerning such persons, we may safely pronounce that they have made but little progress in the path of the just. They are strangers to their own hearts, and have not proper ideas of the Divine law. They measure the law of God by the laws of men, and think that

if their external conduct is blameless, they have acted their part well: not considering that the law of God extends to the heart, and punishes for the omissions of duty as well as for the commission of sin. Such errors the Pharisees taught of old; and such notions of duty Paul had imbibed before his conversion to Christianity. “After the straitest sect of “our religion,” says he, “I lived a Pharisee; “touching the law, blameless.—I was alive “without the law once:” That is, when I did not know the law in its true sense, I thought myself alive and a saint. The Pharisaical doctrines in which he had been educated, taught him that God required no more than a conformity of the external behaviour to the letter of the law. But when he discovered that the Divine law extended to the heart: when thus in its power, the commandment came: “sin revived and I died;” then I saw myself to be a sinner, and died to the self-conceit which I formerly entertained.

Secondly, Let me ask you what is the strength of your attachment to the cause of righteousness? As you are sensible of your faults, and have seen the deformity of sin, are you enamoured with the beauty of holiness? Do you desire nothing more earnestly than to

put on the graces of the Gospel, and be conformed to the image of God? Men will never imitate what they do not love; if then you are not lovers of goodness and virtue, you never will be good and virtuous. So long as they keep to generals, men may easily deceive themselves. Let us then come to particulars, and let me ask you with what regard and estimation you view those patterns of piety which you see exhibited in life. Are the good and the righteous, to you the *excellent ones* of the earth? The wise do not proportion their respect to men according to the rank they hold, or the name they bear in the world. It is the character of the just man, as drawn in Scripture, that he scorneth the vile, however exalted, and honoureth them that fear the Lord, however depressed. Do you then scorn the vile man, with all his attributes of rank and wealth and power? Do you despise the rich, the noble, the right honourable villain, and choose for your companion the righteous man, although he has not where to lay his head? Could you sit down with Virtue in her cell, contented with her homely fare, with her poor abode, and look down with a generous contempt upon the splendid roof,

where luxury and guilt lead on the festive hours? When you behold the wicked great in power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree, does your heart revolt from giving him that homage which the favours of Mammon never fail to extort from the venal multitude, and can you say, in the sincerity of your heart, “I would not exchange the peace of my own mind for the wealth of the world? What- ever thou art pleased to give, Father Almighty, may I possess it with honour: The world approaches to thine altar, and bends before the throne for temporal blessings; the prayer of my heart is, *Lord, lift up on me the light of thy countenance.*”

Thirdly, Let me ask you, are your resolutions as firm, and your application as vigorous now as when you first set out in the spiritual life? There are times in which all men are serious,—in which the most obdurate minds feel impressions of religion, and in which persons of the most abandoned character form resolutions of amendment. With all the zeal of new converts, they set about a thorough reformation. They wonder how they have been so long blind to their true interest; they mourn over the time that they have lost in vain, or in sinful pursuits, and now seem fully deter-

mined to follow religion as the one thing needful. With many, this course continues not long; the first new object engages their attention, and turns them aside from the path of the just. But true religion, my friends, does not consist in such fits and starts of devotion; in random resolutions made in the fervour of zeal; in the wavering, desultory, and inconsistent conduct which marks the character of multitudes in the world. He alone is a good man who perseveres in goodness. When the vernal year begins, and the shower of summer descends, all nature bursts into vegetable life; the noxious weeds rival the trees among which they grow; but these sudden growths as suddenly disappear; while favoured by the influences of heaven, the trees rise to their full stature, and bring forth their fruit in season. Are you then as much in earnest now, as when your first love to God began to bring forth the fruits of righteousness? Without this undiminished ardour; without these unremitting efforts, you will never run the race set before you, so as to finish your course with joy. At the same time, I must take notice, that as you advance in years, all the passions will gradually cool. When, therefore, the fervour of youth has subsided, and

mature age hath given a sober cast to the temper, you will not feel that degree of ardour in your devotions which you experienced in your early years. Many serious persons have been alarmed at this appearance, not considering that it was the effect of their constitution, and not a mark of apostacy from God. But your devotion will continue as sincere, though not so inflamed, as before, and religion will be as effectual as ever in the regulation of your life ; like a mighty river, before it terminates its course in the ocean, it rolls with greater calmness, but at the same time with a greater strength, than when it arose from its source.

Fourthly, Another mark of increasing grace, is when you obey the Divine commandments from affection and love. They who, from the fear of hell, put on a form of religion for a time, find it to be a hard and a painful service. They are out of their place, when they strike into the path of the just ; they consider religion as a heavy burden, which they would not bear but from necessity, and look upon the duties of the Christian life as so many tasks which they have to perform. Whoever entertains such notions of religion, will not rise to high attainments in righteousness. The

passions and affections are the powerful springs of action in the soul ; and unless these are put in motion, the machine will move heavily along. He alone will make progress in the path of the just, who is drawn by the cords of love. Pleasant are the labours of love ; and sweet is the precept when the duty pleases. The yoke is easy, and the burden light, when the heart goes along. The Christian is not a slave who obeys from compulsion, or a servant who works for hire ; he is a son who acts from filial affection, and is happiest when he obeys. The love of Christ alone constraineth him. The beauty of holiness allureth him ; though rewards and punishments were set aside, he would follow religion and virtue for their own sake, and do his duty, because therein he found his happiness. Do you then, my friends, feel this affection, this passion for righteousness ? Can you say with the Psalmist, “ How
“ do I love thy laws, O Lord ? They are my
“ meditation all the day. More to be desired
“ they are than gold, than much fine gold ;
“ sweeter than honey from the honey-comb.”

I now come to the *second* thing proposed, to give you some directions how to make further progress in the path of the just.

In the *first* place, then, in order to this, make a serious business of a holy life. There are many persons in the world who give a sanction to piety by their example, but who feel very little of its power. They think religion an exceedingly decent thing; they see it patronised by all wise men, and they know it to be necessary for the purposes of society. For these reasons they follow the faith, and conform to the usages of their fathers; they pay a proper respect to the institutions of the Church; and they attend upon the ordinances of Divine worship with all the marks of external reverence. So far their conduct is not only decent, but laudable. But if they go no farther than this; if they confine their sanctity to these walls; if they think that they have done their duty, when they have complied with the external ceremonies of the Church, and have adopted this as the easiest and most compendious method of being religious; the religion of such persons is rather a kind of good manners than real devotion. The true Christian will not be deficient in his attention to the externals of religion: but he will not rest there; he will attend upon the ordinances of public worship, not because it is the custom of the

country, but because it is his duty to God; and he will observe the institutions of Christianity, not from complaisance to established usages, but from a sincere desire of making progress in righteousness. We must make piety more than a matter of form; we must make a study of a holy life, in order to advance from strength to strength, in the ways of the Lord: it is with religion, my friends, as with the other pursuits of life. In those arts where success depends upon genius and industry, unless a man have an enthusiasm for his own profession, unless he follow it from choice, and prefer it to all others, he will never rise to eminence and fame. In like manner, unless a man have an attachment of the heart to the cause of virtue; unless he be fervent in spirit to serve the Lord; unless he prefer a good conscience to every thing upon earth, he will never obtain that crown of glory which is reserved for the righteous. In his journey through life, the pilgrim may turn aside to behold a beautiful scene, or enjoy a passing delight; but he will never forget that his chief object is his journey to the promised land.

In order to attain eminence in the arts just mentioned, the candidate devotes his best and

happiest years ; lives laborious days and restless nights ; makes a sacrifice of ease, and health, and social joy ; and at last consoles himself by the triumphant prospect of lying down upon the bed of fame, and living to future ages. If, then, studies of inferior importance become such a serious concern ; if the desire of an imaginary immortality has such power over the mind ; will this noblest of studies, the science of being good, have no attractions for the soul ? Will this passion for a real immortality have no power over the heart ? Under the influence of this principle, will not every one who has the faith of a Christian, or the feelings of a man, join with the Apostle ? “ Yea, doubtless, I count all things
“ but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge
“ of Christ Jesus my Lord,—that I may know
“ him, and the power of his resurrection and
“ the fellowship of his sufferings, being made
“ conformable to his death, if by any means
“ I may attain to the resurrection of the
“ dead.” Under the influence of these principles, will not every person who desires to make advances in the path of the just, adopt also the resolution of Job, “ While my breath
“ is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my
“ nostrils, my lips shall not speak wicked-

“ness, nor my tongue utter deceit ; till I die
“ I will not remove mine integrity from me :
“ my righteousness I hold fast, and will not
“ let it go ; my heart shall not reproach me
“ so long as I live.”

In the *second* place, in order to make progress in the path of the just, you must never rest satisfied with any degrees of holiness or virtue which you attain. The law of the spiritual life is to aim at perfection : the intention of Christianity is that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. “ As he who hath called you is holy, be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Absolutely perfect, indeed, we can never become in this life ; but we must be always aspiring and endeavouring after perfection. There is no end of your journey till you come to heaven ; there is no place by the way where you are to expect a termination from labour, or a period of repose. It is not uncommon to hear persons express themselves in terms of great indifference about the higher attainments in sanctity and virtue. They seem to be much afraid of being better than their neighbours ; they have no ambition they say to be saints ; they do not desire to rank among the very best ; and they would be content with the

lowest place in heaven. Happy, beyond all controversy, shall he be, who shall obtain a place, though the lowest, in the heavenly mansions: but for men to mark out to themselves boundaries in the path of virtue, beyond which they are resolved not to go; for men, with impious presumption, to cut out to themselves just such a portion of duty as they think will entitle them to an inestimable reward; this is undervaluing the pearl of great price; it is sacrificing the riches of the Divine goodness to their own indolence; it is doing despite to that Spirit of grace which might have been a powerful principle of advancing holiness in the heart. Had he to whom, in the parable, ten talents were given, gained no more than he to whom five were given, can you think that he would have obtained the title, and received the reward of a good and faithful servant? No; but of a slothful and unprofitable one, who had not improved aright the deposite of his Master. What saith the Apostle upon this subject? “Brethren, I count “not myself to have apprehended;” to have already attained perfection; “but this one “thing I do; forgetting the things which are “behind, and reaching forth unto those things “which are before, I press toward the mark,

“ for the prize of the high calling of God in
“ Christ Jesus.”

“ Forgetting the things that are behind,” saith the apostle. What things had this Apostle to forget? He had to forget his labours in the course of his apostolical functions, his unwearied zeal, his unremitting industry in discharging the trust committed to him; his perilous journeys and voyages over the greatest part of the known world, to propagate the religion of Jesus; the many noted persons he converted by his ministry; the many flourishing churches he erected in the course of his travels; the many famous nations he brought over to the Christian faith;—he had to forget what of all things the best men pride themselves most in, the persecutions which he suffered for the sake of the Lord, the imprisonments which he endured, the wounds which he received, and the stripes which he bore as a witness of truth, and a preacher of righteousness;—he had to forget that he was not behind the very chiefest Apostles; the many miracles which he wrought; the frequent revelations that were made to him;—he had to forget that, in the vision of God, he had ascended into the third heaven, and was admitted to scenes, the beauties and the joys of

which, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and the heart of man cannot conceive. If, notwithstanding such a high degree of grace and favour; if, after a life of such extraordinary piety; this apostle forgot the things which were behind, and reaching forth to the things which were before, pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; where is the man who can pretend to say, “I am already as perfect as I can ever expect to be?” Where is the man who is entitled to set a boundary to himself in the path of righteousness, saying, “Hitherto shall I go, but no further?”

In the *third* place, in order to make progress in the path of the just, be always employed in the improvement of your souls. There is no standing still in the path to heaven. Your evil habits, those cords that hold you in captivity to sin, you may not perhaps be able to cast away at once; but through the divine grace, you will insensibly weaken, and at last break them asunder. Your inclinations that may have taken a wrong bent, you may counteract, and at last recover to their original rectitude. Where nature favours a particular exertion, or habit has formed you to

a particular virtue, the one you may cherish, the other you may cultivate; upon both the fruits of righteousness will grow. Afterwards, be still attending to the culture of the soul, and meditating improvements, by calling forth graces that have not yet made their appearance, and bringing forward to perfection those that have. Thus will your minds resemble those trees, in which, at one and the same time, we behold some fruits arrived at full maturity; some half advanced, and others just formed in the opening blossom. By cultivating these graces in the soul, you will not only have an earnest, but also an image of heaven. The trees which thus grow up by the rivers of water; which bring forth their fruit in their season, and whose leaves continue ever green, shall be transplanted to happier climes to adorn the paradise of God.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, in order to make your endeavours effectual, you must abound in prayer to God for the assistance of his holy spirit. “ No man becomes good
“ without the Divine influence. No man can
“ rise above the infirmities of nature unless
“ aided by God. He inspires great and noble
“ purposes. In every good man God resides.
“ The strength which renders a man superior to

“ all those things which the people either hope
“ or dread, descends from him. So lofty a
“ structure cannot stand unsupported by the
“ Divinity.” These, my friends, are the words
of a heathen, and express a doctrine equally
agreeable to reason and to revelation. In con-
sequence of our corrupted nature, we are un-
able of ourselves to produce the virtues and
graces of the Divine life. But we are not left
without a remedy. In the gospel of Jesus
Christ, aids are promised from above, to re-
pair the ruins of our nature, and to restore
the powers of the soul ; God hath not for-
saken the earth : as at the first of days, the
Divine Spirit is still moving over the world
to produce life. The Lord is ever nigh to
them who call upon him in the sincerity of
their heart. While we strive against sin, we
may safely expect that the Divinity will strive
with us, and impart that strength and power
which will at last make us more than con-
querors. As he who continues in wicked de-
vices shall be sure to find Satan standing at
his right hand, so he who begins a good life
shall find God befriending him with secret
aid. He will assist the spirit that is strug-
gling to break loose from the bonds of its cap-
tivity ; he will aid the flight of the soul that

is taking wing to the celestial mansions ; he will support our feeble frame under the trials and conflicts to which we are appointed, and lead us on from grace to grace, till we appear in Zion above. “ They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up as on eagle’s wings ; they shall run and not be weary ; they shall walk and not be faint.”

I come now to the *last* thing proposed, to exhort you to a life of progressive virtue.

In the *first* place, then, it is your duty to make progress in the ways of righteousness. In your sanctification, you are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. It is not enough that you continue steadfast and immoveable ; you must also abound in the work of the Lord, if you expect your labours to be attended with success. It is not sufficient that you *continue* in well-doing ; you must also grow in grace, and increase with all the increase of God. This progressive nature of righteousness is implied in all the figures and images by which a good life is represented in Sacred Scripture. It is compared to the least of all seeds, which waxes to a great tree, and spreads out its branches

branches, and fills the earth. It is compared to the morning light, at first faintly dawning over the mountains, by degrees enlightening the face of the earth, ascending higher and higher in the heavens, and shining more and more unto the perfect day. We are said to be here at the school of Christ ; and in order to attain the character of good disciples, we must not only retain what we have acquired, but also add to the acquisitions we have made. The Christian life is represented as a warfare, and in this warfare we shall never gain the victory, unless we not only maintain the ground we have got, but also gain upon the foe. It is represented as a race set before us, and in running it we must continually press forward, or we shall never gain the prize. Every degree of grace which you receive, and every pitch of virtue to which you attain, is a talent for which you are accountable ; a talent, which if you only retain, but not improve, you will receive the doom of a slothful and wicked servant, and be cast into outer darkness. The Christian life is a life of continued exertion. At every stage in our pilgrimage on earth, new scenes will open ; new situations will present themselves ; and new paths of glory will be struck out. The sphere of action

varies continually. We have, one while, to support adversity; another while, to adorn prosperity; sometimes to approve ourselves to God in solitude; at other times, to cause our light shine before men in society. Different situations in the world, and different periods of life, require the exercise of different virtues. What is accepted from the young soldier will not be excused in the veteran; what is an “ornament of grace” to the youthful brow, will not be a “crown of glory” to the hoary head.

Secondly, Let me exhort you to this life of progressive virtue, from the pleasing consideration that you will be successful in the attempt. In the pursuit of human honours and rewards, the successful candidates are few. In a race many run, but one only gains the prize. But here all who run may obtain. In the career of human glory, time and chance happen unto all, and many are disappointed. “The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; nor riches to men of understanding; nor favour to men of skill.” There is a concurrence of circumstances required to raise a man to reputation; and when these circumstances concur, if the moment of opportunity be not embraced, the

field of glory may be lost for ever. In human life there is a favourable hour which never returns, and a call to fame which is repeated no more: even in its best estate, men ought to lay their account with disappointment and vexation. What thou hast set thy heart upon from thy youth; what has been the aim of all thy labours; what has been the object of thy whole life,—accident, artifice, ignorance, villany, caprice, may give to another whom thou knowest not. When thy ambition is all on fire: in the utmost ardour of expectation, in the very moment when thou stretchest out thy hand to grasp the prize, fortune may snatch it from thy reach for ever. Nay, thou mayst have the mortification to see others rise upon thy ruins, to see thyself made a step to the ambition of thy rival, and thy endeavours rendered the means of advancing him to the top of the wheel, while thou continuest low.

In the pursuits of ambition or avarice, you may be disappointed; but if by a progressive state of righteousness, you seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, I, in the name of God, assure you of success. Never was the gate of mercy shut against the true penitent; never was the prayer of the faithful rejected in the tem-

ple of Heaven; never did the incense of a good life ascend without acceptance on high. Liberal and unrestricted is the Divine benignity : free to all the fountain flows. There is no angel with a flaming sword to keep you from the tree of life. At this moment of time there is a voice from Heaven calling to you, " Come up hither." And if you are obedient to the call, God assists you with the aids of his Spirit ; he lifts up the hands that hang down ; he strengthens the feeble knees, and perfects his strength in your weakness. You are not left alone to climb the arduous ascent. God is with you, who never suffers the spirit which rests on him to fail ; nor the man who seeks his favour to seek it in vain. Your success in the path of the just will not only be pleasing to yourselves, but also to all around you. In the struggles of human ambition, the triumph of one arises upon the sorrows of another ; many are disappointed when one obtains the prize. But in the path of the just, there is emulation without envy, triumph without disappointment. The success of one increases the happiness of all. The influence of such an event is not confined to the earth : it is communicated to all good beings ; it adds to the harmony of the Heavens ; and is the

occasion of new hosannahs among the innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who rejoice over the sinner that repenteth.

Thirdly, Let me exhort you to make advances in the path of righteousness, from the beauty and the pleasantness of such a progress. Whatever difficulties may have attended your first entrance upon the path of the just, they will vanish by degrees; the steepness of the mountain will lessen as you ascend; the path in which you have been accustomed to walk will grow more and more beautiful; and the celestial mansions to which you tend, will brighten with new splendour, the nearer that you approach them. In other affairs, continued exertion may occasion lassitude and fatigue. Labour may be carried to such an excess as to debilitate the body. The pursuits of knowledge may be carried so far as to impair the mind; but neither the organs of the body, nor the faculties of the soul, can be endangered by the practice of religion. On the contrary, this practice strengthens the powers of action. Adding virtue to virtue, is adding strength to strength; and the greater acquisitions we make, we are enabled to make still greater. How pleasant will it be to mark the soul thus

moving forward in the brightness of its course! In the spring, who does not love to mark the progress of nature; the flower unfolding into beauty, the fruit coming forward to maturity, the fields advancing to the pride of harvest, and the months revolving into the perfect year? Who does not love in the human species, to observe the progress to maturity; the infant by degrees growing up to man; the young idea beginning to shoot, and the embryo character beginning to unfold? But if these things affect us with delight; if the prospect of external nature in its progress; if the flower, unfolding into beauty; if the fruit coming forward to maturity; if the infant by degrees growing up to man, and the embryo character beginning to unfold, affect us with pleasurable sensations, how much greater delight will it afford to observe the progress of this new creation, the growth of the soul in the graces of the divine life, good resolutions ripening into good actions, good actions leading to confirmed habits of virtue, and the new nature advancing from the first lineaments of virtue to the full beauty of holiness! These are pleasures that time will not take away. While the animal spirits fail, and the joys which depend upon the liveliness of the pas-

sions decline with years, the solid comforts of a holy life, the delights of virtue and a good conscience, will be a new source of happiness in old age, and have a charm for the end of life. As the stream flows pleasantest when it approaches the ocean; as the flowers send up their sweet odours at the close of the day; as the sun appears with greatest beauty in his going down; so at the end of his career, the virtues and graces of a good man's life come before him with the most blessed remembrance, and impart a joy which he never felt before. Over all the monuments of life, religion scatters her favours, but reserves her best, her choicest, her divinest blessings for the last hour.

In the *last* place, Let me exhort you to this progressive state of virtue, from the pleasant consideration that it has no period. There are limits and boundaries set to all human affairs. There is an ultimate point in the progress, beyond which they never go, and from which they return in a contrary direction. The flower blossoms but to fade, and all terrestrial glory shines to disappear. Human life has its decline as well as its maturity; from a certain period the external senses begin to decay, and the faculties of the mind to be impaired, till dust returns unto dust. Na-

tions have their day. States and kingdoms are mortal like their founders. When they have arrived at the zenith of their glory, from that moment they begin to decline; the bright day is succeeded by a long night of darkness, ignorance, and barbarity. But, in the progress of the mind to intellectual and moral perfection, there is no period set. Beyond these heavens the perfection and happiness of the just is carrying on;—is carrying on, but shall never come to a close. God shall behold his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes; for ever drawing nearer to himself, yet still infinitely distant from the fountain of all goodness. There is not in religion a more joyful and triumphant consideration than this perpetual progress which the soul makes to the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at its ultimate period. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, presents to us a conception so elevating and astonishing, as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified spirit as going on from strength to strength; adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; making approaches to goodness which is infinite; for ever adorning the Heavens with new beauties, and brighten-

ing in the splendours of moral glory through all the ages of eternity,—has something in it so transcendent and ineffable, as to satisfy the most unbounded ambition of an immortal spirit. Christian! does not thy heart glow at the thought, that there is a time marked out in the annals of Heaven, when thou shalt be what the angels now are; when thou shalt shine with that glory in which principalities and powers now appear; and when, in the full communion of the Most High, thou shalt see Him as he is?

The oak, whose top ascends into the heavens, and which covers the mountains with its shade, was once an acorn, contemptible to the sight; the philosopher, whose views extend from one end of nature to the other, was once a speechless infant hanging at the breast; the glorified spirits who now stand nearest to the throne of God, were once like you. To you as to them the heavens are open; the way is marked out; the reward is prepared. On what you do, on what you now do, all depends.

SERMON X.

ON THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS.

MATTHEW v. 5.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

THEY mistake the nature of the Christian religion very much, who consider it as separate and detached from the commerce of the world. Instead of forming a distinct profession, it is intimately connected with life; it respects men as acting in society, and contains regulations for their conduct and behaviour in such a state. It takes in the whole of human life, and is intended to influence us when we are in the house, and in the field, as well as when we are in the church or in the closet. It instructs

men in their duty to their neighbours, as well as in their duty to God: It is our companion in the scene of business as well as in the House of Prayer; and while it inculcates the weightier matters of the law, faith, judgment, and mercy, it neglects not the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. All that refinement which polishes the mind; all that gentleness of manners which sweetens the intercourse of human society, which political philosophers consider as the effects of wise legislation and good government; all the virtues of domestic life, are lessons which are taught in the Christian school. The wisdom that cometh from above is "gentle." The fruit of the Spirit is "meekness." As the sun, although he regulates the seasons, leads on the year, and dispenses light and life to all the planetary worlds, yet disdains not to raise and to beautify the flower which opens in his beam: so the Christian religion, though chiefly intended to teach us the knowledge of salvation, and be our guide to happiness on high, yet also regulates our conversation in the world, extends its benign influence to the circle of society, and diffuses its blessed fruits in the path of domestic life.

In farther treating upon this subject, I shall

in the *first* place, describe to you the character of meekness which is here recommended ; and, in the *second* place, shew you the happiness with which it is attended. I am, in the *first* place, then, to describe to you the character of meekness which is here recommended.

Every virtue, whether of natural or revealed religion, is situated between some vices or defects, which, though essentially different, yet bear some resemblance to the virtue they counterfeit ; on account of which resemblance they obtain its name, and impose upon those who labour under the want of discernment. This meekness which is here recommended, is not at all the same with that courtesy of manners which is learned in the school of the world. This is but a superficial accomplishment, and often proceeds from a hollowness of heart. It is also quite different from constitutional facility, that undeciding state of the mind which easily bends to every proposal ; that is a weakness, and not a virtue. Neither does it at all resemble that tame and passive temper which patiently bears insults and submits to injuries ; that is a want of spirit, and argues a cowardly mind. This

meeKness is a Christian grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit: it is a stream from the fountain of all excellence. A good temper, a good education, and just views of religion, must concur in forming this blessed state of the mind. It becomes a principle which influences the whole life. Though consistent in all its operations with boldness and with spirit, yet its chief characteristics are goodness, and gentleness, and long-suffering. It looks with candour upon all; often condescends to the prejudices of the weak, and often forgives the errors of the foolish.

But to give you a more particular view of it, we may place it in three capital lights, as it respects our general behaviour, our conduct to our enemies, and our conduct to our friends.

With respect to his general behaviour, the meek man looks upon all his neighbours with a candid eye. The two great maxims on which he proceeds, are, not to give offence, and not to take offence. He enters not with the keenness of passion into the contentions of violent men: he keeps aloof from the contagion of party-madness, and feels not the little passions which agitate little minds. He wishes, and he studies to allay the angry pas-

sions which agitate little minds. He wishes, and he studies to allay the angry passions of the contending; to moderate the fierceness of the implacable; to reconcile his neighbours to one another; and, as far as lies in his power, to make all mankind one great family of friends. He will not indeed descend one step from the dignity of his character; nor will he sacrifice the dictates of his own conscience to any consideration whatever. But those points of obstinacy, which the world are apt to call points of honour, he will freely and cheerfully give up for the good of society. He loves to live in peace with all mankind, but this desire, too, has its limits. He will keep no terms with those who keep no terms with virtue. A villain, of whatever station, of whatever religious profession, he detests as an abomination. Thus you see that though softness, and gentleness, and forbearance, and long-suffering are the chief characteristics of this virtue, yet, at the same time, it is very consistent with exertions of spirit. When it acts, it acts with vigour and decision. Moses, who has the testimony of the Divine Spirit, that he was the meekest man upon the face of the earth, yet when occasion presented itself, felt the influence of an elevated temper, and

slew the Egyptian who was wounding his countryman. A meeker than Moses, even our Lord himself, though gentle and beneficent to all the sons of men, yet when the worldly-minded Jews profaned the temple, he was moved with just indignation, and drove the impious from the House of God. Nothing is often more calm and serene than the face of the heavens ; but when guilt provokes the vengeance of the Most High, *forth comes the thunder* to blast the devoted head.

Such is the influence of meekness on our general behaviour. It ought also to regulate our conduct to our enemies. There is no principle which more strongly operates in human nature than the law of retaliation. This appears from the laws of all nations in the early state, which always ordained a punishment similar to the offence; eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life. This appears also from our own feelings ; when an injury is done us, we naturally long for revenge. Our heart tells us, that the person offending ought to suffer for the offence, and that the hand of him who was injured must return the blow. Such are the dictates of the natural temper. But pursue this principle to its full extent, and you will see where it will end. One

man commits an action which is injurious to you ; you feel yourself aggrieved, and seek revenge. If you then retaliate upon him, he thinks he has received a new injury, which he also seeks to revenge ; and thus a foundation is laid for reciprocal animosities without end. Did this principle and this practice become general, the earth would be a field of battle, life would be a scene of bloodshed, and hostilities would be immortal. Legislative wisdom hath provided a remedy for these disorders, and for this havoc which would be made of the human species. The right of private vengeance, which every man is born with, by common consent, and for the public good, is resigned into the hands of the civil magistrate. But there are many things which come not under the jurisdiction of the laws, and the cognisance of the magistrate, which tend to disturb the public peace, and set mankind at variance. Private animosities and little quarrels often rise, which might be productive of great disorder and detriment to society. Here, therefore, where legislative wisdom fails, religion steps in and checks the desire of vengeance, by enjoining that meekness of spirit which disposes not to retaliate but to forgive. He, therefore, who possesses

this spirit, will not answer a fool according to his folly. He will not depart from his usual maxims of conduct, because another has behaved improperly. Because his neighbour has been guilty of one piece of folly, he will not reckon that an inducement for him to be guilty of another. He will regulate his conduct by that standard of virtue which is within, and not by the behaviour of those around him. Accordingly, instead of harbouring animosities against those who have done him ill offices, he will be disposed to return good for evil: remembering that our Lord adds at the conclusion of this chapter, “I say unto you, love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

This meekness ought also to appear in our conduct towards our friends. In the present state of things, where human nature is so frail, where the very best have their weak side, and where so many events happen, which give occasion to the passions of men to shew themselves, there is great scope for the exercise of meekness and moderation. The faults of mankind, in general, present a most

unpleasant spectacle ; but the failings of those we love, of those on whom we have conferred obligations, are apt to fill us with disgust and aversion. If it had been an enemy who had done this, I could have borne it. I would have expected no better ; but thou, O my familiar friend, how shall I forgive thee ? Such, at the time, is the language of nature. But better views, and more mature reflection, will teach us to throw a veil over those infirmities which are inseparable from the best natures, and to frame an excuse for those errors, which proceed not from a bad heart.

In all these instances of meekness, Jesus of Nazareth left us an example, that we should follow his steps. In his general behaviour, he was meek and lowly, and condescending. He went about doing good, and received testimony from his enemies, that “ he did all things well.” To the errors of his friends he was mild and gentle. When, moved by false zeal, in which they are still followed by many, who have the assurance to call themselves his disciples, they besought him to cause fire to descend from heaven, and consume a city, which believed not in his doctrines ; all the rebuke he administered was, “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; the

“ Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” When he suffered his agony in the garden, in the hour and in the power of darkness, when he besought his disciples to watch with him in this dreadful scene, and when, instead of giving him comfort, they sunk unconcerned into sleep; instead of reproving them with severity, as their conduct deserved, he himself sought for an excuse for them: “ The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Though he was the friend of all mankind, yet he had enemies who sought his life. “ I have done,” said he, “ many good deeds among you, for which of these do you stone me?” And when, after persecuting him in his life, they brought him to the accursed death of the cross, his last words were, “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Go thou! and do likewise.

The *second* thing proposed was, to shew the happiness annexed to this character, expressed here by “ inheriting the earth.” The meek are not indeed always to be great and opulent. Happiness, God be praised, is not annexed, and is not confined, to the superior stations of life. There is a great difference

between possessing the good things of life and enjoying them. Whatever be his rank in life, the meek man bids the fairest chance for enjoying its advantages. A proud and passionate man puts his happiness in the power of every fool he meets with. A failure in duty or affection from a friend, want of respect from a dependent, and a thousand little circumstances, which a candid man would overlook, disturb his repose. He is perpetually on the fret, and his life is one scene of anxiety after another. On the other hand, the meek is not disturbed by the transactions of this scene of vanity. He is disposed to be pleased at all events. Instead of repining at the success of those around him, he rejoices in their prosperity, and is thus happy in the happiness of all his neighbours. Such are the blessed effects of meekness on the character. This beam from heaven kindles joy within the mind: it spreads a serenity over the countenance, and diffuses a kind of sunshine over the whole life. It puts us out of the power of accidents. It keeps the world at a due distance. It is armour to the mind, and keeps off the arrows of wrath. It preserves a sanctuary within, calm and holy, which nothing can disturb. Safe and happy in this asylum,

you smile at the madness of the multitude. You hear the tempest raging around, and spending its strength in vain. As this virtue contributes to our happiness here, so it is also the best preparation for the happiness which is above. It is the very temper of the heavens. It is the disposition of the saints in light, and angels in glory; of that blessed society of friends who rejoice in the presence of God, and who, in mutual love, and joint hosannahs of praise, enjoy the ages of eternity.

To conclude : There is hardly a duty enjoined in the whole book of God, on which more stress seems often to be laid, than this virtue of meekness. “ The Lord loveth the meek.— “ The meek will he beautify with his salvation.—He arises to save the meek of the “ earth.” Christ was sent to preach “ glad “ tidings to the meek.” Upon this our Lord rests his own character. “ Learn of me, for “ I am meek.” In the epistles of Paul, there is a remarkable expression : “ I beseech you by “ the meekness and the gentleness of Christ.” The Holy Ghost, too, is called “ the Spirit of “ Meekness.” Implore, then, O Christian ! the assistance of the Divine Spirit, that he may endow you with this virtue, and that you may shew in your life the meekness of wisdom.

SERMON XI.

ON CHARITY.

ISAIAH lviii. 7.

—Deal thy bread to the hungry: hide not thyself from thine own flesh.

WHY there are so many evils in the world, is a question that has been agitated ever since men felt them. As God is possessed of all perfections, he could have created the universe without evil. To him, revolving the plan of his creation, every benevolent system presented itself; how came it then to pass, that a Being, neither controlled in power, nor limited in wisdom, nor deficient in goodness, should create a world in which many evils are to be found, and much suffering to be endured?

It becomes not us, with too presumptuous a curiosity, to assign the causes of the Divine conduct, or with too daring a hand, to draw aside the veil which covers the councils of the Almighty. But from this state of things we see many good effects arise. That industry, which keeps the world in motion; that society which, by mutual wants, cements mankind together; and that charity, which is the bond of perfection, would neither have a place nor a name, but for the evils of human life. Thus, the enjoyments of life are grafted upon its wants; from natural evil arises moral good, and the sufferings of some contribute to the happiness of all. Such being the state of human affairs, charity, or that disposition which leads us to supply the wants, and alleviate the sufferings of unhappy men, as well as bear with their infirmities, must be a duty of capital importance. Accordingly, it is enjoined in our holy religion, as being the chief of the virtues. There is no duty commanded in Scripture, on which so much stress is laid, as on the duty of charity. It is assigned as the test and criterion, by which we are to distinguish the disciples of Jesus, and it will be selected at the great day, as being that part of the character which is most decisive of the

life, and according to which the last sentence is to turn. Charity, in its most comprehensive sense, signifies that disposition of mind, which, from a regard and gratitude to God, leads us to do all the good in our power to man. Thus, it takes in a large circle, extending to all the virtues of the social, and many graces of the divine life. But as this would lead us into a wide field, all that I intend at present is to consider that branch of charity which is called *Alms-giving*; and, in treating upon it, shall, in the *first* place, shew you how alms ought to be bestowed; and, *secondly*, give exhortations to the practice of this duty.

The *first* thing proposed was, to shew you what is the most proper method of bestowing charity. This inquiry is the more necessary, as, in the neighbourhood of great cities, we are always surrounded by the needy and importunate, and it is often difficult to distinguish those who are proper objects of charity from those who are not.

The best method of bestowing charity upon the healthy and the strong, is to give them employment. Almighty God created us all for industry and action. He never intended that any man upon the face of the earth should

be idle. Accordingly, he hath placed us in a state which abounds with incentives to industry, and in which we must be active, in order to live. One half of the vices of men take their origin from idleness. He who has nothing to do is an easy prey to the tempter. Men must have occupation of one kind or other. If they are not employed in useful and beneficial labours, they will engage in those which are pernicious and criminal. To support the indolent, therefore, to keep those idle who are able to work, is acting contrary to the intention of God: is doing an injury to society, which claims a right to the services of all its members; is defrauding real objects of charity of that which is their proper due, and is fostering a race of sluggards to prey upon the vitals of a state. But he is a valuable member of society, and merits well of mankind, who, by devising means of employment for the industrious, delivers the public from an useless encumbrance, and makes those, who otherwise would be the pests of society, useful subjects of the commonwealth. If it be merit, and no small merit it is, to improve the face of a country; to turn the desert into a fruitful field, and make the barren wastes break forth into singing; it is much

more meritorious to cultivate the deserts in the moral world ; to render those, who might be otherwise pernicious members of society, happy themselves, and beneficial to the state ; to convert the talent that was wrapt up in a napkin, into a public use ; and by opening a new source of industry, make life and health to circulate through the whole political body. Such a person is a true patriot, and does more good to mankind than all the heroes and man-destroyers who fill the annals of history. The fame of the one is founded upon the numbers that he has slain ; the glory of the other rises from the numbers that he preserves and makes happy.

Another act of charity, of equal importance, is to supply the wants of the really indigent and necessitous. If the industrious, with all their efforts, are not able to earn a competent livelihood ; if the produce of their labour be not proportionable to the demands of a numerous family ; then they are proper objects of your charity. Nor can there be conceived a more pitiable case, than that of those whose daily labour, after the utmost that they can do, will not procure daily bread for themselves and their household. To consider a parent who has toiled the livelong day in hardship,

who yet at night, instead of finding rest, shall find a pain more unsupportable than all his fatigues abroad,—the cravings of a numerous and a helpless family, which he cannot satisfy; this is sufficient to give the most lively touches of compassion to every heart that is not past feeling. Nor can there be an exercise of charity better judged, than administering to the wants of those who are at the same time industrious and indigent.

Another class of men that demand our charity, is the aged and feeble, who, after a life of hard labour, after being worn out with the cares and business of life, are grown unfit for further business, and who add poverty to the other miseries of old age. What can be more worthy of us, than thus to contribute to their happiness, who have been once useful, and are still willing to be so; to allow them not to feel the want of those enjoyments, which they are not now able to procure; to be a staff to their declining days; to smooth the furrows in the faded cheek, and to make the winter of old age wear the aspect of spring?

Children also bereft of their parents, orphans cast upon the care of Providence, are signal objects of compassion. To act the part of a father to those upon whose helpless years no

parent of their own ever smiled ; to rear up the plant that was left alone to perish in the storm ; to fence the tender blossom against the early blasts of vice ; to watch and superintend its growth, till it flourishes and brings forth fruit : this is a noble and beneficial employment, well adapted to a generous mind. What can be more delightful than this, to train up the young to happiness and virtue ; to conduct them, with a safe but gentle hand, through the dangerous stages of infancy and youth ; to give them, at an age when their minds are most susceptible of good impressions, early notices of religion, and render them useful members of society, who, if turned adrift, and left defenceless, would, without the extraordinary grace of God, become a burden and a nuisance to the world.

But there is a class of the unfortunate not yet mentioned, who are the greatest objects of all,—those who, after having been accustomed to ease and plenty, are, by some unavoidable reverse of fortune, by no fault or folly of theirs, condemned to bear, what they are least able to bear, the galling load of poverty ; who, after having been perhaps fathers to the fatherless, in the day of their prosperity, are now become the objects of that charity

which they were wont liberally to dispense. These persons plead the more strongly for our relief, because they are least able to reveal their misery, and make their wants known. Let these, therefore, in a peculiar manner, partake the bounty of the liberal and open hand. Let your goodness descend to them in secret, and, like the Providence of Heaven, conceal the hand which sends them relief, that their blushes may be spared, while their wants are supplied.

Concerning one class of the indigent, vagrants and common beggars, I have hitherto said nothing. About these your own observation and experience will enable you to judge. Some of them are real and deserving objects of your compassion. Of others, the greatest want is the want of industry and virtue.

The *second* thing proposed was, to give exhortations to the practice of this duty. This duty is so agreeable to the common notions of mankind, that every one condemns the mean and sordid spirit of that wretch whom God has blessed with abundance, and consequently with the power of blessing others, and who is yet relentless to the cries of the

poor and miserable. We look with contempt and abhorrence upon a man who is ever amassing riches, and never bestowing them; as greedy as the sea, and yet as barren as the shore. Numbers, it is true, think they have done enough in declaiming against the practice of such persons; for upon the great and the opulent they think the whole burden of this duty ought to rest; but for themselves, being somewhat of a lower class, they desire to be excused. Their circumstances, they say, are but just easy, to answer the demands of their family, and, therefore, they plead inability, and expect to be exempted from the performance of this duty. Before this excuse will be of any avail, it behoves them to consider whether they do not indulge themselves in expences unsuitable to their rank and condition. Imaginary wants are boundless, and charity will never begin, if it be postponed till these have an end. Every man, whether rich or poor, is concerned in this duty, in proportion to his circumstances: and he that has little, is as strictly bound to give something out of that little, as he that hath more is obliged to give more. What advantage was it to the poor widow, that she, by giving her one mite into the treasury, could exercise a

nobler charity than all the rich had done? The smallest gift may be the greatest bounty.

The practice of this duty, therefore, is incumbent upon all. To the performance of it you are drawn by that pity and compassion which are implanted in the heart. Compassion is the call of our Father in heaven to us his children, to put us upon relieving our brethren in distress. This is an affection wisely interwoven in our frame by the Author of our nature, that whereas abstracted reason is too sedentary and remiss a counsellor, we might have a more instant and vigorous pleader in our breasts, to excite us to acts of charity. As far, indeed, as it is ingrafted in us, it is mere instinct; but when we cultivate and cherish it, till we love mercy, when we dwell upon every tender sentiment that opens our mind, and enlarges our heart, then it becomes a virtue. Whosoever thou art whose heart is hardened and waxed gross, put thyself in the room of some poor unfriended wretch, beset perhaps with a large family, broken with misfortunes, and pining with poverty, whilst silent grief preys upon his vitals; in such a case what wouldst thou think it reasonable thy rich neighbours should do? That, like the Priest and the Levite, they should look with

an eye of indifference, and pass by on the other side ; or, like the good Samaritan, pour balm into thy wounded mind ? Be thyself the judge ! and whatever thou thinkest reasonable thy neighbours should do to thee, go thou and do likewise unto them.

Consider next the pleasure derived from benevolence. Mean and illiberal is the man whose soul the good of himself can entirely engross. True benevolence, extensive as the light of the sun, takes in all mankind. It is not indeed in your power to support all the indigent, incurable, and aged ; it is not in your power to train up in the paths of virtue many friendless and fatherless children : but if, as far as the compass of your power reaches, nothing is deprived of the influence of your bounty, and where your power falls short, you are cordially affected to see good works done by others ; those charities which you could not do, will be placed to your account. To grasp thus the whole system of reasonable beings, with an overflowing love, is to possess the greatest of all earthly enjoyments, is to make approaches to the happiness of higher natures, and anticipate the joy of the world to come. For it is impossible that the man who, actuated by a principle of obedience to

his Creator, has cherished each generous and liberal movement of the soul, with a head ever studious to contrive, a heart ever willing to promote, and hands ever ready to distribute to the good of his fellow-creatures, should notwithstanding be doomed to be an associate for ever with accursed spirits, in a place where benevolence never shed its kindly beams, but malice and anguish, and blackness of darkness, reign for ever and ever. No, the riches which we have given away will abide with us for ever. The same habit of love will accompany us to another world. The bud which hath opened here will blow into full expansion above, and beautify the paradise in the heavens.

SERMON XII.

ON THE DANGER OF SMALL TRANSGRESSIONS.

MATTHEW v. 19.

Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

THE Roman Catholics divide sins into two classes, the venial and the mortal. In the first class, they include those slight offences which, as they say, are too inconsiderable to offend the Deity; and, in the second, those great and aggravated transgressions which expose men to the Divine vengeance in the world to come. Although this distinction, which overthrows the law of morality, is abjured by all

Protestants, yet something like it is still retained by great numbers of men. What the Papists call venial sins, *they* call sins of infirmity, human failings, imperfections inseparable from men. And their own favourite vices, whatever they be, they call by these names. Cruel is the condition of the human kind, say they, and rigorous the spirit of the Christian law, if we are to lie under such terrible restrictions; if breaking one of the least commandments shall exclude us from the kingdom of God. Will the Great Creator be offended by a few trivial transgressions; with little liberties, which serve only for amusement? If others take a general toleration, shall we not have an indulgence at particular times? If we are prohibited from turning back in the paths of virtue, may we not make a random excursion? If we are not allowed to taste the fruits, may we not at least crop the blossoms of the forbidden tree? While the waters of pleasure flow so near, and look so tempting, shall we not be permitted to taste and live? Will the Great Judge of the world condemn us to eternal punishment, for the indulgence of a wandering inclination, for the gratification of a sudden appetite, for a look, a word, or a thought?

As this is the apology of vice, which at one

time or another, all of you make to yourselves, I shall now shew you the dangerous nature and fatal tendency of those offences you call *little sins*. And in entering upon the subject, Christians, I must observe to you, that the attempt to join together the joys of religion, and the pleasures of sin, is altogether impracticable. The Divine law regulates the enjoyments as well as the business of life. You are never to forget one moment that you are Christians. The joys which you are allowed to partake of, are in the train of virtue. While you are pilgrims in the wilderness, if you return to Egypt again, you forfeit your title to the promised land. You have left the dominions of sin, you have come into another kingdom; and if now you revolt to the foe, you are guilty of treason, and may expect to meet with the punishment which treason deserves. How shall we distinguish then, you say, between the sins of infirmity, into which the best may fall, and the violation of those least commandments which exclude from the kingdom of God? I answer, the text makes the distinction. Sins of infirmity proceed from frailty and surprise. The temptation comes upon men unexpected; the foe meets them unprepared; and, in such cases, the most cir-

cumspect must be off their guard, and the best natures may fall. But those sins which exclude from the kingdom of God, are from deliberation and full consent of the mind. The persons who commit them, as the text says, "teach men so;" that is, they justify themselves in what they do, and sin upon a plan. Their evil intentions are not occasional and transient, but permanent and governing; they sleep and wake upon their bad designs, and carry them along in their going out and coming in; and thus forming evil habits, make their lives a system of iniquity. Whoever does so, though it be only in the violation of what he reckons the least commandment, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; that is, shall be excluded altogether from it.

It is proposed, at this time, to set before you the evil nature and dangerous tendency of the least transgressions. And, in the *first* place, it may be observed, that it is a series of little actions that marks the characters of men. Human life is not composed of great events, but of minute occurrences; and it is not from a man's extraordinary exertions, but from his ordinary conduct, that we form our judgment of his character. When a great

event is transacting, a man is on his guard ; he is prepared to act his part well, and often, on such occasions, in the hour of exhibition, he appears to the world a different person from what he really is. But in the series of little actions, in the detail of ordinary life, the turn of mind discovers itself, the temper unfolds, the character appears. It is then, when a man is himself, the mask falls off, and the true countenance is displayed. Human life, then, being a circle of petty transactions, and the temper of men being known from their conduct in little affairs, our character for virtue will depend on our performance of what the world calls the least of the commandments. This is not peculiar to virtue. What is it that constitutes the happiness of domestic life ? Not the singular and uncommon situations, but the familiar and the ordinary ; not the striking events that fly abroad in the mouths of the people, but the daily round of little things which are never mentioned. A miser may have a feast, and be a miser still ; he only is a happy man who has his enjoyments every day. With very great talents, and without any remarkable vice, a man may become a most disagreeable member of society, by his neglect of the attentions and civilities and decorum of

life. In like manner, without being guilty of any enormous sin, by the habitual neglect of inferior duties, and by the practice of little offences, a man may sin unto death.

A good life is one of those pictures whose perfection arises from the nice and the minute strokes. It is not one blazing star, but the host of lesser lights, which forms the beauty of the heavens. In like manner, how does the Great Judge at the last day decide the fate, and determine the characters, of men? You reckon sins of omission but little sins, yet, on account of these, the sentence of everlasting condemnation is passed. Because ye gave no bread to the hungry, no water to the thirsty, and no raiment to the naked, relieved not the oppressed, and visited not the prisoner, therefore, "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In like manner, he determines the character of the righteous, not from the striking and splendid virtues which they exhibited to the world, but from the performance of the inferior duties of daily life: "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Why? Is it for the splendid works of piety, for building temples to

the Deity, or dying as martyrs to the Christian faith? No. Men may build temples, without love to the Deity; they may die as martyrs, without real religion; but because ye have given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and raiment to the naked; actions of life in which ye must have been sincere, because ye never expected that such actions would be heard of, and the practice of them grew so much into habit, that ye scarcely thought it a virtue to perform them.

Secondly, These little sins attack the authority of the Divine Legislator as much, or perhaps more, than great sins. Evil thoughts are as expressly prohibited in the Divine law as evil deeds. The same God who says, thou shalt not kill, says also, thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. What sentiment must you entertain of the Majesty in the Heavens, when his command cannot restrain you from the commission of the least sin? Hath not God forbidden the impure desire and the malicious intention, as well as adultery and murder? And is it not as much his will that he should be obeyed in *those* commandments as in *these*? Have you a dispensation granted you to take the name of God in vain

in common conversation, any more than you have to swear falsely before a civil magistrate? Have you more liberty allowed you to wound your neighbour's character than you have to shed his blood? No; the prohibition extends to the one as well as to the other. The same authority that forbids the action, forbids the desire. The same law which says, thou shalt not steal, says also, thou shalt not covet. But you say, that the indulgences you plead for, are with regard to things in their own nature indifferent. Alas! if you had proper ideas of a God possessed of infinite perfection, nothing that he commands or forbids would appear indifferent. To you it may appear a matter of little moment or concern, what the strain of your thoughts is, or how the tenor of your conversation runs; but when you learn that your thoughts are known in heaven, and that by your words you shall be justified or condemned, these assume a more serious form, and become of infinite importance. But if the things for which you beg an indulgence are in their own nature small, why do you not abstain from them? If the prophet had commanded you a great thing, you might have murmured against the precept; but when he only enjoins what you

yourselves reckon a little thing, what pretence have you for a complaint? In place of being an excuse, this is an aggravation of your offence. With your own mouth you condemn yourself. Can there be a stronger proof of a degenerate nature and a stubborn mind, than this inclination to disobey your Creator, in things that you reckon of little consequence? What can shew a heart hardened against God, and set against the Heavens, so much as this refractory and rebellious disposition, which leads men to violate the majesty of the law, to insult the authority of the Lawgiver, to risk the vengeance of the Omnipotent, and to pour contempt on all the perfections of the Divine nature, rather than part with what they themselves reckon small and inconsiderable.

In the *third* place, You may contract as much guilt by breaking the least of the commandments, as by breaking the greatest of them. You start back and are affrighted at the approach of great iniquity; the heart revolts from a temptation to flagrant sins; yet thousands of lesser sins, evil thoughts, malicious words, petty oaths, commodious lies, little deceits, you make no scruple to commit every

day. But the guilt of such reiterated sins is as great, or greater, than that of any single sin. To hate your neighbour in your heart without cause, to take every opportunity of blasting his character, and defeating his designs, makes you as guilty in the Divine eye, as if you had imbrued your hands in his blood. To use false weights, and a deceitful balance, is as criminal as a direct act of theft. He who defrauds his neighbours daily in the course of his business, is a greater sinner before God, and a worse member of society, than he who once in his life robs on the highway. The frequency of these little sins makes the guilt great, and the danger extreme. The constant operation of evil deeds impairs the strength of the soul, and shakes the foundation on which virtue rests. Wave succeeding wave undermines the whole fabric of virtue, and makes the building of God to fall. The thorns, which at first could scarcely be seen, spread by degrees over the field, and choke the good seed. The locusts which Moses brought over the land of Egypt, appeared at first a contemptible multitude; but in a little time like a cloud they darkened the air; as a mighty army, they covered the face of the earth; they devoured the herb of the

field, the fruit of the tree, and every green thing, and turned what was formerly like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. Thus these little sins increase as they advance; they blast where they enter; by degrees they make the spiritual life decay; they lay waste the new creation, and turn the intellectual world into a chaos, without form, and void of order. And yet we are not on our guard against them. It fareth with us as it did with the Israelites of old. We tremble more at one Goliath than at the whole army of the Philistines. One gross scandalous sin makes us recoil and start back; and yet we venture on the guilt of numberless smaller sins, without hesitation or remorse. What signifies it whether you die of many small wounds, or by one great wound! What great difference does it make, whether the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings are kindled by many sparks, or by one fire-brand? When God shall reckon up against you at the great day the many thousand malicious thoughts, slanderous words, deceits, oaths, imprecations, lies, that you have been guilty of, the account will be as dreadful, and the wrath as insupportable, as if atrocious crimes had stood upon the list.

In the *fourth* place, These little offences make life a chain and a continuation of sins, so that conversion becomes almost impossible. Often, upon the commission of a gross sin, a sober interval succeeds; serious reflection has its hour; sorrow and contrition of heart take their turn; then is the crisis of a man's character; and many, improving this favourable opportunity, have risen greater from their fall. But if these little sins then come in; if between the commission of one gross sin and another, there intervenes a constant neglect of God, a hardness of heart, a vanity of imagination, and unfruitfulness of life, you still add to the number of your sins, and treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath. Such little sins fill up all the void spaces; so that, by this means, life becomes an uninterrupted and unbroken chain of iniquity. Thus you render yourselves incapable of reformation, and put yourselves out of the power of Divine grace. How is it possible that you can ever come within the reach of mercy? How can the voice of God reach your heart? He speaks to you in the majestic silence of his works; but you reckon it no sin at all to shut your ears against the voice which comes from heaven to earth, and reaches from

one end of the world to the other. He speaks to you by the voice of his providence; but you reckon it of little moment to regard the doings of the Lord. He speaks to you in the Holy Scriptures; but you reckon the precept to read these one of the least commandments. He speaks to you in the ordinances of his own institution; but alas! how many hold it a little sin to absent themselves from these altogether! And how many of those who attend, think it but a little sin to spend their time as unprofitably as if absent! He speaks to you with the still small voice; his Spirit whispers to your spirit; he seeks to enter in by your thoughts: but vanity, and folly, and vice, swarms of little sins, stop up the passage. Thus every corner of life is filled up. Every avenue to the heart is shut. You nowhere lie open to the impression of Divine grace, and the soul is so full, that there is no room for the Holy Spirit to enter.

In the *last* place, These lesser sins infallibly lead to greater. There is a fatal progress in vice. One sin naturally leads to another: the first step leads to the second, till by degrees, you come to the bottom of the precipice. Deceit, duplicity, dissimulation,

in different matters, which many persons, who maintain what is called a decent character, make no scruple to employ, have a tendency to render you insincere on more important occasions, and may gradually destroy your character of integrity altogether. He who tells falsehoods for his own conveniency, will, in the natural course of things, become a common liar.

The spirit of gaming perhaps you reckon a small sin. When gaming is only an amusement, it is innocent; but whenever it goes farther, whenever it is made a serious business, and the love of it becomes a passion, farewell to tranquillity and virtue; then succeed days of vanity, and nights of care; dissipation of life, corruption of manners, inattention to domestic affairs, arts of deceit, lying, cursing, and perjury. At a distance Poverty, with Contempt at her heels, and in the rear of all, Despair, bringing a halter in her hand.

Thus have I set before you the evil nature and the dangerous tendency of the least transgressions. And do you ask an indulgence in little sins, when you see how fatal they are? Do you still ask to make an excursion from the path of virtue? Such an excu-

sion if you make, you will fall in with the road to perdition. Do you still wish to taste the waters which unlawful pleasure presents to your eye? Taste them you may; but be assured that there is poison in the stream, and death in the cup. Alas! if we calmly indulge ourselves in the cool commission of the least sin, who knows *when* and *where* we shall stop? If once we yield to the temptation, in whose power is it to say, Hitherto shall I go, but no further? Many persons at their first setting out, would have trembled at the very *thought* of these sins, which in time, and by an easy transition, they have been brought to commit with boldness. The traitor consigned to eternal infamy, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord of glory, had at first only his covetousness to answer for. Fly, therefore, I beseech you, fly from the first approaches of sin. Guard your innocence, as you would guard your life. If you advance one step over the line which separates the way of life from the way of death, down you sink to the bottomless abyss. Come not then near the territories of perdition. Stand back and survey the torrent which is now so mighty and overflowing, that it de-

luges the land, and you will find it to proceed from a small contemptible brook. Examine the conflagration that has laid a city in ashes, and you will find it to arise from a single spark.

SERMON XIII.

ON DELIVERANCE FROM REMORSE.

HEBREWS xii. 24.

— *The blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

REASON and philosophy have applied their powers to external objects with wonderful success. They have traced the order of nature, and explained the elements of things. By observation and experience, they have ascertained the laws of the universe; they have counted the number of the stars; and, following the footsteps of the Almighty, have discovered some of the great lines of that original plan according to which he created the world. But when they approach the region of

spirit and intelligence, they stop short in their discoveries. The mind eludes its own search. The Author of our nature has checked our career in such studies, to teach us that action and moral improvement, not speculation and inquiry, are the ends of our being. Accordingly, the moral part of our frame is the easiest understood. Having been placed here by Providence, for great and noble purposes, virtue is the law of our nature. This being the great rule in the moral world, God has enforced it in various ways. He hath endowed us with a sense or faculty which, viewing actions in themselves, without regard to their consequences, approves or disapproves them. He hath endowed us with another sense, which passes sentence upon actions according to their consequences in society. He hath given us a third, which, removing human actions from life, and the world altogether, carries them to a higher tribunal. The first, which is the *moral sense*, belongs to us as individuals; is instinctive in all its operations; approves of virtue as being moral beauty; and disapproves of vice as being moral deformity. The second, which is the sense of *utility*, belongs to us as members of society, is directed in its operations by reason, and passes sentence upon actions ac-

according as they are favourable or pernicious to the public good. The third, which is *conscience*, belongs to us as subjects of the Divine government, is directed in its operations by the word of God, and considers human actions as connected with a future state of rewards and punishments. It is this which properly belongs to religion. Upon this faculty of conscience, the happiness or misery of mankind in a great measure depends. A good conscience is a continual feast, and proves a spring of joy amidst the greatest distresses. A conscience troubled with remorse, or haunted with fear, is the greatest of all human evils. Accordingly, the Christian religion, which adapts itself to every state of our nature, and carries consolation to the mind in every distress, has presented to the weary and heavy laden sinner, “the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” The meaning of which expression is this: As the blood of Abel, crying to Heaven for vengeance, filled the mind of Cain with horror, and as every sin is attended with remorse; so the blood of Jesus is of power to deliver the mind from this remorse, and restore peace of conscience to the true penitent.

In further treating upon this subject, I shall

describe to you the nature of that remorse which is the companion of a guilty mind ; and next, the deliverance which the Gospel gives us from it, by means of “ the blood of sprinkling.” In the *first* place, then, let us consider the nature of that remorse which is the companion of a guilty mind.

Almighty God having created man after his own image, intended him for moral excellence and perfection. Hence all his passions were originally set on the side of virtue, and all his faculties tended to heaven. Conscience is still the least corrupted of all the powers of the soul. It keeps a faithful register of our deeds, and passes impartial sentence upon them. It is appointed, the judge of human life ; is invested with authority and dominion over the whole man, and is armed with stings to punish the guilty. These are the sanctions and enforcements of that eternal law to which we are subjected. For even in our present fallen state, we are so framed by the Author of our nature, that moral evil can no more be committed than natural evil can be suffered, without anguish and disquiet. As pain follows the infliction of a wound, as certainly doth remorse attend the commission of sin.

Conscience may be lulled asleep for a while, but it will one day vindicate its rights. It will seize the sinner in an hour when he is not aware; will blast him perhaps in the midst of his mirth, and put him to the torture of an accusing mind. For the truth of this observation, let me appeal to your own experience. Did you ever indulge a criminal passion; did you ever allow yourselves in any practice which you knew to be unlawful, without feeling an inward struggle and strong reluctance of mind before the attempt, and bitter pangs of remorse after the commission? Though no eye saw what you did; though you were sure that no mortal could discover it, did not shame and confusion secretly lay hold of you? Was not your own conscience instead of a thousand witnesses? Did it not plead with you, face to face, and upbraid you for your transgressions? Have not some of you perhaps, at this instant, a sensible experience of the truths which I am now pressing upon you? In these days of retirement and self-examination, did you not feel the operation of that powerful principle? Did not your sins then rise up before you in sad remembrance? Has not the image of them pursued you into the house of God? And are not your minds now stung with some of

that regret which followed upon the first commission?

My brethren, there is no escaping from a guilty mind. You can avoid some evils, by mingling in society; you can avoid others, by retiring into solitude; but this enemy, this tormentor within, is never to be avoided. If thou retirest into solitude, it will meet thee there, and haunt thee like a ghost. If thou goest into society, it will go with thee; it will mar the entertainment, and dash the untasted cup from thy trembling hand. Whilst the sinner indulges his vain imagination; whilst he solaces himself with the prospect of pleasures rising upon pleasures never to have an end, and says to his soul, Be of good cheer, thou hast happiness laid up for many years,—a voice comes to his heart that strikes him with sudden fear, and turns the vision of joy into a scene of horror. Whilst the proud and impious Balshazzar enjoys the feast with his princes, his concubines, and his wives; whilst he carouses in the consecrated vessels of the sanctuary; in a moment the scene changes; the hand-writing on the wall turns the house of mirth into a house of mourning; the countenance of the king changes, and his knees smite one against ano-

ther, whilst the Prophet, in awful accents, pronounces his doom; pronounces that his hour is come, and that his kingdom is departed from him.

It is in adversity that the pangs of conscience are most severely felt. When affliction humbles the native pride of the heart, and gives a man leisure to reflect upon his former ways, his past life rises up to view: having now no interest in the sins which he committed, they appear in all their native deformity, and fill his mind with anguish and remorse. Men date their misfortunes from their faults, and acknowledge their sin when they meet with the punishment. The sons of Jacob felt no remorse when they sold their brother to be a slave; they had delivered themselves from the foolish fear that he was one day to be greater than they; they congratulated themselves upon the mighty deliverance. But the very first misfortune which befel them, a little rough usage in a foreign land, awakened their guilty fears, and they said one to another, "We are very guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, *therefore* is this distress come upon us."

But that the prosperous sinner may not presume upon impunity from the lashes of a guilty mind, and to shew you that no situation, however exempted from adversity, and that no station, however exalted, is proof against the horrors of remorse, I shall adduce two remarkable instances of persons who felt all the horrors of a guilty mind, without meeting with any judgments to awaken them. The first is that of Cain, referred to in the text. When the offering of Abel ascended acceptable and well-pleasing to God, Cain was seized with envy; from that moment he meditated vengeance against him, and at last imbrued his hands in the blood of his brother. There was then no law against murder: and if antecedent to law there is no original sense of right and wrong implanted in the mind; if conscience, as some affirm, was not a natural but an acquired power, the mind of Cain might have been at ease; he might have enjoyed the calm and the serenity of innocence. But when he was brought to the tribunal of conscience, was his mind at ease? Did he enjoy the calm and the serenity of innocence? No. He cried out in the bitterness of remorse, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." What punishment did he complain

of? There was then no punishment denounced against murder, and the Lord expressly secured him from corporal punishment. But he had that within, to which all external punishments are light: He was extended on the rack of reflection, and he lay upon the torture of the mind. Hell was kindled within him, and he felt the first knawings of the worm that never dies.

Another remarkable instance of the dominion of conscience, we have in the history of Herod. John the Baptist, the harbinger of our Lord, sojourned a while in the court of Herod. This faithful monitor spared not sin in the person of a king, but reprov'd him openly for his vices. Herod, although he disliked, yet he respected the prophet, and feared the multitude, who believed in his doctrines. But on Herod's birth-day, when the daughter of Herodias danced before him, he made a sudden vow, that he would grant her whatever she desired. Being instructed of her mother, she asked the head of John the Baptist. One of the common arts by which we deceive our consciences is to set one duty against another. Hence sin is generally committed under the appearance of some virtue, and hence the greatest crimes which have ever

troubled the world have been committed under the name, and under the shew of religion. Such was the crime which we are now considering. The observance of an oath has, among all nations, been regarded as a religious act; and here a fair opportunity offered itself to one who only waited for such an opportunity, to make religion triumph at the expense of virtue. If Herod had no inclination to destroy the Prophet, and no interest in his death, his conscience would have told him that murder was an atrocious crime, which no consideration could alleviate, nor excuse; it would have told him that vows, which it is unlawful to make, it is also unlawful to keep: but Herod was already a party in the cause; he determined to get quit of his enemy; he satisfied his conscience with some vain pretences, and gave orders to behead the Baptist. But were all his anxieties and sorrows buried with the Prophet? No: the grave of the Prophet was the grave of his peace. Neither the splendour of Majesty, nor the guards of state, nor the noise of battle, nor the shouts of victory, could drown the alarms of conscience. That mangled form was ever present to his eyes; the cry of blood was ever in his ears. Hence, when our Saviour appeared in a public charac-

ter, and began to teach and to work miracles, Herod cried out, in the horrors of a guilty mind, "It is John the Baptist whom I slew; he is risen from the dead."

How great, my brethren, is the power and dominion of conscience! The Almighty appointed it his vicegerent in the world; he invested it with his own authority, and said, "Be thou a God unto man." Hence it has power over the course of time. It can recall the past; it can anticipate the future. It reaches beyond the limits of this globe; it visits the chambers of the grave; it reanimates the bodies of the dead; exerts a dominion over the invisible regions, and summons the inhabitants of the eternal world to haunt the slumbers, and shake the hearts of the wicked. Tremble then, O man! whosoever thou art, who art conscious to thyself of unrepented sins. Peace of mind thou shalt never enjoy. Repose, like a false friend, shall fly from thee. Thou shalt be driven from the presence of the Lord like Adam when he sinned, and be terrified when thou hearest his voice, as awful when it comes from within, as when it came from without. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a spirit wounded by remorse who can bear?

The *second* thing proposed, was, to shew you the deliverance which the Gospel gives us from remorse, by means of the “blood of sprinkling.” This expression alludes to the ceremonial method of expiating sin under the Old Testament, by offering sacrifices, and sprinkling the blood of the victim upon the altar. But, as this was in itself only typical of Christ, how welcome to the soul is the glad tidings of the Messiah, who did, what these sacrifices could not do,—actually save his people from their sins! By the atonement and blood of Christ, the sins of men have been completely expiated. It is the voice of the gospel of peace, “take, eat, and live for ever.” What relief will it give to the wounded mind, to hear of the Blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel! The gospel being published to the world, and the offers of mercy through a redeemer being made to all men, the sincere penitent accepts these offers, and flies for refuge to the hope set before him. Then Jesus saves his people from their sins; he heals the mind which was wounded by remorse, and bestows that peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. There is joy in heaven, we are told, over a

sinner that repenteth, and the joy of the heavens is communicated to the returning penitent. When he beholds God reconciled to him in the face of his Son ; when he hears, in secret, the blessed Jesus whispering in sweet strains to his heart, “ Son, be of good cheer, thy sins “ are forgiven thee,” he is filled with peace and with joy ; with peace which passeth all understanding ; with joy which is unspeakable and glorious. His sins being forgiven, he is accepted in the Beloved. He is an heir of immortality, and his name is written in heaven ; to him is opened the fountain of life. He has a title to all the pleasures which are at God’s right hand ; to the treasures of heaven, and to the joys of eternity. He looks forward, with a well grounded hope, to that happy day, when he shall take possession of the inheritance on high ; he anticipates the delights of the world to come ; and breaks forth into strains of exultation, similar to those transports of assurance uttered by the Apostle, “ Who shall lay any “ thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is “ God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather “ that is risen again, and who now sitteth and “ intercedeth for us at God’s right hand.”

SERMON XIV.

ON THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

MARK viii. 36.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

THERE is not a person in this assembly, but who assents immediately to the truth of the maxim implied in the text. You all agree, that religion is the one thing needful, and that above all things you ought to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof. But there is a wide difference between the assent of the mind to the truth of this principle, and that deep conviction of its importance, which, in Scripture, obtains the name of faith; sufficient to influence the heart, and

to determine the life. A great part of mankind seem to have no steady belief that they are endowed with souls which are immortal: an eternity to come is with them merely a matter of speculation, and their faith in a future world has little more influence upon their lives, than their idea of a distant country, which they are never to see. Hence spiritual and eternal things are heard with little emotion or concern, while they are delivered in the house of God. Some can give themselves up to listlessness; and others soon lose all remembrance of what they have heard, in the next amusement, or in the news of the day. Even he who spoke as never man spake, and while he discoursed on points of such importance as the loss of the soul, had occasion often to take up the complaint, that in vain he stretched out his hands all day long to a disobedient people.

To call your contemplation, then, to these subjects, for they need no more but to be considered aright, in order to be felt, I shall endeavour to shew you the value of the soul, from its native dignity, from its capacity of improvement, from its immortality, and from its unalterable state at death.

Let us consider, then, in the *first* place, the native importance and dignity of the human soul. It is the mind chiefly that is the man. Our souls properly are ourselves. The bodily organs are the ministers of the mind; by these it sees and hears, and holds a correspondence with external things. It is by our souls that we hold our station in the scale of being; that we rank above the animal world, and claim alliance with superior and immortal natures. As the soul is superior to the body, so intellectual pleasures exceed the sensual; as heaven is higher than the earth, so the joys of a heavenly origin are superior to earthly enjoyments. I mean not, in the common way, to depreciate temporal possessions, as being insignificant in themselves, and unworthy the cares or labours of a wise man. Such discourse is mere declamation; it is against nature, contrary to truth, and makes no impression at all. Let all the value be set upon wealth and temporal possessions which they deserve, as affording a defence from many evils to which poverty is liable; as ministering to the convenience, the consolation, and the enjoyment of life; as supporting a station with decency and dignity in the world; and as accompanied with an im-

portance, by which a good man may find much pleasure arising to himself, and have the power of doing much good to his fellow creatures; let all the value which reason allows be set upon temporal acquisitions and enjoyments, still they are inferior to those of an intellectual and moral kind; still the maxim remains true, that he would be an infinite loser who should gain the whole world and lose his own soul. “Thou hast put more gladness into my heart,” saith the Psalmist, “than worldly men know, when their corn, and their wine, and their oil abound.” And do not your own feelings and experience bear witness to this truth? Who will not acknowledge that there is more excellence in wisdom than in mere animal strength? Who will not own that there is more happiness in the improving conversation of the wise, than in the tumultuous uproar of the debauched and licentious? Are the rays of light as pleasant to the eye as the radiations of truth to the mind? Have sensual gratifications a charm for the soul, equal to intellectual and moral joys? While the former soon pall upon the appetite, are not the latter a perpetual feast? While the remembrance of the one is attended with no pleasure, is not the remembrance of the other a repetition of the enjoyment?

But great as the dignity of the human soul is, it may be still greater; for, in the *second* place, it possesses a capacity of improvement. This constitutes one essential difference between the intellectual and the material world. All material things soon reach the end of their progress, and arrive at a point beyond which they cannot go. Instinct grows apace, and the animal is soon complete in all its faculties and powers. Man ripens more slowly, because he ripens for immortality. Those enjoyments and pursuits of man also, which do not belong to him as an immortal being, come soon to their period. Amusement, when continued long, becomes a fatigue. In pleasure there is a point, beyond which, if it be carried, it is pleasure no more, it turns into pain. The pursuits of greatness too are very limited, and the race of honour is soon run. After many a weary step, the votary of ambition finds that he has been running in a circle, and that he is come to the self-same point from which he set out. Mind, mind alone, contains in itself the principle of progression and improvement without end. There is no ultimate power in the progress of man: there is no termination to the career of an immortal spirit. The dominions of earthly greatness are

circumscribed within narrow limits, and the hero has often wished for new countries to conquer: but the empire of the mind has no limit nor boundary; and we can never arrive at that period, when we may say, Hitherto can we go, but no farther. Never have we learned so much, but we may learn more. Suppose life never so long, if the powers remain, new paths to science may be struck out, fresh accessions of knowledge may be made. And we know from experience, that the largest measure of knowledge proves no burden to the mind, nor weakens its powers; but that, on the contrary, the capacity enlarges with the acquisition, and that men, the more they have learned, the more apt they are to learn; the less is their labour, and the easier their progress.

Improvements in goodness keep pace with improvements in wisdom. Repeated acts of obedience grow into habit; the penitent is confirmed in righteousness, and he that is holy becomes holier still. From the fulness which is in God, he adds grace to grace. The day of small things shineth more and more, and that day is succeeded by no night. The pilgrims, who at first set out feeble and faint, grow vigorous as they advance, going forward

from strength to strength; ascending from one degree of goodness to another, they approach the everlasting hills, and coming within the sphere of heaven, they inhale the spirit of their native region; they feel the attractions of the uncreated beauty; they receive a foretaste of the fruits of life, and, with hearts already full of heaven, and with tongues already tuned to the songs above, they put on the brightness of angels, and enter into the mansions of paradise.

In the *third* place, The value of the soul will farther appear, if we consider that it is immortal. All human things soon come to an end. Temporal possessions, and earthly greatness, have a short date. The world itself is for ever changing; the fashion thereof passes away, and he who knows it in one age, in the next would not know it again. How short-lived are the enjoyments of this mortal state! Although the flowers of transient joy, more hardy than the gourd of Jonah, may outlive the heat of the morning, and glow amid the blaze of noon, yet when the blast of evening comes, they are nipt and wither away. Ambition too has its day, and often a short one. Its votaries seem to be raised, but the more sensibly to feel their

fall. The same whirlwind that snatches them up from the crowd, brings them down at even with tenfold fury. Not to mention these more violent revolutions,¹⁶ its natural period soon comes. He who runs the race of human glory, is lost in the very dust that is raised around him. And such is the sudden end of all terrestrial enjoyments, when, after the study and the labour of years, we have with much pains and care gathered together the requisites and materials of a happy life, and say to ourselves, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years,” the warning voice is heard, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” So transient is the date, so short the day of power, and pleasure, and greatness! But wisdom never dies; but virtue is immortal. We have a higher life than that which beats in the pulse, and when the dust returns to the dust as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it. It is indeed an awful, though a pleasing thought, that we have an eternity before us. When the sun shall be extinguished in eternal darkness; when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll; when the earth, with all its works, shall be dissolved, the soul shall survive the general wreck, and exult in the enjoyment of youth immortal! To think

of an infinity of years of existence, enduring beyond all the numbers which we can add together, beyond all the millions of ages which figures can comprehend, and that, when all this vast sum of duration is expended, our existence is but just beginning, is, indeed, beyond imagination to grasp. Never to come to an end, never to be nearer an end, is indeed amazing, overwhelming, and incomprehensible to the mind. But such is thine inheritance, O man! "Because I live," saith the Lord, "ye shall live also." Our duration shall be coeval with His years who sits upon the Throne for ever; the Ancient of days, who is, and was, and is to come.

In the *last* place, To shew you the value of the soul still more, after death its state is unalterable. This is our state of probation, and now is the time to fix the character for eternity. This is the spring-time of everlasting life; according as we now sow, hereafter we shall reap; on our present conduct depends our happiness or misery for ever. There is neither repentance nor apostacy beyond the grave. The righteous can never fall away, and to the wicked there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. From the judgment-seat of

the Immutable, the voice is heard, “ He that
“ is righteous, let him be righteous still : and
“ he that is unjust, let him be unjust still.”

But even here, too, appears that goodness of God which is over all his works. For while we know not of any addition to the torments of the wicked, the happiness of the righteous shall be for ever on the increase. That capacity of improvement which we formerly ascribed to the soul, is a capacity of improvement without end. The progress which begins here is carried on hereafter. Heaven is indeed the residence of the spirits of just men made perfect ; but it is not to be imagined, that they are all at once advanced to a perfection which they shall not to eternity exceed. They will indeed find their state happy, when they are taken from this world ; they will all be presented without spot or blemish in the presence of God with exceeding joy ; but still there is room left for their improvement in perfection and happiness. It cannot, indeed, be otherwise. For the more we know of the Divine perfections and works, our veneration and love of God will increase the more. Now, it is impossible that we can ever know so much of God and his works, but that we may know more. As our knowledge of God, therefore,

and our views of the Divine glory, will be enlarged without end, our love and admiration of him will also increase for ever. And in proportion to our love, our assimilation to the Divine nature, and our joy in the Lord, will be. What a prospect, O Christian, does this open up to thy mind! Here thou art at liberty to expatiate at large! Here is a noble field for thy contemplation! There is a time appointed when thou shalt occupy that station which is now occupied by the highest angel in heaven. Not that we shall overtake the angels in their course, or, in the career of immortality, press upon natures of a superior order; but that we shall make advances in moral perfections, and improve in the beauties of immortality. God shall behold his great family for ever brightening in holiness: for ever drawing nearer and nearer in likeness to himself. The river of their pleasures increases as it rolls. The fulness of their joy grows more and more full. Throughout all the ages of eternity, there is still a heaven which is to come; still a glory which is to be revealed.

If the soul, then, be of such infinite value, how inexpressibly great must the *loss* of it be! Over the mansions of utter darkness, the Scriptures draw a veil which does not authorise our

conjectures. What is comprehended under these awful emblems—The worm that never dies—The fire that is not quenched—Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power,—we do not know. May the Almighty forbid that any of us should ever know ! But of this, the Scriptures assure us, that from these mansions there is no return ; that the gates of the eternal world shut to open no more, and that when the soul is once lost, it is lost for ever and for ever !

SERMON XV.

ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PSALM xliii. 4.

I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

CHRISTIANS, as we are next Lord's day to go to the altar, and approach unto God, it may be proper for me now to explain the nature, and set before you the advantages of such an approach.

The pleasures of devotion have been the theme of good men in all ages; and they are pleasures of such a kind as good men only can feel. In what I am now to say, therefore, I must appeal to the heart, to the hearts of those who, in times past, have felt the joy of spiritual communion, and who will again feel

that it is good still for them to draw nigh unto God.

This is the time when Jesus prepares a banquet for his friends ; when the Spirit saith, Come ; when the church saith, Come ; when he that is athirst is invited to come ; and happy will it be when the friends of Jesus prepare to meet with their Lord, if those who have hitherto been strangers to the holy hill, shall be attracted with the beauty which is in true holiness, also to come, and to take the waters of life freely. For thus runs the gracious promise of Heaven : “ The strangers “ who join themselves to the Lord, to love “ him and to serve him, even them will I “ bring to my holy mountain, and make them “ joyful in my house of prayer.” In further treating on this subject, what I intend at present is, in the *first* place, to explain the nature of that approach which the devout make to God ; and in the *second* place, set before you the advantages which accompany such an approach.

I am, in the *first* place, then, to explain the nature of that approach which the devout make to God.

This earth is not the native region of that

spirit which is in man. It finds not objects here congenial with its nature, nor a sphere adequate to its faculties. It wants room to expand to its full dimensions; to spread so wide, and stretch so far, and soar so high, as its immortal nature and unbounded capacity will admit. Descended from heaven, it aspires to heaven again. Created immortal, nothing that is mortal can satisfy its desires. Made after the image of God, it tends to that God whose lineaments it still bears. When we approach to God, therefore, we find objects suited to our nature, and engaged in the employment for which the soul was made. Here we are at home in our Father's house. Here our spirits aspire to hold communion with the everlasting Spirit; and we tend to heaven with exceeding joy, as to our native country.

The sense of Deity is akin to the perception of beauty, and the sensibility of taste. We are formed by the author of our nature to feel certain movements of mind at the sight of certain objects. Even inanimate things are not without their attractions. The flowers of the field have their beauty. Animal life rises in our regard. Rational excellence, and moral perfection, rank still higher in our esteem, and when expressed in action, and ap-

pearing in life, awake emotions of the noblest kind, and beget a pleasure which is supreme. Let any person of a right constituted mind, place before his view a character of high eminence for generosity, fidelity, fortitude; let him see these virtues tried to the utmost, exerted in painful struggles, overcoming difficulties, and conquering in a glorious cause, and he will feel their effects in his admiring mind: he will be actuated with respect and love to such illustrious virtues. We account that faculty of the mind, which gives us a relish for these pleasures, a perfection in our nature, and a high one; we look upon an insensibility to such enjoyments as a radical defect. Let us apply this principle to religion. Who can behold the vastness and magnificence of the works of God without emotion; and infinite perfection without wonder and awe? Can our thoughts be fixed upon infinite goodness and everlasting love, without affection, and without gratitude? Can we behold Divinity in a form of flesh; the Son of God extended on the cross for the salvation of the world, and our hearts not burn within us with love to him who loved us unto the death? Can we behold the veil drawn aside from the invisible world, the heavens opened over our

head, and the treasures of eternity displayed to view, and after all continue cold and dead ; cold to the beauty of the heavens, dead to the love of immortality ? Where there is any sensibility at all, where there are any affections that become humanity, they will be excited to their most lively exercise by the presence of spiritual and divine things.

Under the influence of these objects, and the impression of Deity, the devout enter into their chamber and shut the door ; they turn aside their eyes from beholding vanity ; they charge their passions to be silent, their minds to be still ; and pour out their hearts to Him who made them, in all the fervency of prayer. Thus prepared to seek the Lord God of their fathers, they come to his temple to meet with him there. They are seized with a religious awe in the presence of the sanctuary, and approach to the altar wondering and adoring, as Moses to the burning bush, and as the High Priest of old to the holy of holies. They look beyond the externals of a sacrament, and, under the symbols in the communion, they discern the mysteries of redeeming love. Notwithstanding the veil with which a greater than Moses covers himself on this holy mountain, they behold his beauty, and

cannot bear the brightness of his countenance. When they sit down with him at his table, they are sensible of his presence: While their hands receive the sacred symbols, their eyes behold the Lord of Glory. In the spirit of devotion, and on the wings of faith, they rise from earth to heaven; they pierce beyond the clouds, and enter within the veil. The everlasting doors are thrown open; the King of Glory appears upon his throne; Angels and Archangels cover themselves with their wings, and all the pillars of the firmament tremble.

But not to heaven is the Divinity confined. He fills the earth; he dwells with men. Look around you, and behold the marks of his presence and the impression of his hand. In the gay and lovely scenes of nature, behold him in his beauty smiling on his works. In the grand and awful objects of creation, in the tempest, in the thunder, in the earthquake, behold him in the Majesty of Omnipotence. When, like the prophet who retired to the wilderness, you hear that voice which rends asunder the mountains, which breaks in pieces the rocks, and which shakes the pillars of the world, you hear behind it a still small voice, saying, "It is I, be not afraid."

Thus, good men see the Creator in his works; they have the Lord always before them. They know where they can find him, and can come nigh to his seat. They go forward, and he is there; backward, and they perceive his footsteps; on the right hand his wonders are seen; on the left his goodness is felt. They cannot go but where he is. The Great Universe is the temple of the Deity, built by his hand, consecrated by his presence, bright with his glory.

The *second* thing proposed was, to set before you the advantages which accompany this solemn approach to God, which are the following: There is honour in approaching to God, there is joy in approaching to God, there is consolation in approaching to God, there is preparation for heaven in approaching to God.

First, then, There is honour in approaching to God. The superiority of man to the animal world has been inferred from the structure and formation of his body. While the inferior animals, prone and grovelling, bend downwards to that earth which is their only element, man is formed with an erect figure, and with a countenance that looks to the hea-

vens. His erect figure is given as the indication of an elevated mind; and the countenance that looks to the heavens is bestowed, in order to prepare us for the contemplation of what is great and glorious. With this formation of body, and with this tendency of mind, man feels that the earth is not his native region; he looks abroad over the whole extent of nature; he has an eye that glances from earth to heaven, and a mind which, unconfined by space or time, seizes on eternity. The eye that glances from earth to heaven, the mind which seizes on eternity, draws the line between the intellectual and animal world. The beast of the field, indeed, beholds the face of the heavens; the bird of the air is cheered with the splendour of the sun; but man alone has the intellectual eye, which beholds in the heavens the handiwork of Omnipotence, and which traces in the sun the glory of its Creator. To him, high favoured of his Maker, a scene opens, unseen by the eye of sense; a new heaven and a new earth present themselves; the intellectual world discloses its rising wonders, and, seen by his own light, in the majesty of moral perfection, God appears. It was reserved to be the glory of man, that he alone, of all the in-

habitants of this lower world, should be admitted into the presence of his Creator, and hold intercourse with the Author of his being.

Accordingly, in the happy days of the human race, when the age of innocence lasted, and the garden of Eden bloomed, there was an intercourse between heaven and earth, and God did dwell with man. Our first parents in Paradise were sensible of his presence; they heard his voice among the trees of the garden; they held converse with him face to face, and found that the chief honour of their nature consisted in drawing nigh to God. Nay, it is the happiness of higher natures, it is the glory of superior beings, of the principalities and powers in heaven, to dwell in the presence of their King, to worship at the throne of infinite perfection, and draw nearer and nearer to the fountain of all felicity. But this honour have all the saints. To thee, O Christian! it is given to hold communion with the Creator, and to become the friend of the Almighty. Truly your fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. If it be great and honourable to be near the person and round the throne of an earthly king, how truly glorious are they whom the King of heaven delighteth to honour!

No wonder, then, that though exalted to the highest dignity which the world can bestow, the king of Israel was ambitious of higher still: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

Secondly, There is joy in approaching to God. "I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy." The idea of a perfect being is the most joyful subject of contemplation that can be presented to man. Moral qualities, even when they shine in a lesser degree, have a charm for the soul. The prospect of natural beauty is not more pleasant to the eye, than the contemplation of moral beauty to the mind. A great and good action, a striking instance of benevolence, of public spirit, of magnanimity, interests us strongly in behalf of the performer, and makes the heart glow with gratitude to him, although he be unknown. We take delight in placing before our eyes the illustrious characters that stand forth in history, wise legislators, unshaken patriots, public benefactors of mankind, or models of goodness in private life, whose virtues shone to the past, and shine to present times,

whose lives were glorious to themselves, and beneficial to the world. If an imperfect copy gives so much satisfaction, how will we be affected at the contemplation of the great Original? If a few faint traces and lineaments of goodness, scattered up and down, yield us so much pleasure, the pleasure will be supreme, when we contemplate his nature in whom every excellence, every moral perfection, all Divine attributes, reside as in their native seat, flow as from their eternal source, and ever operate as vital and immortal principles. For all created beauty is but a shadow of that beauty which is uncreated; all human excellence but an emanation of that excellence which is Divine; all finite perfection but a faint copy of perfections which are infinite; and all the traces of goodness to be found among men or angels, but a few faint rays from the Father of lights, the uncreated, unclouded, and unsetting Sun of nature, who at first gave life to the universe, who kindled the vital flame which is still glowing, who supplies all the orbs of heaven with undiminished lustre, and whose single smile spreads joy over the moral world.

Thus, the very idea of a perfect Being is a source of high pleasure to the mind; but to us there is more implied in the idea of the

Deity. For these perfections are not dormant in the Divine nature; they are perpetually employed for the happiness of man. This glorious Being is our Father and our Friend. He called us into being at first, to make us happy; he hath given us many proofs of his goodness, and he hath allowed us to hope for more. He is soon to give us an opportunity of commemorating the most signal display of his grace, his noblest gift to the children of men. And, if he spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up to the death for us all, may it not be depended upon, that with him he will give us all things? Entering into these ideas, and animated with this spirit, the pious man is never so much in his element, as when he is drawing nigh to God. The mind never makes nobler exertions, is never so conscious of its native grandeur and ancient dignity, as when holding high converse with its Creator: The heart never feels such unspeakable peace, as when it is fixed upon him who made it—as when its affections go out on the supreme beauty—as when it rests upon the Rock of ages, and is held within the circle of the everlasting arms.

Hence, the good men of old, in approaching to God, broke forth into the language of

rapture : “ As the hart panteth after the water-
“ brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O
“ Lord. O God, thou art my God, early will
“ I seek thee. My flesh longeth for thee in
“ a dry and parched land, wherein no water
“ is ; that I may see thy glory as I have seen
“ it in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-
“ kindness is better than life, my mouth shall
“ praise thee with joyful lips. Surely we shall
“ be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
“ and thou wilt give us to drink the river of thy
“ pleasures.—Whom have we in the heavens
“ but thee, and what is there upon the earth
“ that we can desire beside thee? My flesh
“ and heart shall fail, but thou art the strength
“ of my heart and my portion for ever.”

Thirdly, There is consolation in approach-
ing to God. Alas ! in this world, afflictions
so abound, that consolation is often our
greatest good. In how few days of this mortal
life do we not feel the want of a comforter ?
Ever since the introduction of sin into the
earth, human life hath been a scene of misery.
Man is born to trouble, and sore is the travail
which is appointed to him under the sun. We
come into the world the most forlorn of all
beings ; the voice of sorrow is heard from the
birth ; man sighs on through every path of

future life, and the grave is the only place of refuge, where the weary are at rest. Sometimes, indeed, a gleam of joy intervenes, an interval of happiness takes place. Fond man indulges the favourable hour. Then we promise to ourselves the scenes of paradise; perpetual sunshine, and days without a cloud. But the brightness only shines to disappear; the cloud comes again, and we awake to our wonted anxiety and sorrow.

Not limited to our own personal woes, we are doomed to suffer for sorrows not our own. We are not unconcerned spectators of human life. We are interested in every event that befalls our fellow men. Sympathy makes us feel the distresses of others; and the best affections of the heart become the sources of woe. How many deaths do we suffer in mourning over the friends that we have lost! While we lament their unhappy or untimely fate, we cut short the thread of our own days. The chords of love are broken, one after another; string after string is severed from the heart, till all our early attachments are dissolved, till our sad eyes have wept over every friend laid in the dust, and till we become lonely and wretched as we at first began.

Under these afflictions, and from these sorrows, devotion opens a retreat; the altar of God presents a place of refuge; the ear of the Eternal is open to thy cry; the arm of the Almighty is stretched out to relieve thee. There is a sanctuary where no evil can approach; there is an asylum where no enemy can enter. In the pavilion of his presence, God will hide thee in the time of trouble; in the secret of his tabernacle, he will cover thee in the day of danger. There the prisoners rest in peace, and hear not the voice of the oppressor. There are the small and the great, and the servant is free from his master. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

It is some consolation, it is some relief, to open our hearts to men, and tell our sorrows to a friend, who can give us no relief, but by mingling his tears with ours. What consolation, what relief will it then give to open our hearts, and tell our sorrows to that Friend above, who is ever gracious to hear, and ever mighty to save! To that Friend who never fails; who is afflicted in all our afflictions, and who keeps us as the apple of his eye! Art thou therefore oppressed with the calamities of life; is thy head bowed down with affliction, or thy heart broken with sorrow? Ap-

proach to the altar, go to God, present to him the prayer of thy heart, and he will send thee help from his holy hill.

Lastly, In approaching to God, there is preparation for heaven. The objects among which we are conversant, have a wonderful power over the mind. External things make such an impression within, that the character is often formed from the situation. The soul is assimilated to surrounding objects, and proportions itself to the sphere in which it moves. When employed in little and in low things, it is contracted; when occupied in earthly matters, it is debased; but acquires enlargement and elevation, in the presence of what is grand and sublime. By daily converse with the world, and familiarity with material things, the soul is alienated from the life of God, and man, setting his affections on things below, becomes of the earth, earthy. But when we engage in the exercises of devotion, we counter-work the charm of material objects, we retire from the world and its temptations, and shut the door of the heart against every intruding guest, that would disturb us in approaching to God. Standing upon holy ground, we put off unhallowed affections, and impure desires. From the presence of the Lord every

sinful thought flies away. Our attention is turned from those things that would raise guilty passions in the mind. Pure and spiritual ideas are presented to view, and the perfections of Almighty God are set before our eyes. When these are before us, our admiration of them will increase, our love to them will be kindled, and we will endeavour to resemble them in our own life. Thus, by approaching to God, we become like God. By devotion on earth, we anticipate the work of heaven. We join ourselves, beforehand, to the society of angels and blessed spirits above; we already enter on the delightful employment of eternity, and begin the song which is heard for ever around the throne of God.

Such, Christians! are the advantages of approaching to God, and encompassing the altar. And if, with pious affections, and a pure heart, we draw nigh unto God, God will draw nigh unto us. To the wide extent of his creation, to the great temple of heaven and earth, JEHOVAH prefers the heart of the pure and the pious. There he takes up his abode; there he delighteth to dwell. In the divine discourse which our Lord delivered to his disciples, the same night in which he was betrayed, there is a promise rich in consola-

tion : “ If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.” While this promise sounds in your ears, I hope that your hearts correspond to the strain, and that you recall those precious hours, when God manifested himself to you, so as he does not unto the world. When, on former occasions, he sent his light and his truth ; when the fountain of living waters has been opened, and the voice came to your ears, “ Drink, and live for ever ;” did you not feel emotions which came from no created source, and taste a joy which confessed its origin from heaven ? Who can describe the blessedness of that time, when a present Deity is felt ? It is the joy of heaven upon earth ; the happiness of eternity in the moments of time.



CELEBRATION
OF THE
SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in Scotland always upon a Sunday, in the parish-church; and in most places, once only in the year. There is no particular Sunday fixed for this solemnity. On the Thursday and Saturday before it, and on the Monday after it, there is public worship; and sermons are preached upon subjects suitable to the occasion. The Thursday is particularly set apart for solemn *fasting*; and no labour is that day permitted in the parish. The greater part of persons of all ranks in the parish, who have arrived at the years of discretion, join in celebrating this Ordinance, which, partly from this cause, and partly from its taking place but once or twice a-year, is performed in a manner that is very solemn and devout.

The service begins with the singing of a psalm; which the Minister reads out immediately upon ascending the pulpit. The choice of the Psalms is, in all cases, at the Minister's discretion; and to give the Sacramental service more completely, some portions, which are often sung on such occasions, are inserted here, in their places. The music is entirely vocal. In a few Congregations there is music in parts; but in general, the whole congregation sing in unison. The Psalm tunes are set to slow time: the melody is simple, grave, and often very affecting.

MORNING SERVICE.



PSALM lxxv.

- 1 PRAISE waits for thee in Zion, Lord,
To thee vows paid shall be.
- 2 O thou that hearer art of prayer,
All flesh shall come to thee.
- 3 Iniquities, I must confess,
Prevail against me do ;
But as for our transgressions,
Them purge away shalt thou.
- 4 Blest is the man whom thou dost choose,
And makest approach to thee,
That he within thy courts, O Lord,
May still a dweller be :
We surely shall be satisfied
With thy abundant grace,
And with the goodness of thy house,
Even of thy holy place.

PRAYER.

(In the Worship of the Scottish Church, the whole Congregation rise from their seats at the beginning of the prayer, and stand in a devout posture till it be concluded.)

“ LORD GOD ALMIGHTY ! which was, which is, and which art to come ! Thou art the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. All perfections adorn thy nature: Every attribute of Majesty supports thy Throne. The heavens are thine ; thou hast made them bright with thy glory : The earth also is thine ; thou art the Lord of universal nature. Thou dwellest in that uncreated light, which mortal eye hath not seen, nor can see. Thousands of angels and of blessed spirits stand before thee : Ten thousand times ten thousand minister in thy presence, and perform thy pleasure. The whole host of heaven worshippeth thee.

“ Thou hast formed the mountains, and created the wind. With thee are the treasures

of the snow and the chambers of the hail. Thou makest thy pavilion in the dark cloud : Thou sittest on the multitude of waters : Thou walkest on the wings of the wind ; and thy voice in the storm makes the nations adore.

The sons of men, generation after generation, return to the dust, from whence they were taken. The heavens which we behold shall vanish like the cloud which covers them ; the earth which we inhabit shall dissolve like the snows upon its surface ; but independent of change, of the revolutions of time, and of the fate of worlds, thou continuest the same, immortal, unalterable, the Ancient of days, from everlasting to everlasting God.

“ Thou hast given commission unto all thy works, to declare their Maker. The light of heaven reveals to our eyes thine existence : Our ears hear the voice of universal nature proclaiming the Providence which sustains what it made. Thou walkest in the circle of the universe. Thy footsteps are every where seen ; Thyself, the invisible God. How powerful is that arm which supports the pillars of the firmament, and keeps the wheel of nature in perpetual motion ! How unsearchable that wisdom, which, from the first of time has conducted all nature ? How boundless that good-

ness which supplieth the wants of the whole creation! How precious are thy thoughts of grace to the children of men?

“Thine is the power and the victory and the majesty. Whatsoever pleaseth thee, that thou dost in the heavens and in the earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places. Thou weighest the mountains in scales; thou takest up the isles as the dust of the balance; the nations are as the drop of the bucket before thee. At thine altar, Lebanon is not sufficient to burn; nor the cattle upon a thousand hills, to be a burnt-offering.

“Thou inhabitest time and eternity, and the praises of Israel. Thy goings forth hath been of old; thy love to the human race before the birth of time. Before the mountains were brought forth, when no deep arose from beneath, and no fountains abounded with water, even then were we present to thy mind. Thou didst rejoice in the earth that was to be inhabited, and thy delights were with the children of men. We thank thee for the rank thou hast assigned to us in thy creation. Thou hast given us a portion of thine own light; thou hast opened to us the source of intellectual joy, and hast made us capable of becoming fit for heaven, and like unto thee. Above all, we

rejoice in Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from death, and washed away our sins in his own blood.

“ As we now come before thee to commemorate the sacrifice of the Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world, we recall with joy what ancient days beheld, and the wonders thou didst work of old. To the fathers thy presence appeared, and to the prophets, thine inspiration was given. On mount Sinai thou didst descend to give the law; by types and figures thou didst shadow forth good things which were to come. In these last days thou hast spoken unto us by thy Son. Thou hast performed thy holy covenant, and raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of thy servant David. Our souls do magnify the Lord; our spirits now rejoice in God our Saviour!

“ But whilst we adore thy goodness and mercy, we lament our own unworthiness and guilt. We are less than the least of all thy mercies. We are transgressors from the birth. We are unworthy to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth. Thou whose pure eye discerns darkness in the sun, and charges thine angels with folly, thou beholdest the multitude of our iniquities. We have sinned, and

what shall we answer unto thee, O thou, who triest the heart ! We have neglected the good which it was in our power to perform, and done the evil from which we should have abstained. Deaf to the voice of wisdom, we have turned aside unto folly ; forgetting heaven and immortality, we have set our affections upon the earth ; we have looked up to the fashion of the world rather than to thy laws. Alas ! when we consider what we might have been ; when we think upon the talents that we have abused, the means of improvement that we have neglected, the opportunities of doing good that we have lost ; when we reflect how long it was before we began to form a serious thought ; we tremble at the footstool of thy justice.

“ We confess our sins to thee, O Lord ! Our iniquities are now before us. Thou who knowest the heart ; thou knowest the sorrow of our souls. Trampling upon conscience, undervaluing the joys of heaven, and braving the pains of hell, we have surrendered ourselves to delusions, which, under the colour of good, have left us to misery and remorse. We have turned our glory into shame ; we have defaced thine image, and the lineaments of heaven,—Woe unto us ; for we have sinned.

Every way have we sinned ; ungrateful for mercies bestowed ; insensible of blessings promised ; impatient under the smallest evils ; provoking the friend who loves us ! Our condemnation is aggravated, when we think against whom we have sinned ! Hadst thou been a hard master, less had been our crime, and less had been our sorrow ; but we have offended against the most indulgent goodness, against the tenderest mercy, against the fondest love.

“ O thou ! who madest us, have mercy upon us. O thou ! who redeemest us, lift up again the light of thy countenance. God of infinite perfection, we humble ourselves before thee in the dust ! Suppliant at thy throne we plead for mercy. In the meritorious life, in the atoning death, in the prevalent intercession of our great High Priest, we place our claims for life, and our hopes of salvation. Hide not thy face, O God ! Shut not thine ears against the prayer of the miserable. Shine forth in our redemption, and let thy glory appear in saving thy people from their sins.

“ By thy goodness which created the world, by thy tender mercies which are over all thy works, by the love which moved thee to redeem mankind by the death of thine own Son,

—save us, we beseech thee; save us, O God! from our sins. Have mercy upon us, O Lord! O Lord! have mercy upon us!

“ See, O Father! the tears of thy children. Weary and heavy laden with sin, we come unto thee, O blessed Jesus! that we may find rest unto our souls. At thy feet, great Patron and Protector of the human race, we lay ourselves, and pray for mercy and salvation. We come again unto thy altar, to seal our vows of new obedience.

“ Why are our hearts cast down, and our spirits disquieted within us? Thou art mighty to save; we still hope in thee; our fathers trusted in thee, and they were not deceived. Whom have we in heaven but thee? When thou standest at the door and knockest, may it be the voice of our hearts, Come in thou beloved! to sit with us and to bless us! Clothe us with the garments of salvation; let thy banner over us be love.

“ Father of all! God of our Israel, bend now the heavens, and come down this day to thy holy mountain. O send forth thy light and thy truth. Lead us by the green pastures. May the dews descend, and the blessings be poured down. Here, take up the place of thy rest; here, command the blessing, life for

evermore. Uphold our goings in the paths of righteousness, and perfect within us thy good work unto eternal life.

“ And now, what wait we for, O our Father in heaven ! Manifest now thyself unto us, we most fervently beseech thee. May we see thee as thou hast been seen heretofore in thy holy place. Go up with us, O our God, this day, unto thy holy mountain ; and make us joyful in thy house of prayer.

“ Now, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, be praise for ever and for ever ! *Amen.*

MORNING, OR ACTION SERMON.

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST,

LUKE xxii. 44.

And being in agony.—

THE agony of our Lord in the garden, and his complaints upon the cross, are the most extraordinary parts of his life. A dread of those sufferings which he was to undergo, appears to have made a strong impression upon his mind. Forebodings of them frequently disturbed his repose, and overwhelmed his spirits. Many days before his passion, he cried out, “ Now am I troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.” It was probably with a view to console his mind in such a dejected state, that he was transfigured; that he re-assumed the

glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and was favoured with the presence of Moses and Elias from the mansions of immortality; for, as we are informed by the Evangelist, they talked of that decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Magnanimity in all its exertions was a conspicuous part of his character. He who walked upon the water, who slept in tranquillity amid the storm, and who encountered the foe of mankind in the desert, cannot be accused of a defect in courage. When a band of soldiers, with Judas at their head, came to apprehend him, and inquired for Jesus of Nazareth, he said unto them, "I am he;" and by the dignity of his demeanour, struck them with awe. When he was accused by the chief priests and elders before the judgment-seat of Pilate, with that majestic silence which is sometimes the best expression of fortitude, he answered not a word. Nay, when he underwent the severest of his bodily sufferings upon the cross, he endured them with a tranquillity, a firmness and magnanimity, which display a mind truly great and undaunted. How, therefore, on some other occasions, his spirit was overwhelmed, is a subject worthy of our inquiry at all times;

more particularly on this day, when we have assembled together to renew the memorial of his death upon the cross, and to recall the remembrance of all his sufferings.

In further discoursing upon this subject, I shall, in the *first* place, set before you the account which is given of his sufferings; and *secondly*, endeavour to assign the causes of them.

In the *first* place, I am to set before you the account which is given of his sufferings.

That night in which he was betrayed, the Saviour of the world went into the garden of Gethsemane, and ascended the mountain of Olives, as he was wont to do. This had been his accustomed retreat from the world; here was the hallowed ground to which he retired for prayer and contemplation; here he had often spent the night in intercourse with heaven. He was accompanied by Peter, James, and John, the very same disciples who had been the witnesses of his glorious transfiguration, when Moses and Elias had appeared to him, and a voice had come from the overshadowing cloud, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What a different scene now presented itself? the rays of glory shone

no more ; the Divine presence was withdrawn ; the voice from heaven ceased ; that time was now come, which is so emphatically called *the hour and power of darkness*.

He had lately partaken of the passover with his disciples ; that passover which, with so much earnestness, he had desired to eat ; he had instituted the holy sacrament of the supper ; he had delivered those divine discourses recorded in the Gospel of John ; he had warned them against deserting him in the hour of temptation ; he had selected three of them to attend him in his sorrows : nevertheless, even these three thus favoured, thus honoured, thus warned, forgot all that had been said and done, and, unconcerned, sunk into sleep. He was left alone to endure the bitterness of that hour.

The severity of his sufferings in the garden, the anguish and the horror which then overwhelmed him, appear from the strong colours in which they are drawn by the sacred writers. They speak of his sorrow : “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” They speak of his agony, that is, the most inexpressible torment of mind : “ And being in an agony.” They speak of his fears : “ He was heard in that he feared.” They speak of his cries

and his tears: "He offered up prayers and "supplications with strong crying and tears." They speak of the prodigious effects his agony had upon his body: "His sweat was as it were "great drops of blood." They speak of the desire he had to withdraw from his sufferings for a time: "Father, if it be possible, let this "cup pass from me."

They who are acquainted with the style of the Holy Evangelists, know how remarkable they are for simplicity of narrative. They make use of no oratorical arts to interest the passions of their readers, they affect no threatenings or embellishments of eloquence, but place the plain action before our view, devoid of all ornament whatever. Historians contemporary to the events which they record, and who beheld the actions which they describe, usually give free vent to their passions in relating the occurrences of their history, and enter with the zeal of parties upon the various subjects which engage their attention. The sacred writers, on the other hand, lay aside every thing that looks like passion or party zeal; they relate events not like men who were interested in the facts which they describe: not like men who had acted a part in the history they write; not even with the

ordinary emotion of spectators, but with all the simplicity, and conciseness, and brevity, of an evidence in a court of justice. The torments which our Saviour endured in the garden, therefore, must have been great and amazing, when the sacred writers clothe them with all the circumstances of terror, and paint them in all the colours of distress. What shall we say, then, to account for this dejection which our Lord felt, and for this desire which he expressed to be saved from his sufferings? In the ordinary course of human affairs, an innocent man of common fortitude resigns himself with acquiescence to his fate; his integrity supports him; a good cause and a good conscience carry him onwards through life and death, undaunted and undismayed. Hence, many illustrious and virtuous men in the heathen world, supported by the native fortitude of the human mind, poured contempt upon all the forms of death, and departed with magnanimity and with glory. If a man who had only innocence to support him, might thus acquiesce in his doom, one whose sufferings were to be publicly useful, whose death was to be glorious to himself, and beneficial to the world, might rejoice in the midst of his sufferings, and exult in the prospect of death.

In the early times of the Christian Church, the first disciples followed their Lord in a path that was marked with blood ; persons of all ranks, of all ages, and of both sexes, braved the rage of the enemy, the sword of the persecutor, the fire of the tormentor, became candidates for the crown of martyrdom, and with triumph embraced that very form of death at which our Lord, to appearance, now trembled and stood aghast.

This leads us to the *second* thing proposed, which was to account for these appearances, —to assign the causes of our Lord's peculiar sufferings. In general, then, there were circumstances in the passion of our Lord, of a singular kind, fully adequate to produce the effects here mentioned. What these were will appear when we consider that our Lord died in a state where he was abandoned by his friends, and by mankind ; and he died in a state of ignominy ; and that he died in a state, where, after suffering an agony of spirit, he was at last forsaken by his Father in heaven. While the two former of these can hardly be paralleled in all their circumstances, the last is entirely peculiar to our Lord, and constitutes the chief branch of his sufferings.

First, He died in a state where he was

abandoned by his friends and by mankind. From the beginning he found the world against him. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. He was to be made perfect through sufferings, and many were the distresses which wrung his heart, before the decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem.

This was the severest of all, from the manifold terrors that were now combined together. He had not only to carry his own cross, to have his head crowned with thorns, to be derided and buffeted, to be extended upon the accursed tree, to suffer the scourge, the nails and the spear. All this he was superior to ; but to be abandoned by his friends, and by all mankind, at the very time he was suffering for their sakes, was the peculiar and forlorn fate of the Saviour of the world.

The presence of our friends, in the hour of trial, gives a secret strength to the mind ; it affords a melancholy pleasure to die among those with whom we lived. But this consolation our Saviour had not. He had chosen twelve friends to be the partners of his life, and the companions of his death. One of these betrayed him ; another denied him ; all forsook him and fled.

It is some relief to the unhappy sufferer

to have the passions of the spectators on his side; from their sympathy he derives courage, and the pain that is felt by many is alleviated to the one who suffers. But the high and the low, the Jew and the Heathen, entered into the conspiracy against Christ. The priests and elders accused him. The High Priest cried out, "He is guilty of death." Pilate, his judge, though conscious of his innocence, though he washed his hands from the guilt of his death, ordered him to be scourged, and allowed him to be crucified. The people, with a frantic ardour, sought his death. That very people, who, a few days before, upon his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, had strewed the way with palm branches, and cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," that very people, such is the giddiness of the multitude, now cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Thus, in his sorrows, he stood by himself, a wretched individual without a friend. When the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered abroad. He trode the wine-press alone. Of the people there were none with him. When he died for all, he was pitied by none.

In the *second* place, He died in a state of ignominy. The death of the cross was not

only painful and tormenting, but ignominious also, and accursed,—a death that was never inflicted upon free men, but reserved for slaves and malefactors, for the basest and the vilest of the human kind. There is implanted in the mind of man a strong abhorrence of shame and disgrace. The sense of ignominy is more pungent in a noble nature, than the feeling of pain. To want the appearance of innocence, while, at the same time, we preserve the reality; to lie under the imputation of heinous crimes, to die the death of a criminal, and leave the world with an indelible stain upon our name and memory, is one of the sorest trials that virtue can meet with upon earth. Yet even this our Lord had to suffer. He had to endure the cross, and submit to the shame. It was foretold by the prophet, that he should be “numbered among transgressors.” And although he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, yet he was impeached of the highest crimes; not only as a violator of the Divine law, in breaking the Sabbath, and frequenting the company of sinners, but also as an impostor, deluding the people; as a blasphemer, assuming to himself the prerogatives of God; and as a seditious person, perverting

the nation, usurping royal authority, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar. "If he had not been a malefactor," said the Jews to Pilate, "we should not have delivered him up to thee." The resentment of such a situation our Lord felt strongly, and discovered in that remarkable speech, "Are ye come against me as against a thief, with swords and with staves?" Thus, our Lord was not only a sufferer, but in appearance a criminal: he had not only to endure the pain but the ignominy of the cross; not only to be wounded and tormented, but also to be mocked, reviled, and scorned by the vilest of mankind. Then were fulfilled the words of the mystical Prophet, "I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." There is not a circumstance in the history of mankind so ignominious, and to an ingenuous nature so tormenting, as the following, which is recorded by the Evangelists. Pilate said, "Shall I release Jesus? They all cried, not this man,

“ but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.”

There is a misapprehension into which we are apt to fall, in considering the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Whenever he appears before our eyes, the splendour of his Divinity overcomes the mind, and in the Lord of Glory the man of sorrows is forgotten. But, my friends, you are to remember that as God is by his nature incapable of pain or sorrow, in all scenes of distress, the *Divinity* withdrew, that the *Humanity* might suffer. Yes, Christians, the man Christ Jesus was like one of ourselves, as encompassed with the same infirmities, and subjected to the same distresses; as accessible to sorrow, and as sensible of ignominy and pain.

Thirdly, Our Lord died in a state, where, after undergoing an agony of spirit, he was at last forsaken by his Father in heaven. The presence of God, and the aids of his Holy Spirit, have always been the consolation of good men in their afflictions. They experienced the fulfilment of these promises, “ As thy days are, so shall thy strength be. “ When thou goest through the waters, I will go with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. Our fathers trust-

“ ed in thee,” saith the Psalmist, “ they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.” But in the sufferings endured by the Redeemer in the garden, and on the cross, God departed from him, and the divine presence was withdrawn.

Christians! what an hour was that, which our Saviour passed in the garden of Gethsemane! In the time of his passion, his torments succeeded one another. He was not at the same time betrayed, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, pierced with a spear, extended on a cross, and forsaken by his Father; but here all these torments rose before him at once: all his pains were united together: what he was to endure in succession, now crowded into one moment, and his soul was overcome. At this time, too, the powers of darkness, it should seem, were permitted to work upon his imagination, to disturb his Spirit, and make the vale through which he was to pass appear more dark and gloomy.

Add to this, that our Saviour having now come to the close of his public life, his whole mediatorial undertaking presented itself to his view; his eye ran over the history of that race which he came to save from the beginning to the end of time; he had a feeling of

all the misery, and a sense of all the guilt of men. If he looked back into past times, what did he behold? The earth a field of blood, a vale of tears, a theatre of crimes. If he cast his eyes upon that one in which he lived, what did he behold? That nation to whom he was sent, rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, imprecating his blood to be upon them and their children, and bringing upon themselves such a desolation as has not happened to any other people. When he looked forward to succeeding ages, what did he behold? He saw that the wickedness of men was to continue and abound, to erect a Golgotha in every age, and by obstinate impenitence to crucify afresh the Son of God. He saw that in his blessed name, and under the banners of his cross, the most atrocious crimes were to be committed, the sword of persecution to be drawn, the best blood of the earth to be shed, and the noblest spirits that ever graced the world to be cut off; he saw that, for many of the human race, all the efforts of saving mercy were to be defeated: that his death was to be of no avail; that his blood was to be shed in vain; that his agonies were to be lost, and that it had been happy for them if he had never been born. He

saw that he was to be wounded in the house of his friends ; that his name was to be blasphemed among his own followers ; that he was to be dishonoured by the wicked lives of those who called themselves his disciples ; that one man was to prefer the gains of iniquity, another the blandishments of pleasure, a third the indulgence of malicious desire, and all of you, at times, the gratification of your favourite passion, to the tender mercies of the God of peace, and the dying love of a crucified Redeemer. While the hour revolved that spread forth all these things before his eyes, we need not wonder that he began to be in agony, and that he sweated as it were great drops of blood.

On the cross that agony returned, and was redoubled. Judge of what he felt by the expressions of the Prophet in the mystical psalm, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not, and in the night-season I am not silent. Our fathers trusted in thee ; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. But I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. I am poured out

“like water.” My heart is melted like wax
“in the midst of my bowels; thou hast brought
“me to the dust of death.”

This constituted what the ancient church called the *unknown sufferings* of Christ. In the cup which the Father gave him to drink, there was something sharper than the vinegar, and more bitter than the gall. The darkness which at that time covered the face of the earth, was but a faint emblem of that blacker cloud which overwhelmed his soul. What the degree of these unknown sufferings was, how they were inflicted, or how they were sustained, we cannot tell. But the complaint of dereliction, which the Saviour then uttered, the sense which all nature had of its Creator rising in wrath, when the earth trembled, the rocks were rent asunder, and the grave gave up its dead, testify that they were such as God only could inflict, and the Son of God only could sustain.

Never was there sorrow like unto this sorrow, wherewith the Lord now chastened him in the day of the fierceness of his anger. Upon his agony in the garden, an angel from heaven strengthened him. But in this hour, when he bore the sins of his people, when the pangs of death took hold of him, when the

sorrows of hell encompassed him ; in this hour of inutterable woe, where were the heavenly messengers, and where was the countenance of his Father which used to comfort him, and to smile upon him ? Alas ! from his Father proceeded those very sufferings, the severest of all which he was now experiencing. From him came the cup of trembling, which he was now doomed to drink, and the vials of vengeance which were now poured upon his head. Abandoned and smitten, and overwhelmed, he cried out, “ My God, my God ! why hast *thou* forsaken me ? ”

The measure of his woe was now full: The sufferings of Christ were completed. Before he bowed the head and yielded up the ghost, he looked up to the heavens, and saw the darkness disappearing from before the throne of God. Filled with celestial satisfaction, “ Father,” said he, “ into thy hands I now commit my spirit.” There was but one pang more. The last cloud was vanishing from the sky, and all was to be serene for ever.

From such a subject, Christians, what sentiments arise in your breasts, and what reflections ought we to conclude with ? How is the condition of our Redeemer now changed ?

From a scene of terror and distress, he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. As the sun broke out from the eclipse which it then suffered, so did the light of his Father's countenance upon his soul. Shame and sorrow, and suffering, were succeeded by glory, and victory, and triumph.

What consolation does not this yield to Christians in all their afflictions! The High Priest under the law was taken from among men, that he might have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who were out of the way; for that he himself was also compassed with infirmity. So likewise "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, but without sin. It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

I shall conclude with another reflection. Persons of humane and compassionate feelings, when they hear an account of their Saviour's sufferings, are apt to be moved with pity

for his distresses, and to be actuated with indignation against his enemies. But these passions, in the present case, my brethren, are misapplied. “Weep not for me, ye daughters of Jerusalem,” said our Lord, when in the midst of his sufferings. These sufferings were not intended to excite the sighs of sensibility, and the tears of distress. Sympathy is not the proper return for his love. His sufferings are the objects of your faith, and ought to awaken your gratitude. Neither vent your wrath against the enemies and the crucifiers of your Saviour. Look inwards, O man! search thine own bosom; there dwell the murderers of thy Lord. Thy sins, thy crimes, thine unhallowed desires and unmortified passions, were the actors in that dreadful scene. The Jews and Romans were but instruments in *their* hands,—but the feeble executioners of that wrath which *they* provoked and drew down. On these, therefore, exhaust thy vengeance. Bring forth those enemies of thy Saviour, and slay them before his eyes. †

How will it affect the mind with contrition and godly sorrow, when, on this solemn occasion, you call up your past sins to your remembrance! How will it grieve you to think, as one by one they pass before you in review,

that each of them added a pang to your Saviour's agony, and formed the bitter ingredients of that cup which he drank! Will not this consideration break your covenant with death, and disannul your agreement with hell? Can you ever again cherish those sins in your heart, which not only crucified the Lord of Glory upon Mount Calvary, but which even now crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame?

But, Christians, I hope better things of you. On this occasion, let me beseech you, by the sufferings of your crucified Redeemer, to break off your iniquities by repentance. Resolve sincerely, by the grace of God, to live no longer in sin. Finally, implore the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to renew your wills, and purify your souls. Then may ye rejoice in this the day of your solemnity, and be welcome guests at the table of the Lord. Then shall ye be joyfully invited to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Then shall Jesus manifest himself to you in the breaking of bread. He shall say unto your souls, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" and inspire into you the well-grounded hope, of sitting down with him at his table above, where, in his presence, ye shall rejoice for ever-

more. Which may God grant, and to his name be the praise ! Let us pray.

PRAYER.

“ SON of the Most High ! Thou art worthy to take the book of life, and to open the seals thereof ; for by thine agony in the garden, and by thy sufferings and death upon the cross, thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood. Thou didst tread the wine-press alone ; thou stainedst thy garments in blood ; thou pouredst out thy soul unto death. But thine agony is now over. Thou hast seen the travail of thy soul, and tasted the joy that was set before thee ! Come now from thy holy hill, glorious in thine apparel, travelling in the greatness of thy strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save !

“ Thou art now ascended on high, and exalted to the right hand of the Father ! All greatness is below thee ! The principalities of heaven worship thee : the powers of darkness tremble at thy nod : the heavens and the earth

are subject to thy dominion: thou hast the keys of hell and of death: thou hast all power over the visible and invisible worlds!

“ In obedience to thy commands, we now come to shew forth thy death. Bless us we beseech thee, and manifest thyself to us in the breaking of bread! Lord remember us when thou art now come to thy kingdom: and accept of the solemn dedication which we are here this day to make of ourselves unto thee!

“ Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”
Amen.

PSALM xviii.

- 4 FLOODS of ill men affrighted me,
 Death's pangs about me went,
5 Hell's sorrows me environed:
 Death's snares did me prevent.
- 6 In my distress I called on God,
 Cried to my God did I;
 He from his temple heard my voice,
 To his ears came my cry.
- 7 Th' earth, as affrighted, then did shake,
 Trembling upon it seiz'd;
 The hills' foundations moved were,
 Because he was displeas'd.

FENCING OF THE TABLES.

[What is termed the *Fencing of the Tables*, is a Discourse designed to point out the characters of such as are worthy, and such as are unworthy, to be admitted to sit at them.

Among the Author's manuscripts, no form for this purpose could be found. The following is supplied by one of his friends, that no part of the Sacramental service might be wanting.]

“CHRISTIANS, we proceed to the particular and solemn service of this day. An ordinance the most sacred and holy in the Christian religion, is now, by the blessing of God, to be celebrated among us. The Table of the last Supper of our Lord is before you; and there will soon be placed upon it the consecrated representations of the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, and the Saviour of the world. Let now, therefore, the believer in Christ, and the keeper of his commandments, prepare himself to approach and sit down, partake of the spiritual feast, and present his vows to the Most High.

‘ My brethren ! So sacred an occasion as this is, demands, upon our part, a suitable frame of spirit, and naturally tends to inspire us with religious awe. Many serious and solemn thoughts now arise in the mind. An holy fear takes possession of the soul ; and we distrust ourselves, when about to approach into the presence of the living God. “ Who is the man that shall ascend into the holy hill ? and where is he who has clean hands and a pure heart ? ” These questions arise in the breasts even of the faithful and of the devout. They know that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; and therefore they desire to sanctify their hearts before Him, and to prepare themselves to enter within the FENCE that is now to be drawn round his holy place.

‘ Before, therefore, we advance, let us inquire,—What is it that God hath required of us ? How read the commandments and the Law ?

In the Book of Exodus xx. 3. &c. we find these words :—

“ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

“ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that

“ is in heaven above, or that is in the earth
“ beneath, or that is in the waters under the
“ earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to
“ them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy
“ God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity
“ of the fathers upon the children unto the
“ third and fourth generation of them that
“ hate me: and shewing mercy unto thou-
“ sands of them that love me, and keep my
“ commandments.

“ Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord
“ thy God in vain! for the Lord will not hold
“ him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

“ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it
“ holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do
“ all thy work. But the seventh day is the
“ Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou
“ shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son,
“ nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy
“ maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stran-
“ ger that is within thy gates: for in six days
“ the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea,
“ and all that in them is, and rested the se-
“ venth day; wherefore the Lord blessed the
“ Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

“ Honour thy father and thy mother: that
“ thy days may be long upon the land which
“ the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“Thou shalt not kill.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

‘Such is the law: and we read, that when it was delivered, there was thunder on Sinai, and the people, in fear, “removed and stood afar off.” Let him who is guilty of wilfully and habitually breaking the law, forbear to approach unto this table: *Stand back, thou profane!* But let him who obeys, and who loves the law, come forward: *Sit down, thou blessed of the Lord!*

‘Let us next proceed from the Old to the New Testament, from the laws of Moses to the laws of Christ. These are not reduced into a summary; but their substance is, faith, charity, humility, and holiness. We have the character of the blessed in Jesus described particularly by himself in the sermon on the mount,’ Matth. v. 3, &c.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“ Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

“ Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

“ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

“ Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

“ Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

“ Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.

“ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Such is the character of the disciples of Christ,—of those who are worthy to sit down at the Sacrament of the Supper. Let him whose character is opposite, forbear to approach unto this table : *Stand back, thou pro-*

fane! But let him who imitates and who loves this character, come forward: *Sit down, thou blessed of the Lord!*

‘Some, my brethren, are thus debarred; but the invitation to this feast is large and generous. All who repent and propose a reformation of life are welcome. Every one that thirsteth is invited to drink. They who labour and are heavy laden are desired to come in, and obtain rest: and he that cometh unto me, saith the Master of the feast, I will in no-wise cast out

‘Trusting in the grace of heaven, let us therefore advance; and in vows of obedience, in songs of love and of praise, partake of the banquet which is prepared. And, may he himself be with us, and go before us. May He clothe us this day, with the wedding garment, and his banner over us be love!’

PSALM XXIV.

[Upon the giving out of a Psalm, such as this, the Minister desires the Elders to bring forward the *Sacramental Elements*, and the Communicants to take their seats at the Communion-Table. The Elders consist of several of the most respectable and exemplary persons of the Parish, and who are regularly ordained to their office, which has a considerable resemblance to that of *Church-Warden* in England. The senior Elder gene-

rally carries the *Bread*, and the rest follow him with the *Wine*, Cups, and other utensils, which, for the most part, are of silver. These are placed at the head of the Communion-Table, which corresponds to the *Altar* in the Church of England. The whole Communion-Table is covered with linen. The Communicants, agreeably to directions given them on a previous day, approach to the Tables, and, after communicating, retire from them, in such a manner as to avoid any interference or confusion.]

7 YE gates, lift up your heads on high,
 Ye doors that last for ay,
 Be lifted up, that so the King
 Of glory enter may.

8 But who of glory is the King?
 The mighty Lord is this,
 Even that same Lord, that great in might
 And strong in battle is.

9 Ye gates, lift up your heads, ye doors,
 Doors that do last for ay,
 Be lifted up that so the King
 Of glory enter may.

10 But who is he that is the King
 Of glory? who is this?
 The Lord of hosts, and none but he,
 The King of glory is.

CONSECRATION PRAYER.

[This Prayer is pronounced by the Minister standing at the head of the Communion-Table, to which he has now descended from the Pulpit. And the Addresses to the Communicants are all afterwards delivered successively at this place.]

“ ETERNAL JEHOVAH! Lord of the heavens and of the earth, God of glory, we bend before thy throne. Thy children prostrate themselves with holy adoration at thy footstool. The heavens are bright with thy glory. The earth is full of thy praise. The great universe is thy temple. Thy name is JEHOVAH, who alone hast, of thyself, being and immortality.

“ Thou mightest have continued for ever alone, in the enjoyment of thine own perfections, though angels and men had never been. But to extend life, to communicate happiness, and to diffuse joy, thou didst rise from thy throne, thou raisedst thine arm over the void, thou spakest this earth into existence, thou madest us after thine own image, and hast watched over us from the beginning of time, even until this day.

“ When we transgressed against thy com-

mandments, and lost our original innocence, thy mercy forsook us not. Thou hadst compassion upon the offspring of Adam. Thine eye looked with pity ; thou didst lay our help upon One who was mighty to save. Him, in the fulness of time, the Ambassador of peace and reconciliation, and love, thou didst send. Our ears have heard the joyful sound ; our eyes have seen the salvation of our God. This is a day of the Son of Man !

“ Glory be to God, that peace is proclaimed on earth, and good-will to the children of men ! Hosanna to the Son of David ! Blessed be he who came in the name of the Highest to save us ! Halleluiah, Halleluiah, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever !

“ God of the patriarchs ! who saw afar off this day which we now commemorate : God of the prophets ! who foretold its arrival : God of the righteous men ! who desired its approach : God of the evangelists and apostles ! who first beheld the day of the Messiah : God of the martyrs and confessors ! who honoured it with their blood : God of our fathers ! who within these walls have kept it in remembrance : God of our children ! who will commemorate it when we shall sleep in the

dust : God of time ! God of eternity ! descend now, make thyself known to us, and fill this house with thy glory.

“ Father Almighty ! Creator of the world, great Parent and Preserver of men, who didst contrive the mystery of our redemption, which we now come to commemorate : Son of the Most High ! Redeemer of the world, Intercessor, Friend, and Patron of the human race, who by thy death upon the cross, didst accomplish the mystery of our redemption, which we now come to commemorate : Eternal Spirit ! proceeding from the Father and the Son, Author of the divine life, Comforter of the faithful, Inhabitant of the temple of a pure heart, who dost apply to the penitent the benefits of that redemption which we now come to commemorate,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ! God blessed for ever ; be now present ; be now propitious, and hear the prayers of thy people.

“ Thou hast brought us to thy holy mountain ; make us joyful in thy house of prayer. We have come to thy temple ; may we behold thy glory ; may the beauty of our God be upon us, and make all thy goodness to pass before us. Open unto us the fountain of life, that we may drink and live. Now

command the blessing, even life for evermore.

“ May these elements of bread and wine, which, in the name, and by the authority, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we now set apart to represent his body and blood, convey to the faithful the grace of the new covenant. May the bread become the bread of life; may the fruit of the vine be a foretaste of that wine which is for ever new in the kingdom of the Father. Eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup, may we never after hunger or thirst again. Hear, O God, these our humble praises and prayers. May they now ascend before thee with acceptance from this table, upon which are the emblems of the Lamb sacrificed, to the throne of the Lamb reigning in glory. Now, to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, and honour, dominion and power, time without end.— Amen.”

ADDRESS TO COMMUNICANTS

BEFORE AND AFTER THE SERVICE OF THE TABLES.

[*Service of Tables*, is the homely phrase which has been long used, and is still retained upon this occasion. It strict-

ly refers to the distribution of the Elements by the Elders. It has been improperly extended to the Addresses made by the Minister; for the Minister, in reality, only gives the Elements to the Communicants who sit nearest on each hand. The Elders administer them to the rest.

At the First Table, the Minister, immediately upon concluding the Consecration Prayer, usually proceeds to read the words of the Institution, and, without adding more, to distribute the Elements. But before the Service of the succeeding Tables, Addresses at some length are made to the Communicants.]

TABLE FIRST.

[Before the Service.]

“ COMMUNICANTS ! I now proceed, after the example, and in the words of our Lord, to distribute among you the symbols of his body broken, and of his blood shed. The sacred warrant was received of the Lord, and has been delivered unto us.

[Service.]

“ The Lord Jesus, that night on which he “ was betrayed, took bread, and having given “ thanks,” (as we have already done in his name), “ he brake it, and gave it unto his “ disciples, saying, Take, eat ;” (*Here the*

Minister gives the Bread,) “ this is my body
 “ which is broken for you ; this do in re-
 “ membrance of me.”

[After a short Pause.]

“ In like manner also after supper, he took
 “ the cup, and gave it unto his disciples,”
 (*Here the Minister gives the cup,*) “ saying,
 “ ‘ This cup is the New Testament in my blood,
 “ shed for the remission of the sins of many ;
 “ drink ye all of it. For as often as ye eat of
 “ this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do shew
 “ the Lord’s death until he come again.”

[After the Service.]

“ Draw near, my soul, and behold this great
 sight ! Thy Saviour, the Son of God, and
 equal to God, in agony, upon the cross !

“ Communicants ! that agony was for you.
 It was to save you from the wrath to come.
 It was to restore you to the favour and image
 of God ; and to present you one day before
 Heaven, a glorious Church, perfect in the
 beauty of holiness.

“ Forbid it, O communicants, that you
 should ever be of that number who crucify

the Lord afresh, and by your ungodly lives dishonour that name by the which you are called. The religion of Jesus may be attacked by its enemies, but it can only be hurt by its friends. Much, therefore, O Christians, depends upon you. The sincerity of your faith, the truth of your religion, and the honour of your Master, are at stake. Shew to the world the divinity of the Gospel, by leading lives becoming its glorious light ; and never forget the vows which you have this day made.

“ To animate you to run the race of glory, lift up your eyes, O Communicants, from these symbols of the Lamb sacrificed, to the throne of the Lamb reigning in glory. There the harps of heaven are all employed, and the song of Moses and the Lamb is heard from ten thousand voices. The blessed above, with one accord, cast down their crowns at the foot of the throne, and cry out, Hosanna, and blessing, and praise ! Many who, like ourselves, were frail and imperfect creatures, who, like us, struggled under the bondage of corruption, have now entered within the gates of the heavenly Zion, and have sat with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the new Jerusalem.

“ O city of the living God ! when shall we

approach to thee ! When shall the day come, when death shall be swallowed up in victory ; when this corrupted shall put on incorruption ; when this mortal shall put on immortality ! This is our song in the house of our pilgrimage. Because of this our soul rejoices, and our flesh shall rest in hope.

“ As ye have received the Lord Jesus, communicants, so walk ye in him. Go in peace, and may the God of all peace and grace go with you. Amen.

[The Minister now generally quits the head of the Table ; and, after communicating at the Second Service, resumes his place in the Pulpit. One or more neighbouring Ministers, who act the part of his Assistants, preside, in succession, at the remaining Tables.]

PSALM ciii.

1 O THOU, my soul, bless God the Lord,
And all that in me is
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless.

2 Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,
And not forgetful be
Of all his gracious benefits
He hath bestowed on thee.

TABLE SECOND.

[Before the Service.]

“ COMMUNICANTS ! you have sat down at this table, to commemorate the death of your Redeemer. It was the solemn charge of your Lord himself, “ Do this in remembrance of “ me.” We are so formed by the Author of our frame, that the memorial of a friend who is no more, and the token of a love that is past, has a wonderful power over the affections. The slightest circumstance that recalls a departed friend, awakens the sensibility of the soul. The smallest relic acquires a value : a robe, a ring, or a portrait, calls up a history, on which the heart delights to dwell. How much more, the memorials of our glorious Redeemer, the dearest friend of the whole human race !

“ Remember now, then, O Communicants ! the *Man of sorrows*. Remember his state and sufferings, from Bethlehem to the cross. Mark the reception he met with, despised and rejected of men ; he came to his own, and his own received him not. In the midst of scorn-ers, in the hands of persecutors, mark the patience and meekness of the Lamb of God. Follow him to the court of Herod, the hall

of Pilate, and the hill of Calvary. See him at last forsaken of God. Was there ever sorrow like unto his sorrow?

“Turn now, Christians, with hearts penetrated with grief, and bleeding at a sight so sad, to the table that is now before you. You are now to engage in the most solemn ordinance of our holy religion. You are going to transact with the King of Glory, now far from men and their cruelties, in the highest heavens; before whom ten thousand times ten thousand angels bow down and adore. You are about to commemorate that scene at which the sun grew dark and the earth trembled. You are going to seal your souls to the day of everlasting redemption. Not the last hour of your lives can be more awful than the present. In the view of so great a covenant, I call upon you to banish all worldly passions, all unhallowed affections, all the leaven of malice and of wrath, and to sit, with reverence, with faith, and with love, at the feast of salvation, of which you are now to partake.

[Service.]

“The Lord Jesus, that night in which he was betrayed, took bread,” &c.

[After the Service.]

“ How awful is this place ! Surely God is here, and I knew it not. This is none other than the House of God ; and this is the gate of heaven.” These were the words of Jacob, when at Bethel he awoke from a dream in which he was favoured with the visions of God. The Almighty gave him this promise, “ In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

“ This promise, O Christians ! is fulfilled. This great redemption is accomplished by him, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

“ While you now sit with him at his table, the Patriarchs who foresaw this day, the Prophets who foretold it, and the righteous men who desired to see it, are beholding your Redeemer face to face, and sitting on thrones in heaven, where they now dwell in the presence of God ; where they now sing the high praises of the Lord. My friends ! there are vacant thrones. Say, are they vacant for you ? Do you look on him whom you have pierced with repenting eyes ? Do your hearts glow with love to God, with love to Christ, with love to

the brethren? Do your bosoms expand with benevolence to the whole creation of God? Do you aspire to the regions above, and breathe towards the mansions of immortality? Then, my friends, these thrones are vacant for you! As sure as if an angel descended from his orb, and hailed you to your seat at the right hand of the Father, so sure will be your arrival in the promised land. If you fulfil the vows you now make, the gates will lift up their heads that ye may enter in: your blessed Redeemer will call unto you, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your Lord."

"Thither, O communicants, may ye all go! May God himself keep your feet from falling; hear this day your vows, and seal you to the day of redemption!

"As we have received the Lord Jesus," &c.

PSALM ciii.

3 ALL thine iniquities who doth
 Most graciously forgive;
 Who thy diseases all and pains
 Doth heal, and thee relieve.

- 4 Who doth redeem thy life, that thou
To death mayst not go down :
Who thee with loving-kindness doth
And tender mercies crown.
-

TABLE THIRD.

[Before the Service.]

“ COMMUNICANTS ! the prophet Daniel foretold concerning our Saviour, “ That he should “ confirm a covenant with many.” It is for this purpose that we have assembled this day. You sit down at this table, to avouch the Lord to be your God, and to join yourselves unto him, in a perpetual covenant never to be broken.

“ If, with sincere and upright hearts, if, with true repentance and faith unfeigned, you accept the terms of the Gospel, then all the blessings of the new covenant are in this ordinance sealed to your souls. Then the promises of the covenant become your portion : Then the blood of the covenant pleads for you in heaven : Then the messenger of the covenant brings you the glad tidings of salvation ; Then the Mediator of the covenant

gives you access to the holiest of all, by that new and living way which he hath consecrated with his flesh within the veil.

“ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,” said the Prophet of old, “ for behold thy King cometh !” “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,” say we now, “ for behold thy King is come !” Sing hosanna : Strew his path with flowers : He who loved us is come : When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews, observing his emotion, cried out, “ Behold how he loved him !” Christians ! The ordinance which we are now to celebrate, represents the Redeemer, not as shedding tears, but shedding his blood for his friends. Much greater reason have we then to cry out, “ Behold how he loved the human race !”

“ My friends, this is a feast of joy : This is the eucharist or song of thanksgiving. When the Patriarchs saw afar off this day which we now commemorate, they rejoiced : The prophets broke out into strains of exultation, when they foretold its arrival : The angels, when they announced its approach, tuned their harps, to higher joy, and sung, “ Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to the children of men.” It is a token of love which had no beginning, and which shall

never have an end. Like the bow appearing in the cloud in the day of rain, which the hand of the Most High hath bended, it is a memorial of the world's being preserved from one deluge, and a signal that it shall never be destroyed by another.

“To commemorate this great salvation, and to enter into covenant with God, I now distribute among you the symbols of the body and of the blood of Christ.

[Service.]

“The Lord Jesus, that night in which he was betrayed, took bread,” &c.

[After the Service.]

“I will arise and go to my Father, and say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.” Instead of being in covenant with God, I heretofore made a covenant with sin and with death. That covenant, from henceforth, I disannul: Be it written in the volume of thy book, that henceforth I am thine: Accept of a heart which has been long estranged from thee! Receive a prodigal returning to his Father's house. If I have

done iniquity in times past, I will do so no more. Lord, thou who knowest all things, thou knowest how sincerely I am resolved to serve thee.

“ Communicants, you have now joined yourselves in covenant to God: You have vowed unto the Most High, and I hope you shall never go back. Your hands have this day been lifted up unto the Lord, let them never afterwards be defiled with sin: Your eyes have this day beheld a crucified Redeemer, let them henceforth be turned away from beholding iniquity.

“ I make no doubt, Christians, that at this moment you are sincere, and in earnest to fulfil the engagements you have now come under. But ah! do you know the deceitfulness and treachery of your own souls? Set a watch, I beseech you, upon your hearts. Give them unto God; for unless he keep the house, the watchmen watch in vain.

“ Finally, my brethren, trust always in your Saviour, for he is mighty to save. He suffered, but he overcame. The hour of his agony was also the hour of his triumph. Then he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death. The Lion of the tribe of Judah bruised the head of the ser-

pent. He cancelled the hand-writing that was against us, fixed it to his cross, and left it there as a trophy of his victory. He dismissed the cherubim that were placed in the garden of Eden; and sheathed the flaming sword which turned every way to guard the tree of life. He hath opened the gates of heaven, and now calls upon us to follow after him, and to enter in.

“ As ye have received the Lord Jesus,”
&c.

PSALM ciii.

8 THE Lord our God is merciful,
And he is gracious,
Long-suffering, and slow to wrath,
In mercy plenteous.

9 He will not chide continually,
Nor keep his anger still.

10 With us he dealt not as we sinn'd,
Nor did requite our ill.

TABLE FOURTH.

[Before the Service.]

“ COMMUNICANTS! After the first celebration of the supper, our Lord looked forward to the hour of his departure, and said, “ I will not henceforth taste of the fruit of the vine until the day that I shall drink it new in the kingdom of the Father.” When we have now assembled to celebrate this supper, it becomes us, in imitation of his example, to look forward to the hour of *our* departure, and consider this opportunity as perhaps the last which we shall enjoy. We recollect the brevity and uncertainty of human life. We have upon our minds the sad remembrance of friends that are departed, and of companions that are no more, who, on former occasions, sat with us at this table. Now they have gone to their rest,—to the house appointed for all living.

“ Let us then, for a while, shut out the living world, descend into the chambers of the grave, and, like the Prophet of old, take a view of the vale of death.

“ Son of man! what dost thou behold? Dust, ashes, and desolation; dead men’s bones scattered around. How still and fearful is the tomb! Who lie here in these mansions that are so sad? The hand-writing is blotted out: The inscriptions are obliterated: The land of desolation has become still more desolate: The things that were have become as if they had never been. No trace remains of a glory that is passed.

“ But let us take a nearer view of this house of deep forgetfulness. Fellow mortals! around you, and beneath you, are the ashes of your fathers, and the bones of your friends. The remains of those whom you once knew, and loved, are here: The companions of your youthful years: The partners of your tender hours. Now they have no more connection with the living world.

“ But shall it always continue so? Shall they who are thus dead never live again? Have the wise and the worthy, the great and the good, passed into utter annihilation, to exist no more?

No! Communicants! I swear to you by the groans and agonies of suffering virtue; by the blood of the martyrs which is under the altar: I swear by that tomb from which your Lord

arose, as the first fruits of those that sleep, and by these heavens which opened to receive him, and where in glory he now sits enthroned, that *death* shall not prevail in the universe of God. His reign is only for a season : You shall awake from his sleep, you shall break his bands asunder ; and rise and live again.

“ When Jesus arose from the grave, he proclaimed *immortality* to man. When Jesus ascended up on high, the cloud which covered the eternal world was withdrawn : the everlasting doors were thrown open, and the heaven of heavens revealed to mortal view.

“ In the name, and by the authority of Him who was once dead, but is now alive, I now proceed to give you the bread of life.

[Service.]

“ The Lord Jesus, that night on which he “ was betrayed, took bread,” &c.

[After the Service.]

“ Communicants ! We mourn not for those which are asleep, as if there were no hope. We believe that Jesus died, and rose again ; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will

God bring with him. For the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

“ I am the resurrection and the life, said our Lord: whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die. Blessed immortality! to live for ever, and with Christ the Conqueror of death, and the Captain of our salvation!

“ I heard a voice from heaven, says St John, saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: they rest, saith the Spirit, from their labours, and their works do follow them.

“ Loud as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, this voice comes from a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,—from patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, martyrs, and righteous men, who beckon from the skies, and call upon us “ to come up hither.”

“ Celestial society! Ye spirits of the just made perfect, we hear your voice! You have now finished your course, you have entered into bliss, and have received the crown of

glory ! We now combat with flesh and blood ; with sense and passion : but yours is the victory. You taste the pleasures that are pure and unalloyed : yours is the joy of paradise ; the white robe, the crown, and the sceptre. At a distance we adore : you stand in the presence of God ; you see him as he is ; you enjoy the smile of Divinity unveiled. We behold our Saviour darkly in the symbols of this institution : you see him face to face, the Friend, the Patron, and the Redeemer of mankind !

“ But we, too, hope to become members of the general assembly of the church of the First-born ; and that what you now are, we shall be. Hear from thy throne, O God ! the desire of thy people ; and carry us at last from this table where we now sit, and from which we are about to arise, to the feast of the Lamb in heaven, which will never end !

“ Communicants ! as ye have received the “ Lord Jesus,” &c. *

* The Service of four Tables is only given here. But, in general, the Tables are more numerous ; sometimes extending to ten or twelve, or more. This is owing partly to the populousness of particular parishes, and partly to the smallness of churches, which often can admit only of Tables to accommodate thirty or forty Communicants at a time.

PSALM xxiii.

- 1 THE Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want,
- 2 He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.
- 3 My soul he doth restore again ;
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
Even for his own name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill :
For thou art with me, and thy rod
And staff me comfort still.
- 5 My table thou hast furnished,
In presence of my foes ;
My head thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.
- 6 Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me :
And in God's house for evermore,
My dwelling-place shall be.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION

FROM THE PULPIT.

“ MY brethren and friends ! our solemn work of communion is now over. It has been performed with much external decency, and seeming devotion. I presume not to judge of the heart : that is the prerogative of the Almighty God. Proceeding according to the judgment of charity, I conclude that your intentions have been pure, and your hearts upright before the Lord. In this view I congratulate you on the good confession which you have this day made before many witnesses. You have given your hearts to him who redeemed you from the wrath to come ; and I have authority to assure you that you will never have cause to repent.

“ Henceforth you belong to the family of Jesus. Your Lord now says to you, I call you “ not servants but friends.” The blessings which he bequeaths to his friends who have sat with him at his table, are summed up in those precious and expressive words which he spoke to his disciples at the first institution of the Sacrament : “ Peace I leave

“with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”—“I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.—Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” These are the words of life; and have in them a power to give comfort to the mind in life and death, in time and through eternity.

“Yet, my brethren, draw nigh, and give ear to me.—It is only to those who have prepared themselves according to the preparation of the sanctuary, who have washed their hands in innocence before they approached to the altar of the Most High, that these blessings are promised. It is to be feared, that with many persons on such occasions as this, and *perhaps at this very time*, the performance of the solemn duty has been rather a matter of form, than of true devotion. To such I must say, *The bread is not the bread of life, nor the cup the cup of blessing*. Their hearts may have burned for a time within them; but this flame will soon be extinguished. Were I endowed with the power of looking into futurity, and of beholding the after lives of this assembly, what might I foretell? But without pretending to such a power, I may predict,

from the experience of ages past, that not a few will break their sacramental vows, and profane that holy name by which they are called: that by secret sins and open wickedness, they will crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame: that he will be wounded in the house of his friends: that perhaps before the sun shall have ended his course in the heavens,—that perhaps before the cock shall have crowed twice, the best resolutions will be forgotten; that one man shall prefer the gains of iniquity, another the cup of drunkenness, and all their darling sins, to the tender mercies of the God of Peace, and the dying love of a crucified Redeemer! “O “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” (it may be said still), “thou who stonedst the prophets, and killest “them who are sent unto thee, how often “would the blessed Jesus gather thee under “his wings, as a hen gathereth her brood, and “ye will not?”

“But, my friends, we hope better things of you, though we thus speak. Many, it is to be hoped, (and fain would I say, *all*,) who have sat with Jesus this day, will sit again with him in his Father's kingdom. And for your encouragement,—He will be always with you. Over the future there hangs a dark cloud,

which the eye of providence only can pierce. In the world you shall have tribulation. But let not your souls be troubled: You believe in God, believe also in Christ. When you go through the waters, he will be with you. Amidst all the changes of this fleeting and turbulent scene, you will have one friend, and him mighty to save, who will never fail you: You will have a city which cannot be shaken, a kingdom which cannot be moved, and a crown that fadeth not away.

“ For you the joys which accompany religion are preparing. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Walk, then, as becometh the children of the resurrection, and the heirs of glory. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world, and let your conversation be in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour. And when your hearts fail, you have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for your souls. Let us pray,

PRAYER.

“ We come now, O God, from the table of thy Son, with grateful and with joyful hearts,

to prostrate ourselves before thy throne. Blessed, forever blessed be the Lord! that our eyes have seen this day of the Son of Man: We will for ever remember it as one of the days of the right hand of the Most High. We have seen the King in his beauty: We have seen the Messiah's reign, which, of old, thou didst keep hid from prophets, and from princes, and from righteous men. Thou hast made all thy goodness to pass before us: Thou hast opened the fountain of life, and hast poured the treasures of heaven upon earth. Thou hast this day put into our hands the dearest pledges of thy love: Thou hast permitted us to sit down with Jesus, and partake of that feast through which we hope for eternal life.

“ Blessed Jesus! in obedience to thy commandments, and in commemoration of thy dying love, we have this day joined ourselves unto thee in an everlasting covenant, and vowed, that whether living or dying, in time or through eternity, we will serve thee, be thine, and thine only. In obedience to thy commandments, we have joined ourselves to the Church-militant upon earth, and rest in hope of joining the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, when we

shall be admitted to the presence of God, the merciful Judge of all ; to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant ; to an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect ; to all the host of heaven, who are now sitting on thrones, and singing hosannas to the Highest. With them we join in ascribing praise and blessing to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Our souls do magnify the Lord : Our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour.

“ Pardon, O God, what thy pure eyes may have seen amiss in any part of this day’s service. Forgive the preparation which has not been the preparation of the sanctuary. Forbid that the bread of life should become the means of death. May what our eyes have seen, our ears have heard, and our hands have handled, keep their hold of our hearts : May we feel the transforming power of that death which we have commemorated, and walk among men as the redeemed of the Lord. May we carry into life the spirit of this day. O grant us aid from above, and the communications of thy grace, to keep alive upon our minds a sense of thy amazing love, to second the good impressions that have been made upon us, and to assist us in performing the

solemn vows we have this day made unto the Lord. Let us not think, when the Sacrament is over, that the work is ended. Having begun our journey, let us not wander in the wilderness, and lose sight of the heavenly Canaan. Comfort our hearts under the hardships of our pilgrimage: Cheer our minds in the waste and howling desert: Bear us up under the swellings of Jordan, and bring us in safety to the promised land. May the Gospel become effectually unto us the glad tidings of great joy, by conveying to us the pardon of all our sins, and peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“ For these purposes, send thy holy Spirit to abide with us for ever. Sanctify us to thy service; subdue the power of sin in our hearts; save us in the hour of temptation, and preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom. Let not the suggestions of a carnal mind, nor the solicitations of sensual pleasure, nor the allurements of a corrupted world, seduce us from the path that conducts to glory and immortality. In prosperity may we reflect, that too often a serpent lurks among the flowers: In adversity may we be enabled to see thy mercy shining through the cloud; and be convinced that we are in the hands of infinite Wis-

dom, who knows what is best for us, and will make all things work for our good. May we fill our stations with integrity, with usefulness, and with honour, holding fast the testimony of a good conscience.

“ We would humbly offer up our prayers in behalf of these our native lands. Preserve the liberties of the British constitution inviolate to the latest posterity. O thou who art King of kings, and Lord of lords, we commend to thy protection thy servant his Majesty King George. Endow him from on high with all princely virtues ; place wise counsellors around his throne, men actuated with the fear of God, and with an ardent zeal for the good, the liberty, and the glory of the people. Bless all the other branches of the Royal Family. Bless all in high rank and authority. May they adorn the stations they possess, and by their influence and example form the manners of the people to virtue. Bless thy servants the ministers of the everlasting Gospel : May they be endued with the Spirit of their Master, and preach the good Word, not from vanity and ostentation, nor to gain the praises of men, but from a regard to the welfare of souls, from the love of truth, of godliness, and of Thee.

“ We humbly offer up our prayers in behalf of this congregation. Let the light of thy countenance be lifted up upon them ; and bless all ranks, high and low, rich and poor. Guide and direct them by thy counsel, while here below ; and at last receive them unto thyself, that where thou art, there they may be also, enjoying blessedness at thy right hand for evermore.

“ Grant us all, we beseech Thee, that we may partake of the Spirit of our holy calling, and exercise the virtues of our heavenly state. Raise our affections from earth to heaven, and may we become followers of those who, by their faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. Let not an inordinate affection to earthly objects withdraw our eyes from heavenly things, or dissolve our connection with the joys above ; but may we live on earth as the citizens of heaven ; may we pass through things temporal, so as not to neglect things eternal. May we walk in the world as becomes the dignity of the rational character, as becomes the sanctity of the religious profession, and the purity of the Christian hope.

“ O that it may be the stedfast purpose of our lives, to hold fast our integrity so long as we shall live. Let not the fear of evil, nor the

fashion of the world, nor the vain splendour of life, turn us aside from the right path. In every department of duty, may we approve ourselves unto thee ; and in every situation of life, may we possess that peace of mind which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. May we pass through life unspotted from the world, and end our days in innocence and peace.

“ Be with us now in singing praises to thy name ; and come forth with us in the evening, to worship again before thee, and to hear instructions from thy holy word. Now to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory, and honour, and praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*”

PSALM CXXI.

- 1 I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid.
- 2 My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made.
- 3 Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will
He slumber that thee keeps.
- 4 Behold, he that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not, nor sleeps.

- 5 The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade,
On thy right hand doth stay.
- 6 The moon by night thee shall not smite,
Nor yet the sun by day.
- 7 The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall
Preserve thee from all ill.
- 8 Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep for ever will.
-

BLESSING.

[The whole Congregation stand up when the blessing is pronounced.]

“ May the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you and all the people of God, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*”

CELEBRATION

OF THE

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

EVENING SERVICE.

PARAPHRASE lvii.

HEBREWS iv. 14, to the end.*

I.

WHERE high the heavenly temple stands,
The house of God not made with hands ;
A great high priest our nature wears ;
The guardian of mankind appears.

* Besides the Psalms of David, a Collection of Translations and Paraphrases in verse, of several passages of Sacred Scripture, together with some Hymns, has been, of late years, used in several Congregations in public worship ; and this by permission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This paraphrase of Hebrews iv. 14, and likewise the Hymn which closes the following EVENING SERVICE, are taken from that Collection, and both of them were composed by the Author of these Sermons. See Mr Logan's Poems, published in 1781.

II.

He who for men their Surety stood,
And pour'd on earth his precious blood,
Pursues in heaven his mighty plan,
The Saviour and the Friend of man.

III.

Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye ;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

IV.

Our fellow sufferer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains ;
And still remembers in the skies,
His tears, his agonies, and cries.

V:

In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part ;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.

VI.

With boldness, therefore, at the throne,
Let us make all our sorrows known ;
And ask the aids of heavenly power,
To help us in the evil hour.

PRAYER.

“ Father Almighty, we come again into thy presence with the voice of thanksgiving and of praise, to worship at the footstool of thy throne. May our prayers come up before thee, as the incense of old ; and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice ! To all temples, thou preferrest the pure and humble heart ; to all burnt-offerings, the sacrifice of prayer and of praise.

“ The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. Thou dwellest not in temples made with hands. The universe is the altar of God. Thy worshippers are, wherever are thy works: every knee bends, and every tongue utters thy praise. Thou lookest down from the height of heaven, upon all the works of thy hands. Thou art clothed with majesty, and dwellest in light. Thou art a God of pure eyes : Thou art glorious in holiness. Thou lookest upon the sun, and it shineth not : the heavens are not clean in thy sight. The angels who surround thy throne, continually worship thee, saying, Holy, holy, holy art thou, Lord God Almighty ! the whole heavens, and the whole earth, are full of thy glory !

“ Thy throne, O God, is for ever : thy dominion ruleth over all ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is altogether a right sceptre. Thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Thy goodness falls everywhere like the dew, and extends like the beams of the sun. Order and beauty attend thy steps : mercy and love direct the whole train of thine administrations. Thou lookest down upon the highest and upon the lowest of thy works : thou carest for the raven of the desert : thou feedest the fowls of the air when they cry unto thee. Thou adornest the grass with green, and deckest the lilies of the field with beauty superior to the glory of kings. Thou hast created all being at first with a father's care, and thou dost still watch over them with a father's eye. Thou, the Lord JEHOVAH, rejoicest in thy works ; and thy works, O Lord JEHOVAH, rejoice in thee ! Whatever hath being blesses thee ; whatever hath life sings thy praise. Who is like unto the Lord our God, that dwelleth on high !

“ We, too, the children of men, desire to accord with the rest of thy creation, to join in the joy of universal nature, and to bear a part in the hymn which the living world continually sings to thee. Thou hast raised us

above the animal creation : thou hast opened unto us the source of pure and intellectual pleasure : thou hast endowed us with higher life than what pertains to the body ; and set before us a better world than that which we now inhabit. Thy goodness is new to us every day of our lives. Thou leadest us to the green pastures, and by the still waters : thou guardest us from the arrow that flieth in darkness, and from destruction which rageth at noon-day. The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places : the sun doth not smite us by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord buildeth the house : the Lord keepeth the city. Blessed for ever be the name of the Lord : because the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, let the isles be glad, and the inhabitants of the earth rejoice.

“ But alas ! what is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him. The child of the dust, whose strength is weakness, whose wisdom is folly, whose goodness is imperfection, whose life is altogether vanity ! We behold the heavens, but discern not him who stretched them over our heads ! We hear the voice, and speech, and language, of universal nature proclaiming the great Creator : we

hear the night speaking unto the night, and the day reporting unto the day, telling of him that made them, and yet we learn not to know thee as we might, nor become wise unto salvation.

“ Have mercy upon us, O God, not for our own sakes, but for the sake of him whom thou lovest always, our Advocate and intercessor with thee. Help, Lord, or else we perish : extend thy powerful arm, and snatch us from the devouring deep. Reconcile us unto thyself, through the blood of Jesus, whom thou hast set forth to be a propitiation for the sins of the world, who suffered for us on the accursed tree, that he might bring us to God, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. For his sake forgive all our iniquities : Receive us graciously, and love us freely. See, O God, the contrition and repentance of our hearts. Hear the vows which this day we have offered up at the table of a Redeemer. O our Father, receive again thy children unto thee, who return with their whole heart, and strength, and soul. Framers of the bodies which now stand before thee, Father of the spirits which now ascend unto thee in prayer, take thine own unto thyself. Our spirits magnify, and love, and bless

thee the Lord : As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so pant our souls after thee, O God. The desire of our hearts is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name !

“ May our purposes of amendment and sincere endeavours after purity of heart and life be not like the early cloud and dew, which soon pass away, and are no more ; but like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Teach us to shun every temptation to sin : May we neither sit in the chair of the scorner, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor walk after the counsel of the ungodly. May we study the laws and commandments of our God : Make them our meditation by night, and our practice by day ; that we may be like trees planted by the rivers of water, which yield their fruit in their season, and whose leaf is ever green. Let not the course of days, and months, and years, which we enjoy, pass over us in vain, to rise up against us in sad remembrance at the evening of life, and to fill our departing hours with terror and remorse. Let not the time of our pilgrimage in this world be one vast blank, barren of improvement, and blotted with conscious guilt ; but may we pass the time of our sojourning here in thy fear, daily abounding

in the graces of Christianity, and the fruits of holiness, adding to our faith virtue, and one grace to another, till we arrive at full conformity to thy blessed image, and be partakers with the saints in light. May we be translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of thy Son, and entitled to all the privileges of the children of God.

“ Bestow upon us that faith which purifieth the heart, and worketh by love. Grant unto us that repentance from dead works, to serve the living God, which leadeth unto life, and is not to be repented of. Fill our hearts with that charity which is the bond of perfection, which suffereth long, and is kind, which beareth all things, which hopeth all things, and which endureth all things. Inspire us with that wisdom which cometh from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. May we exercise at all times a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, and have the testimony of our own hearts, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our lives and conversations in the world.

“ For these purposes, O God, inspire us with thy Spirit, and strengthen us with all might in the inner man, that we may press

forward to perfection. May we acquire that humility which afterwards shall be exalted; that mourning which shall be comforted; those penitential tears which shall be changed into eternal consolations; that contempt of the world to which belongs the kingdom of heaven; that purity of heart which shall fit us to see God; and perform all those works of mercy, and labours of love, for which the kingdom of our Lord was prepared before the foundations of the world were laid. Grant that neither the splendour of any thing that is great, nor the conceit of any thing that is good within us, may ever withdraw our eyes from looking upon ourselves as sinful dust and ashes; but that we may persevere with patience, and humility, and zeal, unto the end. Grant, that when we shall depart from this life, we may sleep in the Lord, and when the morning of the resurrection dawns over the world, we may lift up our heads with triumph, and rejoicing, receive the blessed sentence of those who, having done well, are called upon to enter into their Master's joy.

“ And now, our waiting eyes, O God, are towards thee. May the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength

and our Redeemer. All these our humble prayers, we offer up in the name and through the intercession of Christ, to whom, with thee the Father, and Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory. *Amen.*”

EVENING SERMON.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

WHEN our Saviour expired upon the cross, the cause of Christianity seemed to be lost. Rejected by that nation to whom he was sent, condemned under the forms of a legal trial, and crucified as a malefactor before all the people, an effectual bar seemed to have been put for ever to all his designs. It then seemed that all was over. A people whom their prophets taught to look for a king, did not look for him to come down from a cross; a nation who expected the appearance of a Messiah, did not expect him to appear from the grave. His followers were few in num-

ber, and feeble in spirit. Although he had frequently foretold his death, the idea of a temporal prince was so strong in their minds, that they could not reconcile themselves to the thought of a suffering Saviour; and though he had also on various occasions foretold his resurrection, they were so much under the power of prejudices, deeply rooted, that they either did not understand, or did not believe, his predictions. When he was apprehended by a band of soldiers, they forsook him and fled; they had not courage to attend him in the last hour of his life; to go with him to the tribunal and to the cross: Afar off only, they followed with their eyes, and beheld with tears, him whom they expected to behold no more. Then they gave up all for lost. The sun, which was soon after darkened by a preternatural eclipse, and the rock which was rent asunder by an earthquake, appeared to be the sad tokens of a glory that had departed, and of a kingdom that was to be no more.

Dark and dismal were the shades of that night which descended on the Saviour's tomb: The hearts of the disciples were troubled, and their Comforter was gone. All the scenes of their past lives, the miracles they had seen, the discourses they had heard, the hopes they

had entertained, were like a dream ; they abandoned themselves to despair, and, as we learn from the Evangelist Luke, they were about to leave Jerusalem, and betake themselves to their old employments.

While the enemies of Jesus triumphed, and his friends lamented, the counsels of heaven were executing, and the operation of the Almighty was going forward. We read in the Gospel of Matthew,—“ In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake ; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here : for he is risen, as he said : come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

The nativity of our Lord had been announced by an angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem. “ While they were abiding in the field, and

“ keeping watch over their flocks by night, Lo,
“ the angel of the Lord came unto them, and
“ the glory of the Lord shone round about
“ them ; and the angel said unto them, Fear
“ not, for behold I bring unto you glad tidings
“ of great joy, which shall be unto all people ;
“ for unto you is born this day, in the city of
“ David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
In like manner, his second nativity, his resur-
rection to a new life, was here announced by
an angel. What emotions would arise in the
minds of these ministers of heaven, who had
attended through his life, we cannot tell ;
this only we know, that “ into these things
“ they desire to look.” Much more, then, doth
it become us to contemplate the life, and death,
and resurrection of our Lord ; for he took not
on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of
Abraham. Christians ! you have this day be-
held your Saviour set forth crucified among
you ; let us now contemplate him as arising
from the dead, and appearing in glory ; you
have already sat at the foot of the cross, and
I hope reaped benefit from the commemora-
tion of your Redeemer's passion ; let me now
carry you to the tomb, to behold “ the place
“ where the Lord lay.”

Behold, then, in the *first* place, in the resurrection of your Lord, the proof that the redemption of the world is accomplished.

Our salvation is everywhere ascribed in Scripture to the death and passion of our Saviour. As our great High Priest, he made an atonement for the sins of the world upon the cross; his death was our redemption, and his blood the ransom that was paid for our soul: but his resurrection was the proof, that the sacrifice which he offered up was accepted by God, and that the price which he paid was available for our recovery. By his suffering unto death, we were freed from condemnation; but our freedom was not made manifest till he arose from the grave. His resurrection, then, is the basis of the whole Christian institution, and the ground of our faith and of our hope in him. That Christ appeared on earth as a Great Prophet; that he passed his days in instructing and reforming the world; and that after a life of eminent and exemplary goodness, he died the death of a malefactor, was common to him and others, whom God had raised up to be the lights of the world, and patterns to mankind. Thus the prophets of old were persecuted and destroyed by sundry kinds of death: thus the martyrs since the

time of our Lord, were cut off in a cruel and ignominious manner ; but in their *deaths* there was no expiation for sin ; the blood of the prophets and of the martyrs spoke no such language ; their blood cried, indeed, to heaven,—not for mercy, but for vengeance against a guilty world. If Christ had died like one of them, and been heard of no more, how should we have believed that his death had atoned to the penitent, for all the blood that had been shed from the foundation of the world ? How should we have believed that the whole earth had obtained remission of sin from God, by destroying one prophet more ? Although he had declared, that he was to be offered up as a sacrifice, and to give his life a ransom for many, if he had never appeared again, how should we have known that the sacrifice was accepted, or that the ransom was paid ? The natural conclusion then to be drawn was, that his labours had been in vain. Then might we have said with the disciples, who were going to Emmaus, “ We trusted that “ it had been He who was to have redeemed “ Israel ;” but now all our hopes are buried in his grave. When he burst the bands of death, and rose victorious from the tomb, then it was manifest to all, that he had finished the work

which the Father gave him to do. For if he had not accomplished his undertaking, and expiated the sins of the world, he had never been released from the prison of the grave. When he arose, therefore, and brought back with him the pardon which he had sealed with his blood; when, instead of executing wrath upon his enemies, he sent again the offer of peace and reconciliation, and took upon himself to be their intercessor, as he had already been their sacrifice, what room was there to doubt of the efficacy of his death, the efficacy of which was so undeniably confirmed by his resurrection?

Here, therefore, we hail the completion of that plan, by which the world was to be redeemed: here we rejoice over the finishing of the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteousness is to dwell, and come to the close of the celestial song, which ascribed glory to God in the highest, peace upon the earth, and good-will towards men. Now, we may join in the triumphant language of the apostle, “It is God that justifieth? who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” As if he had said, “Who can con-

“ demn those whom God hath justified, and
“ for whom Christ hath died? Our great
“ High Priest hath now offered up the sacri-
“ fice which was requisite for the redemption
“ of the world. The wrath of God is atoned;
“ the guilt of sin is taken away; peace is made
“ between God and man; and there is joy in
“ heaven over the world of the redeemed.”
That this sacrifice was acceptable and me-
ritorious in the sight of God, he hath testi-
fied unto all men, by raising his Son from the
dead, by exalting him to his own right hand,
and committing to him the sceptre of Provi-
dence, to rule and govern for the good of his
church.

In the *Second* place, Christians, behold your Saviour at his resurrection, entering into his glory.

His first appearance was not distinguished by marks of greatness or splendour. The wise men who came from the East to worship the king of the Jews, expected not to find him a babe at Bethlehem, lying in a manger. Descended of humble parents, and born in a mean condition, he passed his early life in obscurity, and in the labours of poverty. What the Prophet calls the “ stem from Jesse,” was,

at its first appearance, but a root out of a dry ground; it had no form nor comeliness, for which it could have been desired. Hitherto it had been only unknown and obscure; and at the time of his appearing unto Israel, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But even while he stood forth in the power of the Lord, and confirmed his mission by the miracles which he wrought, the opposition to him increased, and every act of charity he did to others became a new source of misery to himself. During this time in which he went about doing good to all the sons of men, he had not where to lay his head. When he cast out devils, he was immediately charged with being in league with the prince of them. When he sat with publicans and sinners, he was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. When he healed the sick of their infirmities, and forgave their sins, then was he called a blasphemer, and an encroacher on the prerogative of God. When he restored the withered hand, and cured the blind or the lame on the Sabbath-day, then is he no longer fit to live. These were such offences as nothing but his death could expiate. And to death at last they brought him. He is betrayed by one of his own disciples, and carried to judgment. He

is charged with the most opprobrious crimes. In cruel sport, they pay him the mock honours of a prince; they crown him with thorns; they put a reed into his hand; they bow the knee before him, and, with profane and impious derision, cry, "Hail, King of the Jews." And that nothing might be wanting, to shew how much he was despised and rejected of men, the question was put between him and a murderer, which should be released; and with one voice, the people answered, "Release unto us Barabbas." He was then nailed to the accursed tree, and died the death of a malefactor.

And is this the Messiah whom the Jews expected, and whom the prophets had foretold? Is this He, concerning whom Isaiah had prophesied, "Unto us a Son is born, unto us a Child is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Is this He who was to raise up the tabernacle of David; who was to repair the desolation of many ages; who was to sit upon the throne of Zion, extend his dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth? Yes, it is He! But, as the Scriptures foretold, he must suffer before he enter into his glory.

Hence, saith the same Prophet, when he shall be stricken for the transgression of the people, and make his soul an offering for sin, then he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. At his resurrection, the prophecies of the Old Testament are understood, and the scandal of the cross is wiped away. The history of the man of sorrows ends, and the Lord of Glory appears. A brighter train of years begins, and a new era of happy time revolves. From the cloud which had concealed him long, he now issues forth in the beauties of immortality; from the veil which had obscured him in the days of his flesh, the splendour of his Divinity now shines forth; celestial rays circle and distinguish his head; and he appears to be the Son of God with power, when he comes in triumph from the tomb, having subdued the powers of death, and leading captivity captive. He now sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; he enters on the joy that was set before him: and has all power committed to him in heaven and in earth.

In the *Third* place, Christians, behold in the resurrection of your Lord, your nature restored to its original dignity.

Man was at first made after the image of

God, clothed with the robe of innocence, and crowned with the honours of immortality. There was no discord among the principles of his frame ; no darkness in his mind, and no disorder in his heart. Happy and harmonious was the temper of his soul. Order, the great law of heaven, was also the law of man. He had a paradise without, and a fairer paradise within. But by his disobedience and fall he became a different person : his nature was degraded, and his dignity was lost. He who was the Lord of the inferior world, and was invested with dominion over the works of nature, was now sunk into a state little superior to the beasts that perish. This change was the death of the man whom God had created ; the divine life was no more ; the image of God lay buried under the ruins of iniquity. Hence the human form in Scripture is called a “ body of death ;” and the world is said to be “ dead in trespasses and sins.” But as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection to life. As in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive. “ The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly.” We consented not to the degradation of our nature ; and he who subjected us in hope hath restored us again.

Christ rose as the Representative of all his people; as the Leader of an innumerable multitude who shall follow him into the heavens. Hence we are said in Scripture to be begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; to be made alive with Christ; to be risen with him; and sit with him in heavenly places. Here then you behold your nature rising anew from the tomb of Christ; fair as when it first came from the hands of the Creator, when he saw his own image, and pronounced it good. Here you behold it rising with additional honour: made at first a little lower than the angels, it was assumed by one who was greater than they, and is now dignified in heaven by him before whose throne the angels of God worship.

In the *last* place, Christians, behold in the resurrection of Christ, the proof and the earnest of your own resurrection.

Our Saviour not only taught the immortality of the soul, but also the resurrection of the body. This doctrine was new to the world, and contrary to the observation of mankind; for there is nothing in the whole compass of nature, that yields a similitude to dust and ashes rising up again into or-

ganized bodies, and to perpetual life. It required, therefore, a proof of a particular kind, which it obtained; for as a proof that the dead were to arise, our Saviour arose from the dead. Hence God is said to have given assurance to all men of the general resurrection, by raising his Son from the dead. This subject is handled professedly, and at great length, by the Apostle Paul, in a most eloquent discourse to the Corinthians, part of which I shall now read to you. 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, 22, 23. “But now is Christ risen from the dead, “and become the first fruits of them that slept. “For since by man came death, by man came “also the resurrection of the dead. For as in “Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be “made alive. But every man in his own “order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they “that are Christ’s, at his coming.”

In the times of the Apostle, this doctrine was more felt than it is now; a strong impression of immortality did then animate the disciples of Jesus. From whence, but from this doctrine, proceeded the zeal and spirit of the primitive Christians, who embraced the religion of Jesus at the expence of all that was dear, and at the peril of their lives. The sword of the persecutor had no terrors, when

they saw it succeeded by a crown of glory. When they looked on the shore of bliss and immortality, they trembled not, though they knew they had to swim through a sea of blood. Even when death was before their eyes, their hearts sprung with joy, and their hopes began to bloom. Not the frown of the tyrant, nor the face of the king of terrors, nor the executioner that thirsted for blood, could rob them of their peace. They looked upon these as messengers sent by Providence, to carry them to that better world where their hearts longed to be. This was the armour by which the saints and martyrs overcame the world; by which they triumphed over pain, and ignominy, and death, and looked upon fires, and racks, and gibbets, upon every engine of torture, and every form of dissolution, as so many doors opening into the kingdom of glory. They were invincible, because they knew they were immortal.

From the doctrines which have been now laid down, let us conclude with some inferences and reflections.

Christians, you are the disciples of a risen Redeemer. As we glory in his cross and passion, let us also rejoice in his resurrection.

The disciples were glad when they saw their Lord restored to life again ; and the first Christians considered it as such a joyful event, that they used to greet one another with this salutation, " Christ is risen." He who was once dead is now alive, and lives for evermore. He hath removed the terror and the sting of death ; he hath hallowed the grave as a place of rest for all his followers, and risen as the Forerunner of the faithful, who shall rise to eternal life. He left the vestments of mortality behind him. Death hath no more dominion. And if ye be risen with Christ, put off the old man and his affections ; let sin have no more dominion over you ; walk in newness of life. As you have set out in the paths of righteousness, continue your course therein. Religion was not intended for extraordinary occasions. Holiness is not a robe which you can put off and on at pleasure. You must never lay aside the wedding garment. Transient emotions which you may now feel, will not change the heart. Starts and sallies of goodness which you may now experience, will not form the character. The temper of the mind and the tenor of the life are all in all. When religion and virtue have been matured by time and grown into habit, then we can pronounce them to be sincere and genuine. Let

him that is righteous, then, be righteous still. Let him that is holy, be holy still. Let the spirit of this day accompany you all the days of your lives. Carry into the world, into the business, and into the pleasures of the world, the purity of this ordinance, the dispositions you now feel, and the purposes you now form. Be faithful unto death, and God will give you the crown of life.

Farther, as ye have gained the victory over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore be assured, that a life of faith and duty will effectually conduct you to happiness.—
“ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye sted-
“ fast, immoveable, always abounding in the
“ work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know
“ that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
Miserable, indeed, would be the condition of the human kind ; feeble would be our efforts, and few our attainments, if, after a well-ordered life, we were obliged to sit down with the sad confession, that virtue was but an empty name ; that we had cleansed our hands in vain, and purified our hearts to no purpose. But, Christians, our labour shall not be in vain : our works of faith and love, our exertions of magnanimity, our efforts of patience in the cause of goodness ; the tender offices

of humanity, charity, and pity, that we have performed, the kind dispositions that we have cherished or improved, the upright intentions which we have maintained, even the silent aspirations of a good heart, the warm wishes of the benevolent, for the happiness of the human kind, are now well-pleasing in the sight of God. We know, even from our own experience, that there is a reward for the righteous. Never have we done a good deed, but we have obtained the gratulations of our own conscience, and enjoyed the triumph of the mind.

Let the wicked call upon the mountains to overwhelm, and the rocks to hide them in the day of the Lord. Let infidels look for the shades of annihilation to conceal them, and the curtains of the dark night to be drawn around them for ever. Better prospects are presented to us. The hope of immortality is set before us, and heaven opens its everlasting gates to receive us to its mansions.

Because of this our heart is glad, and our glory rejoiceth. The Everlasting Father will not leave us in the grave, nor suffer his holy ones to see corruption. He hath shewed us the path of life. In his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are

pleasures for evermore. Know then thyself, O man! make thyself acquainted with thy future state. Enter early, my brethren, upon your eternal life; and now think, and act, and live, as the heirs of immortality. Implore the Divine goodness to give you the spirit of that better country to which you tend, and to bless you with a foretaste of the joys which are to come. And, in the strength of heaven, go forth from this assembly, immortal; go forth into the world, the sons of God, the heirs of heaven, candidates for a crown of glory which fadeth not away. Then you will have good cause to remember this day, as one of the days of the right hand of the Most High, and to endless ages you will bless the time when you retired from the vanities of the world, and learned to meditate at your Saviour's tomb.

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

PRAYER.

“ Follow now, O God, with thy blessing, the whole solemn service of this day. Accept of the praises, and hear the humble prayers of thy people. Our souls would again bless thee, O Lord: all that is within us would magnify thy holy name; for thou hast forgiven our iniquities, healed our diseases, redeemed our lives from destruction, and crowned us with loving kindness and with tender mercies. Adored be that Providence which hath watched over us ever since we had a being. Thou wast the guardian and protector of our tender years: Thou didst supply our wants, before we knew how to express them to thee in prayer: Thou didst distinguish us with thy love, before we knew that liberal hand from which our blessings flowed. Thy good Providence has brought us up hitherto: Thou hast kept our feet from falling, and our eyes from tears: Thou hast not been far off when trouble was near, nor like an absent friend to the distressed. Thou hast given songs to us in the night of adversity.

“ Above all thy mercies, we thank thee for eternal life, through Jesus Christ. Glory to

God in the highest, for peace proclaimed on earth, and good-will to the children of men. We thank thee for the divine doctrines which he taught, for his meritorious life, for his atoning death, for his glorious ascension into heaven, and his prevailing intercession for us within the veil.

“ While we enjoy the blessings of the Gospel, may we improve them. Let it not be our condemnation, that when the light hath come into the world, we have loved darkness rather than light ; but having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come, may we purify ourselves from the pollutions of the world, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. May we live blameless and harmless in the world, as the children of God, in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. Among men may our light so shine that they, seeing our good works, may glorify thee also, our Father which art in heaven. May we put on, as the dearly beloved of the Lord, bowels of compassion and mercy ; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us. While yet on earth, may our conversation be in heaven. May we run our Christian race with patience, and with cheerfulness, pressing forward to the mark set

before us, as heirs of immortality, and candidates for a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

“ We would again humbly offer up our prayers in behalf of these our native lands. We would again pray for thy blessing upon our King, and all the Royal Family. Extend thy favour to all ranks of men, and conditions of life among us.

“ We offer up our prayers for the whole churches of Christianity, and for all the race of man. Spread the knowledge of the faith further and further over the world. We implore thy favour in behalf of the dark corners of the earth, on which the light from heaven hath not yet shone. May the Day-spring from on high visit them, and the Sun of righteousness arise over their heads. Give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. May a light arise in the regions of darkness, and the dry and parched land become as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Thou hast brought a vine to us from Judah: Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it: Thou hast caused it to take deep root, and to fill our lands: The boughs thereof are like the cedars of God. Do not suffer its fences to be broken down, nor let the evil one lay it waste. Return, return, we

beseech thee, O God of Hosts, and behold and visit again thy vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch thou hast made strong for thyself. Extend its boughs over the whole earth, that its leaves may be for the healing of all people ; that nations yet undiscovered, and ages yet unborn, may rejoice in its shade !

“ Father of all mercies, God of all grace ! visit the sick and the afflicted. Let the sighs of the prisoner come up before thee : Look down with pity on the afflictions of the just ; bend thine ear to the groans of the unhappy. We pray for the whole human race, the distressed and fallen family of man ; once formed after thy image, destined to glory, honour, and immortality, but now defaced with guilt, debased with ignorance, subjected to slavery, and appointed unto death. Let them know Jesus, whom to know is eternal life. Sow the seeds of virtue and happiness every where. May the blood of Christ, which was shed upon Mount Calvary, atone for a whole guilty world. May the rays of the Sun of righteousness dissipate, as one vast cloud, the collected sins of humanity !

“ May cruelty, bigotry, and wrath, be no more : May the rod of the oppressor be broken,

and the sword of persecution sheathed. Come down as in the times of old, put on thy robe of vengeance, and deliver the innocent from the hands of the destroyer. May the benign genius of Christianity appear in the lives of all its professors, that the heart may be opened, that amiable virtue may appear again, that man may become a friend to man, and the earth resemble heaven.

“ We offer up our prayers in behalf of those miserable men who have abandoned themselves to wickedness and impiety. O most merciful God ! give them not over to final reprobation : Cast them not off for ever. Pour down upon them the influences of thy Spirit, to melt their hearts of stone ; to turn them unto the wisdom of the just, before the day of grace expire, and the gates of heaven be shut, never to be opened again.

“ May we all of us this day depart from thy courts with deep and solemn impressions upon our minds, never to be effaced ! Keep, O God, keep our feet from falling. With desiring eyes we look forward to the glory which is to be revealed ; and we rejoice in the happy immortality of the redeemed from among men. And now what wait we for but thy

blessing. Bless us, O our God, and be with us for ever and ever. *Amen.*

HYMN V.

I.

THE hour of my departure's come ;
I hear the voice that calls me home ;
At last, O Lord! let trouble cease,
And let thy servant die in peace.

II.

The race appointed I have run ;
The combat's o'er ; the prize is won ;
And now my witness is on high,
And now my record's in the sky.

III.

Not in mine innocence I trust ;
I bow before thee in the dust ;
And through my Saviour's blood alone
I look for mercy at thy throne:

IV.

I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I held so dear :

To heal their sorrows, Lord, descend,
And to the friendless prove a friend.

v.

I come, I come, at thy command,
I give my spirit to thy hand ;
Stretch forth thine everlasting arms,
And shield me in the last alarms !

vi.

The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home ;
Now, O my God ! let trouble cease,
Now let thy servant die in peace.

BLESSING.

“ May the love of God the Father, the grace
“ of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the
“ fellowship and communion of the Holy
“ Spirit, be with you and all the people of
“ God, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*”

SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN LOGAN, F. R. S. EDINBURGH,
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF LEITH:

INCLUDING

A COMPLETE DETAIL OF THE SERVICE

OF A

Communion Sunday,

ACCORDING TO

THE USAGE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF
THE AUTHOR.

VOLUME II.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE very favourable reception which the First Volume of Mr LOGAN'S Sermons has met with, has induced the Publication of a Second; and the same allowances will be made, as in the former case, for a Posthumous Work.

SOME of the Sermons are incomplete; owing partly to their having been left in that state by the Author, and partly to the Manuscript being lost. Their places could have been supplied by others in a more perfect form; but,

as this is proposed to be the concluding Volume, it was judged better to make it up from a selection of the whole remaining Pieces of the deceased Writer.

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LECTURE I.

[A *Lecture* is a stated part in the MORNING SERVICE of the Church of Scotland, and follows immediately after the first prayer. The Minister reads some passage of Scripture, consisting, for the most part, of a considerable number of verses: these he successively explains, and, where necessary, illustrates them, not only from the context, but both from sacred and profane history. Besides making observations upon each verse, he generally, upon concluding, draws moral inferences from the whole.]

It is obvious, that the practice of *Lecturing* must, on those accounts, not only give scope to the learning of the preacher, and to his talent for bringing many particulars into one or a few points of view; but must tend, at the same time, to make the people more acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, and to derive, from the experience of past times, very useful instructions with regard to life.]

THE CONDITION OF THE GOOD MAN AND THE BAD
MAN DESCRIBED.

PSALM i.

1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

2 *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

3 *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.*

4 *The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*

5 *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

6 *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

CHRISTIANS and Brethren! The most critical period of human life is, when we set out into the world! Frequently the first step is

decisive. The young adventurer, set free from the authority of parents and of guardians, becomes his own master, and follows his own inclination. It is then that he begins to form his character; and the character that is then formed generally lasts through life. Mankind for the most part continue in the same path in which they set out. The passions of youth may resign to the passions of age, and one set of vices or of virtues give place to those of a similar kind; but seldom does the formed character undergo an essential change. Our first steps ought therefore to be ordered with the greatest care and deliberation, as upon them, in a great measure, depends not only our present, but also our eternal happiness.

It was with a design to direct us in this important period, that the Psalm before us was written; in which the practice of righteousness is recommended, not only from the advantages attending it in this life, and in that which is to come, but likewise from the pernicious tendency of sin to embitter our earthly enjoyments, and to render us unqualified for inheriting the joys of heaven. The gradual deviation of a sinner from the onward path of virtue, till he is inextricably bewildered in the insidious mazes and winding

ways of iniquity, are here most beautifully described.

The first step in reality, though it be the second in the description, is, *He standeth in the way of sinners*. Frequenting the company of the wicked is a certain introduction to a life of wickedness. Mankind are oftener led astray by the company of the profligate than by their own depraved inclinations. This unhappy bias to associate with the profane arises from two causes, which operate powerfully on the minds of inexperienced youth. The first is that rigorousness and austerity which some gloomy-minded Christians attach to their religion. There are many persons of such an unhappy constitution as to indulge themselves in perpetual moroseness and melancholy. Those sons of sorrow turn every house into a house of mourning, and behave in life as if it were one of their principles, that mirth was made for reprobates, and cheerfulness of heart denied to all those who have the best title to be cheerful. My brethren, there is no connection; God and nature have established no connection between sanctity of character and severity of manners. To rejoice evermore, is not only the privilege, but is also the duty of a Christian. A cheerful temper is a perpetual hymn to the

Divinity. A gloomy cast of mind is not only a certain source of misery and discontent, but is really in itself sinful, by deterring others from a holy life, by representing religion in an unfavourable and forbidding light, as if it conjured up a spirit to darken the face of the heavens and the earth, to trouble the peace and the harmony of nature, and to banish gladness from the circle of human society. Very opposite is the conduct of the votaries of vice. To betray unwary innocence into their snares, they put on the mask of mirth; they counterfeit gladness amidst the horrors of guilt, and borrow the accents of pleasure, and the air of joy. "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds," say they; "let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered, let no flower of the spring pass away, let us devote the present moments to joy, and give thought and care to the winds." By their flattery and fair speeches, too often are the innocent ensnared. They mark the fair attire, and the smiles upon the cheek of the deceiver, sensual pleasure; but they discern not, till too late, the pains, the diseases, and the destruction that follow in her train. They discern not that her steps lead down to the grave, and that her bower is an antichamber to hell.

There is a second cause which has often been known to make men associate with the profane, and that is, an opinion that wickedness, particularly some kinds of it, are manly and becoming; that dissoluteness, infidelity, and blasphemy, are indications of a sprightly and a strong mind. By the most unhappy of all associations, they join together the ideas of religion and dulness; and if they have a good opinion of a man's faith and his morals, they are led to have a very bad one of his understanding. This opinion, although it has gained ground where it might not have been expected, is without foundation in nature or in fact. Some instances there may have been of great men who have been irregular; but the experience of ages is on the other side. Those who have shone in all ages as the lights of the world; the most celebrated names that are recorded in the annals of fame; legislators, the founders of states, and the fathers of their country, on whom succeeding ages have looked back with filial reverence; patriots, the guardians of the laws, who have stemmed the torrent of corruption in every age; heroes, the saviours of their country, who have returned victorious from the field of battle, or more than victorious, who have died for their country; philo-

sophers, who have opened the book of nature, and explained the wonders of almighty power ; bards, who have sung the praises of virtue and of virtuous men, whose strains carry them down to immortality ; with a few exceptions, have been uniformly on the side of goodness, and have been as distinguished in the temple of virtue as they were illustrious in the temple of fame. It was one of the maxims which governed their lives, that there is nothing in nature which can compensate wickedness ; that although the rewards and punishments, which influence illiberal and ungenerous minds, were set aside ; that although the thunders of the Almighty were hushed, and the gates of paradise were open no more, they would follow religion and virtue for their own sake, and co-operate with eternal Providence in perpetual endeavours to favour the good, to depress the bad, and to promote the happiness of the whole creation.

The second stage in the perversion of a sinner, is *walking after the counsel of the ungodly*. It is a maxim established by the sad experience of ages, that evil communication corrupts good manners. The power of nature and of conscience, and the influence of a religious education, may, for a while, with-

stand the shock, but these gradually will be overpowered, and yield to the impetuosity of the torrent. Hence follow the painful struggles between reason and the senses, between conscience and inclination, which constitute a state of the utmost misery and torment. Such persons, when they are carousing in the gay circle of their acquaintance, when the blood is warm, and the spirits high, will then go all lengths with their fellow-debauchees, and give a loose to every wanton and every wicked desire. But when the fumes of intoxication have forsaken the aching head ; when the calm forenoon hour of reflection comes, then conscience, faithful to its trust, summons them to her awful bar, fills them with confusion and remorse, and condemns them to the severest of all tortures—to be extended on the rack of reflection, to lie upon the torture of the mind. This is a state in which great part of mankind live and die. They have as much corruption as to lead them to the commission of new sins, and as much religion as to awaken in them remorse for these sins. They repent of their old vicious pleasures, and at the same time are laying plans for new ones, and make their lives one continued course of sinning and repenting, of transgression and remorse.

The third and last stage of impiety is *sitting in the chair of the scorner*, or laughing at all religion and virtue. This is a pitch of diabolical attainment, to which few arrive. It requires a double portion of the infernal spirit, and a long experience in the mystery of iniquity, to become callous to every sense of religion, of virtue, and of honour; to throw off the authority of nature, of conscience, and of God; to overleap the barrier of laws divine and human; and to endeavour to wrest the bolt from the red right-hand of the Omnipotent. Difficult as the achievement is, we see it sometimes effected. We have seen persons who have gloried in their shame, and boasted of being vicious for the sake of vice. Such characters are monsters in the moral world. Figure to yourselves, my brethren, the anguish, the horror, the misery, the damnation, such a person must endure, who must consider himself in a state of enmity with heaven and with earth; who has no pleasant reflections from the past, no peace in the present, no hopes from the future; who must consider himself as a solitary being in the world; who has no friends without to pour balm in the cup of bitterness he is doomed to drink; who has no friend above

to comfort him, when there is none to help ; and who has nought within him to compensate for that irreparable and irredeemable loss. Such a person is as miserable as he is wicked. He is insensible to every emotion of friendship ; he is lost to all sense of honour ; he is seared to every feeling of virtue.

In the class of those who sit in the chair of the scorner, we may include the whole race of infidels, who misemploy the engines of reason or of ridicule to overthrow the Christian religion. Were the dispute concerning a system of speculative opinions, which of themselves are of no importance to the happiness of mankind, it would be uncharitable to include them all under this censure. But on the Christian religion, not only the happiness but the virtue of mankind depends. It is an undoubted fact, that religion is the strongest principle of virtue with all men, and with nine-tenths of mankind is the only principle of virtue. Any attempt, therefore, to destroy it, must be considered as an attempt against the happiness and against the virtue of the human kind. If the heathen philosophers did not attempt to subvert the false religion of their country, but, on the contrary, gave it the sanction of their example, because, bad as

it was, it had considerable influence on the manners of the people, and was better than no religion at all, what shame, what contempt, what infamy, ought they to incur, who endeavour to overthrow a religion which contains the noblest ideas of the Deity, and the purest system of morals, that ever were taught upon earth? He is a traitor to his country; he is a traitor to the human kind; he is a traitor to Heaven, who abuses the talents that God has given him, in impious attempts to wage war against Heaven, and to undermine that system of religion, which, of all things, is the best adapted to promote the happiness and the perfection of the human kind. Blessed, then, is the man who hath not brought himself into this sinful and miserable state, who hath held fast his innocence and integrity in the midst of a degenerate world; or if, in some unguarded hour, he hath been betrayed into an imprudent step, or overtaken in a fault, hath made ample amends for his folly by a life of penitence and of piety.

VERSE 2. *His delight is in the law of the Lord.* He makes religion and virtue the grand business of his life, and his business becomes his delight. He does not take it up

occasionally, and by fits and starts ; it is his employment *day and night*. In the morning he riseth with the sun, and joins with the choir of angels and archangels in celebrating the great Creator. He looks around him with a pious pleasure on the living landscape which the hand of the Almighty hath drawn for his delight, and he adores that benevolent power who makes all nature beauty to his eye, and music to his ear ; but he has a fairer prospect within, than nature can furnish without, and the still small voice of conscience whispers peace to his heart in sweeter strains than all the music of the morning, which hails him on every side. With a cheerful and a grateful heart, he contemplates the wonders of creating bounty, he recollects the instances of preserving goodness, and he traces the annals of redeeming love. He looks through the veil of created things, and raises his thoughts from this world to that state of happiness and immortality which is reserved for the spirits of just men made perfect. His religion does not consist in contemplation alone. He goeth about doing good. He instructs the ignorant in the light that leads to heaven ; he pours the balm of consolation into the wounded mind ; and he wipes the tears from the cheeks

of the distressed. He distinguishes every day with some good, some memorable deed ; and he retires to rest with that inward, serene, and heartfelt joy, that sober certainty of bliss, which is only to be found in a life of holiness and of piety.

VERSE 3. *And he shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.* A tree planted by the rivers of water, is a beautiful object in all nations ; but to the Jews, who lived in a hot country, and were scorched with the heat of the sun, it was an object both of signal beauty and of signal utility, by affording them a shadow from the heat. Hence, when they describe mankind in their happiest state, they represent them as sitting under their vines and their fig-trees. This allusion expresseth well the flourishing state of the righteous man. Planted in the garden of his God, and watered with the dew of heaven, his leaf is ever green, and he brings forth the fruits of righteousness in due season. His goodness is liberal and unconfined, and his beneficence is shared promiscuously by friends and foes. He is clothed with righteousness,

and his judgment is a robe and a diadem. The ear that hears him blesseth, and the eye that sees him gives witness to him, because he delivereth the poor, the fatherless, and them that have none to help. He is eyes to the blind. He is feet to the lame. The loins of the naked bless him. The blessing of him that is ready to perish comes upon him, and he causes the widow's heart to sing for joy.

All he doth shall prosper well. Among the Jews, to whom this Psalm was addressed, this held invariably true. There was a particular dispensation of providence exercised towards that people, distributing temporal rewards to righteousness, and temporal punishments to sin. In the ordinary course of providence now, this does not always hold. Success and disappointment are administered variously to the sons of men. But still, in all his endeavours, the good man bids the fairest for success. While he acts in character, he will attempt nothing but what is just and honourable in itself, or beneficial to the interests of society; he will always have the good wishes of mankind on his side. And although he should sometimes be disappointed, the consciousness of his good intentions will keep his mind at ease, and his faith in the good providence of his heavenly Fa-

ther will fill him with a contentment and peace of mind, that is a stranger to the breast of the wicked man, even when he obtains his wishes.

VERSE 4. *The ungodly are not so : but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.* The Psalmist hits upon the distinguishing feature in the character of a wicked man. He never acts upon a plan. He lives and acts at random. He has no rule for his life but the veerings of passion. Present gratification being his only object, different and contrary passions solicit him at the same time. One appetite saith unto him, Go, and he goeth ; another says, Come, and he cometh. The slave of sense, and the sport of passion, he is driven to and fro like the chaff before the whirlwind, and his life is one continued scene of levity, inconsistency, and folly.

VERSES 5 and 6. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : but the way of the ungodly shall perish.* The miseries which the wicked endure here, are but the beginning of their sorrows. That God, whose grace they abused, whose mercy they undervalued, and

whose power they despised, is now their awful and inexorable Judge. The wicked have no cause to complain of the sentence that is passed upon them. They have brought it upon their own heads. They have been the instruments of their own ruin. They have brought themselves into a situation in which it is impossible for them to be happy. Let us suppose them to be admitted into the company of the blessed, their situation would be still deplorable. They would pine in the mansions of bliss, and search for heaven in the midst of paradise. We may venture to say, that it is even impossible for Omnipotence to make a wicked man happy ; it implies an express contradiction. They have put themselves out of the reach of Divine mercy, and become what the scripture most emphatically calls, “ Vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” “ Therefore they shall not stand in the judgment.” The poor and the distressed whom they refused to relieve, the widow and the fatherless whom they oppressed, the innocent whom they injured, the unhappy wretches whom, by their artifices, they betrayed into the paths of destruction, shall rise up and witness against them. Their own hearts will condemn them. The final sentence is

pronounced, they are driven from the presence of the Lord, they are cast into outer darkness, where the worm dieth not, where the fire is never quenched; and it had been happy for them that they had never been born.

I shall conclude with one reflection. You see, my brethren, from what has been said, that a life of wickedness is gradual and progressive. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till, by degrees, the whole superstructure of iniquity is complete. When the sinner has once put forth his hand to the forbidden fruit, and thinks that he can taste and live, he returns with greater and greater avidity to repeat his crimes, till the poison spreads through all his veins, and all the balm of Gilead be ineffectual for his cure. Fly, therefore, I call upon you in the name of heaven, fly from the approaching foe. Guard your innocence as you would guard your life. If you advance one step over the verge of virtue, unless the grace of Heaven interpose, down you sink to the bottomless abyss. Come not then near the territories of danger. Stand back. One sin in-

dulged, gathers strength and abounds ; it increases, it multiplies, it familiarizes itself with our frame, and introduces its whole brood of infernal inmates, worse than pestilence, famine, or sword.

LECTURE II.

ON THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

PSALM XXIV.

1 *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.*

2 *For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*

3 *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?*

4 *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*

5 *He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

6 *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*

7 *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.*

THIS Psalm was composed when David removed the ark of the covenant from the house of Obedom to Jerusalem. But though it was composed for that occasion, it is evident

from the latter part of it, that it was ultimately intended for that more illustrious event, when Solomon transferred the ark from the tabernacle into the temple which he had built. As David was not only the Poet, but also the Prophet of God, he foresaw the future events of the Church, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit; and by the same inspiration, he composed songs and pieces of music adapted to these events. These he committed to Asaph, Hemon and Jeduthun, the prefects of sacred poetry, to be sung as opportunities required.

The occasion of this psalm is one of the grandest and most illustrious that anywhere occurs in history. Solomon, by the Divine direction, had now finished the temple, that superb monument of oriental magnificence and glory, which drew the princes of neighbouring nations to come and contemplate. The feast of tabernacles, the most solemn and most frequented of the Jewish festivals, was now at hand. All the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, were now assembled at Jerusalem to the feast. It was then that Solomon proceeded to dedicate the temple, and to fix the ark in its appointed place. The procession to the temple was grand and triumphant. Solomon, arrayed in all his glory,

attended with the elders of Israel, and the heads of the tribes went before; after him marched the priests, in their sacerdotal robes, bearing the ark; to them succeeded the four thousand sacred musicians, clothed in white robes, and divided into classes, some of them singing with the voice, others playing upon harps and trumpets, and psalteries and cymbals, and other instruments of music; behind them followed the whole congregation, with palms in their hands, rejoicing and wondering. Solomon had, on this occasion, made an oblation of twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep, of which the Almighty testified his approbation and acceptance, by causing the sacred fire come down anew from heaven, and consume the sacrifice. The priests and Levites, as they went along, sprinkled the ground with the blood of the victims, and perfumed the air with frankincense and sweet odours. This, with the fumes of incense which rose in clouds from the altars, had diffused such a potent perfume through the air, that people at a distance reflected on the breath they drew as a celestial influence, and regarded the strains of harmony which they heard, as something more than mortal; actually imagining that the God

of the Hebrews had descended from his heaven to take possession of the temple which they had dedicated to his service. Nor were they mistaken. For after the priests had carried the ark into the holy of holies, had placed it between the cherubim, and had reverently withdrawn, the cloud of Divine glory descended and rested upon the house. The Shechinah, or Divine presence, took up its abode in the most holy place. Animated by this sublime occasion, the Psalmist begins his ode with celebrating the dominion of the Deity over this vast universe and all its inhabitants, and setting forth their entire subjection to his power and providence.

VERSES 1. and 2. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.* David ascertains the sovereignty of God over the world, and its subjection to him, from his having created it at first; from his having established it upon the seas, and founded it upon the floods. By this he opposes the sceptics and infidels of those times, who withdrew nature from the Divinity, and denied the interposition of Providence in human af-

fairs : by this he distinguishes the God whom he adored, from the idols of the Gentiles around him, who were confined to one part or province of nature : by this he endeavours to inspire the Jews with gratitude and love to their God and King, who chose them from among all the nations whom he governs by his providence, to be his favourite people, the object of his particular providence, and peculiar loving-kindness. The Psalmist next determines where that God, whose perfections he had been describing, was to be worshipped, and which of his worshippers were to be the objects of his favour and approbation.

VERSE 3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in his holy place ?* It was usual among the Jews to add the name of God to any thing that was great, that was wonderful, and of which they would give us a high idea. Lofty cedars in Scripture are called the trees of the Lord : high hills are called the mountains of God : wine, on account of its generous, joyous, and exhilarating qualities, is said to cheer the heart of God and man. In this place, the phrase is not to be taken in its usual sense. By the hill of God, is here meant the hill of Zion, which the

Almighty had chosen to be the place of his worship, and where he had commanded his temple to be built. Near the same tract of ground there were three hills. Zion, where the city and castle of David stood ; Moriah, where the temple was built, and Calvary, where our Saviour was crucified ; but these, for the most part, went under the general name of Zion. By the phrases of ascending into the hill of God, and standing in his holy place, the Psalmist would point out the persons who are to be admitted to worship God in his temple here, and in consequence of that, to be received into the temple of his glory above, and to dwell for ever with the Lord. We have the character and qualities of these persons expressed in the following verse.

VERSE 4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* It is very observable, that in ascertaining the qualifications of the citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, the Psalmist does not so much as mention the external observances, the costly and laborious rites of the ceremonial law, in which the Israelites generally prided themselves, but dwells alone on the great and essential duties of mo-

rality, which are of universal and eternal obligation. The fond affection and attachment of the Jews to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, so as to neglect other duties, is the more remarkable, as God, by the mouth of his Prophets, frequently declared that he had no pleasure in them, calling them precepts which were not good, and statutes by which a man could not live. In the fiftieth Psalm, we have an express declaration to this purpose : “ Hear, O my people, and I will
“ speak ; O Israel, and I will testify against
“ thee : I am God, even thy God. I will not
“ reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt
“ offerings, to have been continually before me.
“ I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor
“ he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of
“ the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thou-
“ sand hills. I know all the fowls of the moun-
“ tains : and the wild beasts of the field are
“ mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell
“ thee ; for the world is mine, and the fulness
“ thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or
“ drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God
“ thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the
“ Most High, and call upon me in the day of
“ trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou
“ shalt glorify me.” The qualifications here

required are those of the heart and the life, "Clean hands and a pure heart." It is not enough that we wash our hands in innocence before men; we must be pure in heart before the eyes of infinite perfection. True religion is the religion of the heart; it is a principle dwelling in the mind, that extends its influence through the whole man, and regulates the life. Unless our religion enter into the heart, we have no religion at all. The form of godliness is insufficient and unavailing without the power thereof. We can never attain to the true beauties of holiness, unless, like the king's daughter, we be all glorious within. On the other hand, when clean hands and a pure heart are united in the same person; when a conversation without blame, and a conscience void of offence, coincide, they are in the sight of God of great price. A life sacred to devotion and virtue, sacred to the practice of truth and undefiled religion, joined to a heart, pure, pious, and benevolent, constitute an offering more acceptable at the altars of the Most High God, than whole hecatombs of burnt-offerings, and a thousand hills of frankincense in a flame.

By lifting up the soul unto vanity, the Psalmist means making riches and honour, those vani-

ties of the world, the object of our affection and pursuit; saying to the gold, Thou art our trust, or to the most fine gold, Thou art our confidence. Or it may mean the worshipping of idols, which, in Scripture, go under the denomination of vanity, as in Jeremiah, “ Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” *Swearing deceitfully*, includes all manner of perjury. This vice is always represented in Scripture in the most dreadful colours. He that sweareth falsely, and he that feareth an oath, is an equivalent term for the wicked and the righteous. As an oath is the greatest pledge of veracity, and the end of all strife, general and customary violations of it must have the most pernicious effect upon society. Such a practice would entirely banish religious principles from the world; it would dissolve the bands of society, it would shake the fundamental pillars of mutual trust and confidence among men, and destroy the security arising from the laws themselves. For human laws and human sanctions cannot extend to numberless cases in which the safety of mankind is essentially concerned. They would prove but feeble and ineffectual means of preserving the order and peace of society, if there were no checks upon men,

from the sense of Divine legislation ; if no belief of Divine rewards and punishments came in aid of what human rewards and punishments so imperfectly provide for. We have, in the next verse, the rewards promised to the persons possessed of these qualifications.

VERSE 5. *He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of his salvation.* This alludes to the appointed custom of the Jewish priests, who, on solemn and stated occasions, were wont to bless the people. Their form of blessing we have prescribed in Numbers vi. 22. “ And the Lord
 “ spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron
 “ and unto his sons, saying, On this wise shall
 “ ye bless the people of Israel: The LORD bless
 “ thee and keep thee; the LORD make his
 “ face to shine upon thee; and be gracious
 “ unto thee; the LORD lift up his countenance
 “ upon thee, and give thee peace.” But as the priest was a fallible creature, his blessing might be indiscriminately bestowed, and fail of its effect. But the person who hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, shall receive the blessing from God himself, whose favour is better than life, and whose

blessing maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. These blessings are summed up in the eighty-fourth Psalm: "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." *Righteousness from the God of our salvation*, may either mean the reward of righteousness, as the work in Scripture is frequently put for the reward; or it may mean kindness, mercy and the benefits from righteousness, as in 1 Sam. xii. 7, "Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord, of all the righteousness of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers." Where it is evident, from what follows, that by righteousness of the Lord, he means the deliverances that God had wrought for them.

VERSE 6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, or O God of Jacob*, as it might better be rendered. This is the generation, who, in obedience to the commandments of God, and in the methods of his appointment, seek his face, that is, his favour and friendship, and to whom he never said, "Seek ye my face in vain."

Animated by his subject, the Psalmist pro-

ceeds to higher strains, and, in the sublime spirit of eastern poetry, calls upon the gates of the temple to open and admit the triumphal procession.

VERSE 7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.* To illustrate this part of the Psalm, we must take a short view of the Hebrew psalmody. The Psalms of David are of various kinds. Some of them are dramatic, having speakers introduced, making a kind of musical dialogue. Of this the ninety-first Psalm is a remarkable instance. In the first verse, the high-priest, rising up, declares the happiness of him who putteth his trust in the Almighty. In the second verse, David himself, or one of the singers, representing the faithful among the Jews, declares his faith and confidence in God. From the third to the fourteenth, the ode was performed by the sacred singers, both with the voice and instruments of music. The three last verses were spoken by the high-priest alone in the character of God Almighty.

Many of the Psalms are intended to be sung by two divisions of the sacred singers,

the chorus and the semichorus. Such is the Psalm before us. Every verse is divided into two members, exactly of the same length, and generally representing the same thought, expressed in a different manner. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;—the world, and they that dwell therein." When we come to the seventh, the verse is evidently altered. The verses are not divided into two members as before, and for a very good reason. The semichorus asked the question, and the chorus made the reply. Apostrophes, or addresses to inanimate nature, are among the boldest figures in poetry, and when properly introduced, as in this place, are in the highest manner productive of beauty. The simple thought, when stripped of its poetical ornaments, is no more than this: When the priests had carried the ark to the temple, Solomon ordered the gates to be thrown open to admit the ark. How much this thought is improved, when embellished by the fine imagination of the sweet singer of Israel, and clothed in all the graces of poetry, let persons of the smallest critical discernment judge. In short, the passage is too well known, and too beautiful, to need or admit of any illustration. Like the meridian sun, it

shines in its own light, and to endeavour to adorn it were wasteful and ridiculous excess.

As we are assured, by an authority that cannot err, that the ceremonies of the Jewish law were a figure of good things to come, and as the ark has been considered as a type of our Saviour, it is highly probable, that its introduction into the temple prefigured to the faithful among the Jews, that solemn and triumphant period when our Saviour ascended into the heaven of heavens, to take possession of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

LECTURE III.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE xvi. 19—31.

19 *There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.*

20 *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores,*

21 *And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.*

22 *And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried.*

23 *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

24 *And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.*

25 *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou*

in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 *And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

27 *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house :*

28 *For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

29 *Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*

30 *And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

31 *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

THE method of instruction by parables, was much in use among the eastern nations. Both physical and moral causes contributed to introduce and to support this custom. The people of the east have always been more under the government of the imagination and fancy, than the nations of the north. They

use the liveliest and the boldest figures of speech in their ordinary conversation; and their writings are all in the manner as well as in the spirit of poetry. What the influence of the climate made natural, the form of their government rendered necessary. As the form of their government has always been despotic and tyrannical, they were afraid to speak out their sentiments with openness and with freedom. Truth durst not approach the throne, nor appear in public.

Such was the origin of parables. This method of instruction possesses many advantages. It is obvious to all capacities, and has a charm for every hearer. It is well adapted to strike the fancy; it interests the passions, and thus makes a deeper and more lasting impression than mere moral instruction could convey. It likewise possesses one advantage peculiar to itself. It makes a man his own instructor. When the parable is told, we ourselves draw the moral, and make the application. Observations and reflections that we make ourselves, are of more avail to us in the conduct of life, than any instruction we can learn from others.

The parable now before us contains many useful and important lessons. We have here represented two characters not uncommon in

the world; a rich man, who enjoyed the pleasures and the luxuries of life, and a poor beggar, who lived and who died in poverty, and in distress. This man was a signal object of pity. He was a beggar, and he was full of sores. Notwithstanding this double call to sympathy and compassion, the heart of the rich man was hardened against him. All the advantage he reaped from lying at the great man's gate was, that his dogs, who had more feeling than their master, came and licked his sores. Nevertheless this rich man was not a miser. He was not a niggard of the gifts of Providence. He enjoyed life. He was arrayed in purple, which, in those days, was the vestment of kings. Hospitality presided in his hall, and luxury reigned at his table. He made sumptuous entertainments for his friends, and he made them every day. He seems to have been one of that class of men, and a very numerous class they are, and very frequently to be found in life, who are very hospitable to those who do not want, but very unfriendly to those that do; who prepare rich and splendid entertainments for those tribes of flatterers and sycophants, who always crowd the mansions of the great, and at the same time have nothing to spare to a real object of distress. However, he acted very agreeably

to the principles of his sect ; for, as we learn from the sequel, he was a Sadducee, or what in our days we call an infidel, that is, one who has no religion at all. He did not believe in the immortality of the soul. He did not believe that there was either a heaven or a hell. Accordingly, he endeavoured to make the most of this life, and acted up to the maxims of his sect, “ Let us eat and “ drink, for to-morrow we shall die.”

Learn hence the folly and the danger of endeavouring to establish virtue upon any foundation but that of true religion. People may tell us that social affection is the law of our being ; they may talk of virtue being its own reward ; they may sing the praises of disinterested benevolence ; but if you take away the rewards and punishments of the world to come, you set the greatest part of mankind free from every moral obligation, and open a door to universal depravity and corruption of manners. If the beauty of virtue is laid in one scale, and interest in the other, it will not be difficult to determine to which side the balance will incline. The accusations of conscience will be little regarded, unless they are considered as an earnest of the worm that never dies. Take away the doctrine of a

world to come, and you make this world a scene of universal depravity and open wickedness.

At first view we would be apt to wonder at the ways of Heaven, and perhaps tempted in our minds to arraign the conduct of Providence, in crowning this worthless and wicked man with wealth and prosperity, whilst all that diversified the good man's lot was scene after scene of poverty and pain. But let us suspend our judgment. We see but one link in the great chain of Providence. We live but in the infancy of being. The great drama of life is but begun. When the catastrophe is brought about, when the curtain between both worlds is undrawn, the morn will arise that will light the Almighty's footsteps in the deep, and pour full day upon all the paths of his providence.

VERSE 22. *And it came to pass that the beggar died.* He died, and all his miseries died with him. He whom this rich man would have disdained to have considered as his fellow-creature, had a company of angels sent down to transport him to the regions of the blessed, to the bosom of Abraham, where all his sorrows had an end, and the tears were

for ever wiped from his eyes. Let the needy and the oppressed take consolation from this salutary doctrine. With God there is no respect of persons. Let it be the great business of your lives to be rich in faith and in good works, and to lay up treasures in heaven, and then you may rejoice in hope, that though you have nothing here, yet your's is the kingdom of God.

VERSES 23 to 26 inclusive. Before our Saviour's incarnation, the Greek language had made its way into Judea. Along with the language of the Greeks, their opinions in philosophy, and the fictions of their poetry, had been introduced, and made part of the popular belief. This part of the parable which we have now read, is evidently founded upon the fictions of the Grecian poets concerning the state of departed souls. They, as well as our Lord in this parable, represent the abodes of the blessed as lying contiguous to the regions of the damned, and separated only by a great impassable river, or deep gulf, in such a manner, that the ghosts could talk with one another from its opposite banks. In the parable, souls, whose bodies were buried, know each other, and converse together, as if they

had been embodied. In like manner, the heathens introduce departed souls as talking together, and represent them as having pains and pleasures analogous to what we feel in this life; and they thought that the shades of the dead had an exact resemblance to their bodies. The parable says, that the souls of wicked men are tormented in flames; the Grecian poets tell us, that they lie in a river of fire, where they suffer the same torments they would have suffered while alive, had their bodies been burnt. From this account, therefore, we are to draw no inferences concerning the real nature of heaven or of hell. A parable is no more than an instructive fable or tale, and the only thing to be regarded in it is the moral that it conveys. We cannot therefore conclude from this parable, that there is material fire in hell, or that the abodes of the blessed and the regions of the damned are contiguous to one another. The word of God gives us no materials wherein we can make a description either of hell or heaven. It was never the intention of scripture to satisfy our curiosity, but to influence our practice, and for that purpose to awake our hopes and our fears, by representing the one as being the region of the greatest torment, and the other as the scene of unmingled and everlasting joy.

The rich man died, and was buried. We read not of the burial of the poor man. He would be thrown into a common grave, and mingled with vulgar and obscure dust. But the rich man was buried with pomp and with splendour. Crowds of mercenary mourners would attend his funeral, and venal tears be shed upon his tomb. Every amiable and every respectable quality would be ascribed to him by those ready flatterers who have always a character at hand for the deceased of quality. But, insensible to this incense, *in hell he lift up his eyes.* How astonishing and how awful must it be, my brethren, for a person who believes not in a future state, to receive his first conviction from the flames of the lake which burneth for ever, and from the gnawings of the worm that never dies. The request of the rich man is very remarkable. He does not acknowledge the justness of his punishment, nor confess the greatness of his sins. He does not shew any remorse of mind for the offences he had committed against God, for the injuries he had done to society, or for the ruin he had brought upon his own soul. He had no sorrow for sin, he had only a feeling of pain. He did not want to be delivered from his guilt, but only from punish-

ment. But such had been his character in this world. The fact is, my brethren, we retain the same dispositions hereafter, that we cultivate here. It is utterly impossible, that the mere separation of the soul from matter, can make any alteration upon the essential qualities of the soul. We carry to the other world the same qualities, the same temper of mind, and the same character, that we have on earth. What manner of persons doth it become us then to be? As we now sow, hereafter we reap. Our heaven or our hell is already begun within us. The worm that never dies hath already begun to gnaw the heart of the wicked; and the good man hath already begun those hymns and hosannas of praise, which shall employ him through eternity.

Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things. This answer of the Patriarch is remarkable for mildness. When a person, by his imprudence and folly, hath involved himself in a scene of distress, there is nothing more common than for those who visit him at such a time, to upbraid him with his bypast conduct in the severest manner, and to administer rebukes with acrimony and bitterness. Instead of giving their assistance to extricate him

from his distresses, those miserable comforters push him deeper in the pit, and take a cruel pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted, conscious, that whilst they are insulting over their unfortunate brother, they are paying encomiums to their own superior prudence and discretion. This rich man had brought himself into the last of evils, into an evil that admitted of no remedy, by his own wickedness. Yet Abraham did not address him in this severe and insulting language. He calls him *son*, his descendant according to the flesh. The good Patriarch wanted not to add to the horrors of hell. The spirit of rage and rancour never gains admittance into the bosoms of the blessed. This shews us how different the meek, the gentle, and the benevolent temper is from that cruel and merciless zeal which often passeth for it upon earth.

His own petition being refused, the rich man now applies for his relations. VERSE 27. *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house.* Let no wicked man boast himself of possessing some virtues amid the number of his crimes. You see there is even some goodness in hell. The rich man retained still some affection for his brethren, and had a desire for their conversion.

Though they had been partakers with him in his sins, he did not want them to be partakers of his punishment. The repetition of the request shews he was in earnest.

VERSE 31. *Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* As this is a point of great consequence, it requires to be illustrated at some length. Let us suppose, that in order to convince a person of the immortality of his soul, Almighty God sent one of his deceased friends, either in his unembodied state, or with the same body he had in life. As no person would require such a proof, but one who was very much addicted to scepticism, it is very probable, that even then his doubts would not be removed. He might say, perhaps this may be an impostor, perhaps it may be some evil spirit who has assumed the shape of my deceased friend.

But let us suppose, that these doubts are removed, that he is convinced of the reality of the apparition, and the truth of a future state. Let us then see what effect it would have upon his life. He goes into company. He tells the story of the apparition to his companions. They hear it with derision and ridicule, and consider him as a visionary enthusiast, disturb-

ed in his imagination. As the experience of all mankind is against him, and the laws appear to be fixed for ever, of no intercourse between this world and the next, in whatever companies he tells it, it meets with the same treatment; and all the effect of the apparition is, that it makes every one to conclude him to be beside himself. You all know how difficult it is to remain single in opinion against the whole world. It is still harder to become the object of laughter and ridicule; so that with these difficulties in his way, it is ten to one but he falls in with the opinion of the world, and believes the apparition to have been the phantom of his own fancy. That this is not a mere conjecture, but what would really happen, appears from undoubted matter of fact, that did really happen. You remember the history of Saul. When the Lord would not answer him by his prophets, he went in quest of a woman who had a familiar spirit. She raised up to him an apparition, which he believed to be the ghost of Samuel the prophet. The apparition assured him that his kingdom was departed from him, and that he had only one day longer to live. What effect had this upon the king? did he repent of his sins? At first he was sore afraid, and was

melancholy; but through the persuasion of his attendants, he soon resumed his joy; and, on the morrow after the battle was lost, in order to fulfil the prophecy of the devil, he proceeded to commit the most deliberate crime that can be perpetrated by man: He raised impious hands against his life, and plunged his sword in his own breast.

The fact is, my brethren, mankind are not always in a mood to be convinced. In spite of speculative opinion, men act from their passions, and bad passions will always produce bad actions, to the end of the world. The reluctance of mankind to assent to evidence, when it makes against their preconceived opinion, is remarkably apparent in the reception the Jews gave to our Saviour. All the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in him. He appeared in the world in the precise time predicted for the coming of the Messiah; he was descended of the lineage of David; he was born in the city of Bethlehem. A prophet went before him in the spirit and power of Elias. He performed miracles and mighty works, which no man could perform. But after all these proofs, after all these miracles, the Jews, who expected their Messiah to be a temporal Prince, still de-

manded more evidence. “Shew us,” said they, “a sign from heaven.” A sign from heaven they obtained. Now, in the presence of multitudes, a voice came from heaven, the voice of the Eternal, piercing the clouds, and proclaiming aloud, “This is my beloved Son!” Were they then convinced? No: They persecuted him with reproaches in his life, and at last brought him to an ignominious death, And when they had nailed him to the accursed tree, they still affirmed they would believe on him on proper evidence. “Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe on him.” If he had come down from the cross, the redemption of mankind would have been defeated, as it was to be accomplished by his death; but he did more than come down from the cross. He rose from the dead. Did they then believe on him? No: They charged the soldiers who brought them the news of his resurrection, to give out that his disciples stole him away while they slept. Well then may we adopt the maxim of the Patriarch Abraham, and affirm, that if ye believe not Moses and the Prophets; if ye believe not Christ and his Apostles; ye will not be persuaded *though one rose from the dead.*

LECTURE IV.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE FOOLISH VIRGINS.

MATTHEW XXV. 1—10.

1 *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

2 *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

3 *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :*

4 *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

5 *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

6 *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.*

7 *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

8 *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

9 *But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest*

there be not enough for us and you ; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage ; and the door was shut.*

IN a former lecture, I explained to you the nature, the origin, and the use of parables. They were the common vehicles of instruction among the oriental nations. The wisdom of the East loved to go adorned with flowers and with figures, and, by means of the imagination, to make its way to the heart. This mode of instruction was frequently honoured by our Lord's adopting it. Accommodating himself to the practice of the East, and to the manners of the Jews, he wrapt up his wisdom in this veil, and delivered his doctrines to the people in parables. As men are much under the guidance of the external senses, and strongly impressed by the material objects around them, he who knew what was in man, and who laid hold of every avenue to the human heart, frequently addressed himself to this part of our frame. He spiritualizes the whole system of nature ; he turns the most common and familiar occurrences of life into vehicles of Di-

vine truth ; and in the gentlest and most insinuating manner, leads us from earth to heaven.

In the parable which I have now read, the kingdom of Heaven, or dispensation of the Gospel, is likened to a marriage solemnity. On such occasions it was a custom among the Jews, that the bridegroom, in company with his friends, came late in the night to the house of the bride, where, upon a signal given, she and her bride-maids went out in procession to light him into the house with great ceremony and splendour. It is said that *five of these virgins were wise, and that five of them were foolish*. I explained to you, on a former occasion, that, in a parable, we are not to apply particular expressions, but to consider the intention and design upon the whole. If we understood and applied this expression literally, we would be led to conclude that, under the New Testament, the number of the good and of the bad was equal. But to settle this point, to ascertain the number of those who are to be saved, and of those who are to be damned, was not the intention of our Lord in the parable. For, by the same way of arguing, we might infer from the parable of the talents, which immediately follows this, that

the number of the good was double the number of the wicked, as there were two faithful servants who improved the talents committed to them, for one slothful servant who wrapt up his in a napkin ; and in the parable of the marriage supper, in the foregoing chapter, amongst all the number of the guests who were called to the feast, there was only one who wanted the wedding garment : Only from this general scheme of thought, which runs through all our Lord's parables, from their being always framed with a view to the charitable side, we may safely draw two conclusions. In the *first* place, Let us always form a favourable judgment concerning the character and state of those who are externally decent, whether they agree or differ from us in opinion ; and, if we do err, let us err on the side of charity. There are a set of men to be found in the world, who are remarkably fond of passing sentence and judgment upon the external state of their neighbours, and in passing this judgment, they attend not so much to the general tenor of life, and integrity of conduct, as to the system of doctrines which a man believes, and the sect or party in which he arranges himself. Unless you believe in every

point precisely as they do, down you go in their estimation.

Rash and profane mortal, who gave thee a commission to fix the mark of election and reprobation upon men? Did Almighty God depute thee to draw the line betwixt the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, to fill the heavens, and to people hell? We are astonished, and stand aghast at the boldness and impiety of the Roman Pontiff, who pretends to open and to shut the gate of mercy, and who arrogates to himself the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And yet thou who accusest him, art thyself equally guilty. Thou rushest unto the throne of the Eternal, and darest to direct the thunders of the Divine vengeance. Thou prescribest bounds to the mercy of the Omnipotent, and sayest to his saving grace, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." Vile worm! dost thou not tremble at thine own impiety? Fall prostrate in the dust. Shrink into thine own insignificance. Let thy time be employed in working out thine own salvation, rather than in dealing of damnation to thy neighbours.

At the same time, though I condemn this rage which some men discover to condemn their neighbours, as, in my opinion, entirely

inconsistent with the genius of the Gospel, and the Spirit of Christianity, nevertheless I would not go into their extreme, and pass the same sentence on them which they pass upon others. To pass a judgment upon characters is a difficult task, and requires a very delicate hand. We ought to distinguish what flows from a narrowness of mind from what flows from a badness of heart. We ought to make great allowances for the prejudices of education. If a man be educated in the belief, that none are to be saved but those who believe every article of that system which he embraces ; if his judgment concerning the characters of men rest not upon the goodness of their lives, but upon the soundness of their belief, such a man's charity must be narrow and constrained. And this may sometimes be owing, not to the badness of his nature, but to the badness of his religious principles. And I have sometimes seen such persons, though I must acknowledge very rarely, striving and struggling to get the better of their system ;—the heart and the affections true to Christianity, whilst the mind was enslaved by the prejudices of education.

VERSE 3. *They that were foolish took their*

lamps, and took no oil with them. The foolish virgins seemed at first to resemble the wise, and shone out for a while with the same lustre. They made the same profession and appearance at first. Themselves were awake, and their lamps were burning. But they had no supply for the future. Their goodness was like the morning cloud, and soon vanished away. They had no real religion in the heart. They wanted that inward principle of grace, which can alone enable us to stand fast in the Lord. They were not rooted and grounded in the faith. They had no steady principles of conduct, nor settled habits of action. Like the seed which was sown in the stony ground, they forthwith sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun arose, they withered away.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They sought and obtained the influences of the Divine Spirit to abide with them through life. They made a serious business of religion. They laid up a store of useful knowledge. They acted upon fixed and steady principles, and acquired habits of religion and virtue. They kept the heart well, knowing that out of it are the issues of life. They looked forward to the time to

come ; they provided against the evil day, and extended their view to take in all the temptations and afflictions of human life.

VERSE 5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Whether we interpret this coming of the bridegroom to be the second coming of our Lord to judge the world, or whether we apply it to our appearance before his tribunal at death, is a subject of no consequence ; the material point to be considered is, that while the bridegroom tarried, all of them, the wise as well as the foolish virgins, slumbered and slept. The wise grew remiss and careless, and the spiritual life declined within them. The foolish virgins returned again to foolishness ; and, because the Lord delayed, because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed, were fully bent to do evil. Seeing then that the wise virgins slumbered as well as the foolish ; seeing that good men, as well as bad men, may fall into sin ; a question, a very serious one, naturally arises : How shall we distinguish between those temporary relaxations in the Christian race, into which a good man may fall, from the final apostacy of the wicked ; how shall we distinguish between the sins of

infirmity into which the best men may fall, from those sins which are unto death? And to this I beg your attention, as one of the most important subjects which can ever occupy your thoughts. In order to decide this question, Let me ask you, in the *first* place, What was the nature of your relapse into sin? There are times in which all men feel religious impressions and devout dispositions of mind. The seed is sown in stony places, as well as on the good ground. The influences of heaven descend on the barren desert, as well as on the field which is to be fruitful. On such occasions the seed which was sown on the stony places will spring up for a time, and the barren desert will seem to bloom. To speak without a figure, the Spirit of God, in one manner or another, in his common or in his special influences, descends upon all men. After such times of refreshing, the saint of a day, as well as the persevering Christian, will receive the word with gladness, and set about a thorough reformation. And as both of them receive the word with gladness, so both of them are subject to sin. Yet they are not alike in their errors. The sinner having no real principle at bottom, having no fixed plan of life, and but doing every thing

by fits and starts, may, at the first approach of temptation, advance with swift steps to ruin. But the true Christian, laying his account to meet with hardships and temptations, prepares against them, and will not wholly fall off. The coward may at once desert his post, and fly from the banners of the Captain of salvation, to the standard of the prince of darkness: but the good soldier of Jesus will make head against the enemy; he will encounter his spiritual foe; he may be foiled for a moment, but he will never be subdued.

In the *second* place, Let me ask you, what is the state of your mind during these relapses? Are you in total subjection to the sins which have dominion over you? Is your conscience lulled in a profound sleep? Do you roll iniquity, like a sweet morsel, under your tongue? Do you find the ways of sin to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace? Is your bondage sweet, and are the chains of your captivity become pleasant to you? Then I pronounce that there are no symptoms of spiritual life within you; then your sleep is unto death. But, on the other hand, is the dominion which sin has over you, against the bent of your soul? Whilst you sleep, does your heart wake? During your

captivity, is your face towards Jerusalem? Do you lament the deceitfulness of your heart, the feebleness of your resolutions, and your own impotence to save yourself? Do you strive to burst asunder the bands which detain you? Then there is hope in Israel concerning you.

In the *third* place, Let me ask you, what is the nature of the sins into which you fall? Are they contrived before hand, deliberate? Do you commit them with coolness and with consideration? Or are you led astray on a sudden by the strength of temptation, and the power of prevailing passion? The best of men are subject to the impulse of passion; may yield to the strength of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault. But he is a wicked man who sins upon a plan; who makes a system of iniquity; who contrives scenes of mischief upon his bed, and who rises to execute with ardour what he has contrived with coolness. If the sun goes down upon thy wrath, or any other bad passion; if day unto day uttereth speech of your evil deeds; if night after night findeth you in the service of sin, then you are a sinner indeed, then you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

Let me ask again, What are the sins that most easily beset you? The sins of men may be divided into two classes. The one kind flows from a good principle wrong directed, from the perversion and abuse of laudable inclinations; the other kind flows from evil principles and a bad heart. Of the latter kind, are malice, envy, treachery, cruelty, malignity, deceit, and hypocrisy. These indicate a mind which neither fears God nor regards man. The best Christians will at times fall into sins; but they will never harbour in their heart the dark offspring of hell. They may have the failings and the faults of men, but they will never have the crimes of devils, nor the spirit of the damned.

VERSE 6. *At midnight there was a cry heard.* At midnight, the hour of silence and repose, when the operations of nature seemed to stand still, and all things were at rest, when there was no expectation of any event, then was the cry heard, then was the alarm given,—*Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!* And, indeed, my brethren, it often happens, that our last hour comes unexpected. When we are busied in some favourite scheme, when we are laying a scene of happiness which

we expect will last for years, the awful voice comes, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." I mention not this as if I thought it one of the evils of life. If we are prepared to die, a sudden death must be the most agreeable of all. The servant who is doing his duty, will be agreeably surprised at an unexpected visit from his master. The soldier, whose arms are crowned with conquest, would be happy if his prince should suddenly come to be the witness of his victory.

VERSE 7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.* Their lamps were not gone out, though they were not burning bright. They soon arose and trimmed them, to meet the bridegroom. A good man is always habitually prepared for death. He has an interest in the righteousness of his Redeemer, which purchased life and immortality to men; and he is possessed of those good and holy dispositions which fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light. Such a person is ever in a state of preparation to meet with his Lord.

VERSE 8. *And the foolish virgins said unto the wise, Give us of your oil.* Mark here, my

brethren, the triumph of religion. Wicked men at the last envy the state and the happiness of the good, and desire to partake in it. There is a time coming when those who scoff at religion, and laugh at every thing that is serious, will gladly say to those humble and contrite ones whom they now despise, “Give us of your oil.” “Let us die the death of the righteous; let our last end be like his.” “Would to God our souls were in your souls’ place.” Feeble and ineffectual wishes! which discover their misery, but which cannot save them from it.

VERSE 9. *Lest there be not enough for us and you.* There are no works of supererogation. After we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and though we were perfect, we can assign no part of our righteousness to you: *Go to those that sell.* Go to the ordinances of Divine appointment; improve those means of grace which you formerly despised; break off your sins by repentance; who knows if it be yet too late?—*Cætera desunt.*

LECTURE V.

ON THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ix. 28—36.

28 *And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*

29 *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.*

30 *And behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias ;*

31 *Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*

32 *But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.*

33 *And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.*

34 *While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.*

35 *And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.*

36 *And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone: and they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*

IN these verses, we have an account of a very remarkable event. Our Saviour having foretold his sufferings and death in order to keep alive the faith and hopes of his disciples, who would be apt to despair under that mournful event, also foretold them, that some of their own number, before their departure, should behold him coming in his kingdom. “But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.”

As an accomplishment of this prediction, he takes his three favourite disciples, Peter, James, and John, and having carried them to an high mountain, was transfigured before their eyes, that he might give them some idea of the glory of that kingdom to which he was afterwards to ascend. The mountain here

mentioned, by tradition, is Tabor, a hill of great beauty, and, according to Josephus, very high.

Many magnificent events in the Divine dispensations have been transacted on hills. It was on mount Sinai that God descended to give the law : It was on the hill of Moriah that he commanded Isaac to be sacrificed : It was on the hill of Zion that he ordered the temple to be built : From the mount of Olives, Christ was wont to send up his prayers to Heaven ; and on the mount Tabor he was transfigured, and appeared in glory to his disciples. This is founded upon nature. There is an air of grandeur in a lofty mountain, that loseth itself in the heavens, and casteth its shadow into distant lands, which accords with the natural greatness of the soul, and awakens a feeling that is highly favourable to devotion. The grandeur, the awfulness, the silence, and the solitude of the scene, assist sentiments of religious adoration. Remote from man, and exalted above the turbulence of the inferior world, we breathe celestial air, we feel divinity more present, and bow down and worship in the temple not made with hands. Hence, men actuated by their natural feelings, and under the impressions of religious awe, have so often been guided to

erect their temples upon hills, and to consecrate to the Deity such places as those on which he had appeared, and where his footsteps were seen.

We are told, that our Saviour went up to this mountain to pray. Christ began all his great works with prayer to Heaven. Before he entered on his public ministry, he retired into the wilderness, and devoted forty days to contemplation and prayer. When he was about to suffer his last agony, he went and prayed in the garden. And here, when he enters upon his transfiguration, he went up to a mountain to pray. Illustrious example of piety and devotion! worthy the study and imitation of the world. If the eternal Son of God, the Mediator between God and man, who had no errors to be corrected, who had no sins to be forgiven, and who had few wants to be relieved, if he entered upon no important work without prayer to Heaven, if he spent whole nights in the fervour of devotion, shall men, shall feeble, indigent, and sinful men, dare to attempt works of importance, or rush into scenes of danger, without lifting up their eyes and hearts to Heaven, and imploring the protection and assistance of Providence? And yet it is to be dreaded that there are many persons who go under the name

of Christians, who live in the constant and habitual neglect of this duty ; who go out and come in, who rise up and lie down, without once bending the knee to the God of Heaven, and who, unless on this returning day, when they join in the public devotions of the Church, never acknowledge their dependence upon God. Far be such conduct from you, my brethren.

Peter, James and John, were also chosen as the witnesses of our Saviour's agony. If they rejoiced with him on mount Tabor, they also suffered with him in the garden of Gethsemane. And indeed it seems to be one of the general laws by which this world is governed, that those who have the highest enjoyments should also have the deepest afflictions. Providence hath wisely balanced human affairs, and set the day of prosperity against the day of adversity. The most enchanting hopes give rise to the most mortifying disappointments ; the most transporting enjoyments end in the cruellest lassitude and disgust ; and the highest honour is succeeded by the lowest disgrace. The same lively passions and fine feelings that give the greatest relish to prosperity, give also the severest smart to the wounds of adversity.

The transfiguration itself is next related.

The evangelists seem to vie with one another in describing the glories of this scene. During this period, we are told *the fashion of his countenance was altered ; his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the snow*. When Moses received the law upon mount Sinai, his countenance shone in such a manner that the Israelites could not behold him. But a greater than Moses was here ; and he was invested with greater majesty. The splendour of his Divinity shone through the vale with which it was clouded ; he reassumed some rays of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was ; and he stood confessed the Son of the living God.

To heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the scene, Moses, the giver of the law, and Elias, the greatest among the prophets, descended from heaven, and conferred with him concerning his kingdom. It is usual for the chief ministers of a kingdom to resign the seals and badges of their authority to their successors in office. Thus Moses and Elias, who had been the ministers of the kingdom of God under the Old Testament, the one representing the law, the other representing the prophets, resigned their authority to Jesus Christ, who was to reign for ever and

ever. Had we, my brethren, been present on the mount of transfiguration, been spectators of this wonderful scene ; had we beheld the glorified spirits of Moses and Elias, arrayed in the robes of heaven, and adorned with the beauties of immortality ; had we beheld the Son of the Most High clothed with uncreated light, and appearing in the glories of Divinity unveiled ; had we heard the voice of the Almighty proclaiming from the overshadowing cloud, *This is my beloved Son, hear him* ; would we not have been thrown into that delightful amazement of soul, that trance and ecstasy of spiritual joy, which the disciples were in when they cried out, not knowing what they said, *Lord, it is good for us to be here ; let us build three tabernacles ; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias !*

The evangelist tells us, that the disciples were heavy with sleep, or rather heavy as with sleep ; and Mark says that they were sore afraid. From comparing them together, it appears to have been a rapture and astonishment that suspended all the powers of the soul, with a stillness similar to sleep. The sublime appearances which they saw struck a sudden terror into their minds, and occasioned that ecstasy of soul which holy

men were generally in when they were favoured with the visions of God. Moses and Elias were properly chosen as messengers to our Saviour, and witnesses of his transfiguration, as both of them were eminent types of Christ, acceptable to God for their faith and holiness, and admired by the Jews their countrymen, for the miracles which they had performed. Both of them were admitted to conference with God in Horeb; both of them had fasted forty days; both of them had divided the waters; they had been both the messengers of God to kings; and as they were marvellous in their lives, so there was something extraordinary and miraculous in both their departures. Moses died at the commandment of the Lord, and was buried in a place which no man knew. Elias, without seeing death, was translated to Heaven in a chariot of fire.

When this celestial triumvirate had assembled, what was the topic of their conversation? Did their discourse run upon the fate of empires and the fall of kings? Did they converse about the progress of the human genius, about the improvements of society, the inventions of art, and the discoveries of science? Did they talk of the glories of that heaven from which they had descended, or attempt a de-

scription of those mansions above, whose beauty eyes hath not seen, and whose joys ear hath not heard? No, my brethren, an event greater than all these engaged their attention. *They talked of that decease or departure which our Divine Redeemer was to accomplish at Jerusalem.* The prospect of suffering an ignominious and an accursed death, had always appeared to our Saviour a circumstance of distress, and filled him with dismal forebodings of mind. As the event drew nearer, these forebodings increased. The prospect of being forsaken, denied, and betrayed by his friends; of being mocked, and tortured, and crucified by his enemies; the terrors of the hour and power of darkness; the agony in the garden; the horrors of the cross; the assault of devils and wicked spirits; and, far above all, the hiding of his father's countenance, and drinking the cup of the wrath of God; these were circumstances of tremendous suffering, sufficient to have overwhelmed his human nature with horror and despair.

But as an angel was sent to comfort him in the garden, so here two illustrious saints descended from heaven to allay the terrors of that decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. They might represent his passion to

him as entering into the councils of heaven before the world began ; as the hope and expectation of all the patriarchs, and prophets, and righteous men under the law ; as the accomplishment of all the prophecies delivered to the Old Testament Church ; as the fulfilment of all the types and prefigurations of the Mosaic institution ; as the consummation of the legal economy, and period of the Jewish Church ; and as the commencement of a new age and higher order of events. They might place it before his eyes as confirming his doctrine from above ; as magnifying the law and making it honourable ; as rendering glory to God in the highest, and restoring peace on earth, and good-will towards men ; as conquering the principalities and powers of darkness, and setting open the gates of paradise for all the faithful to enter in. They might set it before his eyes as the means of overthrowing the kingdom of Satan ; as diffusing light, and life, and salvation through the world ; as uniting the nations in the bonds of charity and love ; as being the great theme to the Church universal under the New Testament ; as affording a subject for new hymns and anthems to the heavenly host ; as reaching beyond the circle of time, and drawing hosannas of

praise from the heirs of immortality, through the round of everlasting ages. These considerations would comfort our Redeemer under the forebodings of his passion ; and the prospect of the joy that was set before him would animate and strengthen him to endure the cross, to despise the shame, and to finish the work which the Father gave him to do.

Seeing, then, that the death and passion of our Saviour is an event of such infinite importance, let us, my brethren, make it the theme of our praise, and the subject of our contemplation. Let us frequently call to mind that scene which mount Calvary beheld, the sufferings that our Saviour there endured, the groans that he uttered, and the blood that he shed on our behalf. Let us dwell on that marvellous love which moved him to undergo such unutterable agonies, till we feel its transforming power and efficacy, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory ; that so the cross of Christ, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, may become to us the wisdom and the power of God.

VERSE 36. *And they kept it close, and told no man.* Though they were so highly favour-

ed of their Lord, allowed to behold him in the glories of his future kingdom, and to hold converse with two illustrious messengers from the mansions above—nevertheless they made no merit of the preference that was shewn them, and even concealed from the world that they were distinguished from the rest of the apostles. Such, my brethren, is the uniform conduct of good Christians. The manifestations of heaven only inspire them with humility. He is but a novice in the school of Christianity, who is puffed up by any privileges which he has attained. Greater degrees of grace, and higher attainments in virtue, banish all self-conceit and spiritual pride. This holds in other matters as well as in religion. The pretender always outdoes the real character. The actor always exceeds nature, and goes beyond the life. In friendship, those who have the least of the reality, have generally most of the appearance and pretence. Men of the greatest talents and abilities appear in conversation but like other men; whilst fools and coxcombs assume those airs of superiority, and that tone of solemn pedantry, which amazes the ignorant. This holds even in infidelity itself. Those wretches, who set their mouths against the heavens, and profess

open impiety, are generally hypocrites in wickedness, who believe and tremble when alone, and are in the horrors whenever they are left in the dark.

Beware, therefore, of a form of religion without the power thereof. The voice of true piety is not heard in the streets. She sounds no trumpet before her, affects no appearances, and lays claim to no distinctions. Those persons are always to be suspected who covet the public eye; who make a show of their sanctity, and who endeavour to dazzle the world with the pomp and the parade of godliness. Let men discover your piety and virtue; do not you discover them yourselves. There is all the difference in the world betwixt being exemplary and being ostentatious. When the angels descended of old, they were in form and appearance like men; but when the devil appeared, he transformed himself into an angel of light.

SERMON I.

THE GOSPEL, A SYSTEM OF SPIRITUAL JOY.

LUKE ii. 10.

— *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*

THE coming of the Messiah is always foretold in Scripture as a period of joy and triumph. The patriarchs rejoiced when they saw his day afar off. All the prophets take fire at this great occasion, and rise into strains of rapture when they describe the glory of the latter days, and the happiness of the Messiah's reign. In the most beautiful colours they paint its arrival as a new era of happy time, and as a general jubilee to the world. They represent it as accompanied with universal peace and prosperity; as affecting a renovation of nature, the return of innocence to earth, and the descent of God to dwell with men. "In those days
" the wilderness and the solitary place shall be

“ glad ; the desert shall rejoice and blossom
“ like the rose. They shall blossom abundant-
“ ly : and rejoice with joy and with singing.
“ The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto
“ it ; the excellency of Carmel and of Sha-
“ ron. The parched ground shall become
“ a pool, and the dry land springs of wa-
“ ter. In the wilderness shall waters break
“ out, and streams in the desert.—The light
“ of the moon shall be as the light of the sun,
“ and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold.”

When the heavens and the earth at first arose in beauty from the hands of the Creator, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. In like manner, when these new heavens and this new earth appeared, all the angelic host broke forth into strains of gratulation, ascribing glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards fallen men.

Unhappily, the Jews, who were a gross and carnal people, misinterpreted the prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, took the magnificent style of prophecy for literal description, and fondly imagined that these glad tidings of great joy announced temporal and earthly blessings. They looked for no better a country than the land of Canaan, and

expected no other redemption than to be redeemed from the Roman yoke. The veil is now taken off from the prophets, and we discern the Gospel, not as meant to procure us possession of the earth, and dominion over the nations, but as intended to make us partakers of eternal life, and to give us an inheritance in the heavens, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

The Gospel, then, is a system of spiritual joy. And, in treating of it in this light, I shall, in the *first* place, consider it as a method of instruction, enlightening the darkness, and dispelling the ignorance of human nature : In the *second* place, As a plan of redemption from the guilt of sin : In the *third* place, As a scheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life ; and, in the *fourth* place, As a system of consolation against the fear of death. Here are comprehended all the evils of human life ; and if we find that the Gospel brings us relief from all of them, then it will appear to contain indeed, “ Good tidings of “ great joy.”

I am to shew you, then, in the *first* place, That, as a system of joy, Christianity enlightens the natural darkness of the mind, and

gives us all requisite information concerning the truths necessary to our happiness.

Curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, is one of the earliest emotions of the human soul. No sooner does the mind arrive at the exercise of thought, than it proceeds to examine the objects around it, and to extend its researches wider and wider over the whole circuit of nature. One of the most obvious dictates of reason is the belief of a God. There are so many indications of wisdom and contrivance in the works of nature ; such striking displays of order and beauty ; such splendid demonstrations of a plan established, that an intelligent Mind is at once recognised, and a Deity, though invisible in himself, is everywhere seen in his works. Accordingly, all nations have agreed in acknowledging and worshipping a supreme Power, the Creator and Governor of all things. But although the light of nature reveals to us the existence of a God, it gives us no materials whereon to form an opinion concerning his attributes. A mixed dispensation of things seems to prevail in the world. There are many indications of goodness, but there are also many appearances of evil. Providence seems equally to favour the good and the bad. All things come alike

to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Reason is at a loss what conclusion to draw from such contradictory appearances, and amidst the clouds and the darkness that surround the paths of the Almighty, cannot discern that justice and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne. But a state of uncertainty and suspense, especially about an object of such great importance, is the most deplorable of all situations. To live and to die in ignorance and uncertainty, whether the Governor of the world be a tyrant or a friend, whether we are under the misrule of hate, or the government of love, must sit heavy upon the candid and inquisitive mind, and give additional smart to all the sorrows which embitter human life. What beams of joy will break in upon such benighted minds, when the Sun of Righteousness appearing, scatters the clouds of ignorance and error, and lets in the pure light of heaven upon the darkness of the human condition? To make the discoveries of the Gospel to such persons, is to reveal to them a father and a friend. To discover that God is love; that he is a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; that he administers the affairs of the universe so as to issue in the general

good ; that he is for ever employing the attributes of his nature, his infinite wisdom, his boundless goodness, and his Almighty power, to favour the cause of righteousness, and to promote the happiness of the good throughout the whole creation : Such views of Deity as these fill the mind with joy and with consolation. The weary traveller has now got a shelter from the storm. He has found a sanctuary in the time of trouble, and he looks to the heavens *from whence cometh his aid*. The heart is fully at ease while it rests on him that made it, and reposes with perfect peace under the protection of everlasting arms.

Further, Man in a state of nature is equally ignorant concerning himself. He finds himself here a stranger in a wide world, where the powers and operations of nature are very imperfectly known ; where both the causes and the issues of things are wrapt up in much darkness, and where he can only form uncertain conjectures from whence he comes, for what purpose he was brought into being, and whither he is to go when he departs from hence. If he looks back to his origin, he is lost in uncertainty. Born to be at the head of the inferior creation, and to be the masterpiece of the Almighty in this lower world, he hath

at the same time appetites and passions, the abuse of which degrades him below the level of the brutes that perish. His dignity and his meanness; the excellence of his frame, and the degeneracy of his nature; the elevation of his understanding, and the corruption of his heart,—form a contrast which the philosophy of ages could never reconcile. How could such a creature come into the world? If he be the work of a wise and good being, whence come the seeds of evil that are latent in his heart? If he be the production of malignant beings, whence the seeds of goodness, and the lineaments of heaven, which, however obscured, are to be found in his frame? Whatever supposition we take, we are beset with insuperable difficulties. But, change the scene, and look forward to his future lot, and he is still more distressed and forlorn. He sees his friends and companions, one after another, continually disappearing. But whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlasting darkness, or do they still act in another scene? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguished? Is the celestial fire which glowed in their hearts for ever quenched, and nought but ashes left to mingle with the earth, and be blown around the world? Are their hopes limited to

this life? Or, beyond the horizon which terminates their present prospects, does a more beautiful and a more perfect scene present itself, where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and where the weary shall be at rest? If we consult our affections, we will be inclined to believe in a future state. Nature is loath to quit its hold. The heart still wishes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint, and indulges us with the pleasant hopes of one day meeting again the companions which we dropped in life. The perfections of the Deity also favour these wishes of nature. If God be infinitely wise and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to see the light, and to depart for ever. Would a wise builder have erected such a noble structure, to last but for a moment? On the other hand, if we consult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation surround us. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The animal that mingles with the earth never rises to life again.

These doubts and horrors are now removed, and this darkness destroyed, by the Gospel of Christ. No sooner did the day-spring arise from on high, but it became a light to

lighten the Gentiles, and extended its radiance over the region and shadow of death. The nature of man is now unfolded, the origin of evil accounted for, and life and immortality brought to light. Our Saviour did not propose these doctrines as the controvertible opinions of a private man: He taught them with the authority of God. Of his peculiar doctrines he gave us a proof in kind. Did he teach that the dead were to arise? As an infallible confirmation of it, he himself arose from the dead. The good man need not now be in anxiety about his future existence. Come and behold the place where the Lord lay. Come and behold the place from which the Lord arose. You do not mourn as those who have no hope. You commit the bodies of your deceased friends to the grave in the hopes of a blessed resurrection. For we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we know that we shall in like manner revive. The sound of the last trumpet shall pierce even the caverns of the tomb; the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; the celestial fire shall again reanimate these ashes, and a glorious body spring forth from the bosom of corruption. What a source of consolation does this open to us in all the afflictions of

life? Can that man despond and sink under the evils of life, who has the prospect of a blessed resurrection and of a happy immortality?

It has been thus endeavoured to shew you the advantages that we derive from Christianity, in point of instruction. It was never my intention to exalt revelation at the expence of reason, or to establish Christianity upon the ruins of natural religion. The light of nature affords us many discoveries, and the religion of nature suggests many obligations to virtue. The heathens reasoned well concerning the existence of a Supreme Cause; from the things which are seen, they inferred his eternal Power and Godhead, and gave many excellent lessons for the conduct of human life. But their discoveries had not the authority of uncontroverted truth, and their precepts wanted the obligation of laws. They were the private opinions of mere men, who had no commission to enact articles of faith, and who had no authority to establish laws for the conduct of human life. Their discoveries did not even carry conviction to their own minds. They doubted concerning points the most important and the most essential to the happiness of a rational mind. If, from the order and beauty of the natural world, they

inferred the existence and the power of God ; from the irregularities and evils of the moral world, they were led to doubt concerning his wisdom and goodness. The immortality of the soul was rather the object of their wishes, than of their firm belief. The law of nature, amidst the multiplicity of vicious and criminal customs, was almost totally obliterated. The sense of moral good and evil, amidst the universal degeneracy and depravity of manners, was in danger of being altogether lost. So general, so gross was the darkness which long involved the nations, so deep and thick did the cloud sit over the moral world, that the wisest of the ancient philosophers thought it was a necessary step in the Deity, in order to ascertain his perfections, and vindicate his ways to men, that a prophet should descend from heaven, clothed with a Divine commission, to make a revelation of the Divine will.

But they laboured under a difficulty still more dreadful than ignorance,—that was, a sense of guilt. This leads us to the *second* head of discourse,—To consider the Gospel as a plan of redemption from the guilt of sin.

When the sins of a criminal life rose up before them, horror of conscience overwhelm-

ed them. Unenlightened nature presented nothing to their eye but an offended Judge, arrayed in all his terrors. The violated law called aloud for reparation. Justice unsheathed her flaming sword. The mercy of the judge was altogether unknown. All was darkness and dismay, without one beam of hope. It was in this dreadful dilemma that, in order to appease the wrath of the incensed Deity, they had recourse to sacrifices and to the shedding of so much blood. It was this that drove them to violate the strongest and most sacred laws of nature; drove them to torture their own flesh before the shrine of the offended God, and, terrible to tell, drove them,—drove the tender parent to take his son, his first-born son, and, with his own trembling hands, to shed his blood as a ransom for his soul! The grand inquiry of the heathen world was that with which the Prophet Micah introduces the king of Moab, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?”

As a sense of moral good and evil is implanted in the mind, and as a principle of conscience, condemning sin and improving righteousness, is universally felt, we see and we feel, by sad experience, that all men have sinned, have come short of the glory of God,

and that, without an atonement, there could neither be joy nor peace in the heart of man.

Further, it was necessary that, in this atonement, provision should be made for delivering men from the state of degeneracy and imperfection, that they might not again fall into deadly sin, and stand in need of a new atonement. In consequence of that original corruption derived to us from our first parents, our nature is degenerated, and our moral abilities impaired so, that no man can yield perfect obedience to the law of God. It would therefore be of little consequence to blot out our transgressions for the time past, unless we were also to be delivered from the dominion of sin in the time to come. To be always falling into sin, to be always standing in need of new acts of indemnity and forgiveness, is neither consistent with the dignity of the Divine government, nor with the perfection of a rational and immortal nature. Accordingly, the great atonement proposed in the Gospel, not only provides for our redemption from the wrath to come, but also for our restoration to the image of God. From the cross of Christ, virtue flows to the world, and healing to the nations. In consequence of his sufferings and death, our Saviour is now ascended to the right

hand of the Majesty in the heavens, to administer the affairs of his kingdom, and dispense the treasures of the new covenant. He retains our nature, and represents our persons in the presence of God, and makes intercession with the Father in our behalf. He sends down his sanctifying Spirit to repair the ruins of our nature; to create in us the clean heart; to renew within us the right spirit; to lead us on from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, till we perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Having thus recovered the original honour of our frame, and being restored to the image of God, he translates us to the mansions of immortality above, where these good tidings of great joy are a subject of praise amidst an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

We proceed to the *third* general head of discourse,—To consider the Gospel as a scheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life.

Ever since the introduction of sin into the world, human life hath been a scene of misery. Man that is born of a woman is of few days; and few as they are, they are full of

trouble. He is doomed to suffer from the womb. When he comes into the world, he enters on a state of pain ; and from the cradle to the grave, his life is a pilgrimage of sorrow. Where is the kingdom ; where is the city ; where is the family ; where is the individual that is exempted from affliction ? It enters the palaces of the great, as well as the cottages of the low ; it invades the throne of the king, as well as the hut of the peasant ; and scarce are the sanctuaries and the altars of the Lord asylums against its approach. The calamities of life are always great ; but when the mind is under the impression of melancholy, and bleeds from recent sorrow, then are they felt in extreme. The cloud sits deep upon the face of things ; the prospect before us is dark and lurid ; and the mind, if not supported, would sink under its woes. It is the great excellence, my brethren, of the Christian religion, that it abounds with consolations in all the evils of life. To the upright, says the Scripture, light shall arise in the midst of darkness. Those who are weary and heavy laden with their woes, if they come to Christ, he will give them rest.

The first consolation which the Gospel proposes to us, is, That there is a particu-

lar Providence which watches over human affairs. It is part of the glad tidings revealed to us in the gospel, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that although his throne be in the heavens, and though the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he condescends to visit the earth, to take up his abode and dwell with men. He who counts the number of the stars, numbers also the hairs of our head; a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father. The most ordinary, as well as the most casual events, are under the direction of that arm which reaches from heaven to earth. Ever watching over the world, there is an eye above, which slumbers not nor sleeps. The archer may draw the bow at a venture; but the arrow is directed by an higher hand. This will administer relief to the mind in all the afflictions of life. Trusting to the Providence of God, the devout mind will rest in hope, and break forth into joy: “The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad; the Lord reigneth, let the multitude of the isles rejoice. His kingdom ruleth over all; and he will make all things co-operate for the good of those who love him.” Shall not I therefore trust in him who is ever present to

help me in the time of need? Are not these perfections, which are equal to the government of the whole system of nature, more than sufficient to direct my little concerns? My God is a present help in the time of trouble. He is not far off when grief is near, nor like an absent friend to the distressed. Let the darkness of the tempest surround me; let the winds blow, and the waves rage, I have an interest in the Ruler of the storm; I have an interest in him who can say to the winds "Cease," and to the waves "Be still."

In the next place, afflictions take their rise, not from the wrath, but from the love of God. Did we believe that the world was governed by a malignant being, who made sport of human misery, and took a malicious pleasure in punishing his creatures: Did we consider ourselves as under the dominion of hatred, as objects of the divine vengeance, and pursued by the Almighty as victims devoted to perdition,—such thoughts would make us miserable indeed. They would sharpen the arrows of adversity, and mingle poison into the bitter cup which we are doomed to drink. Then might we cry out with Job, in the hour of despair, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. The

“ terrors of the Lord set themselves in array
“ against me. The arrows of the Almighty
“ are within me, the poison whereof drinketh
“ up my spirit. Why hast thou set me as a mark
“ against thee? My soul chooseth strangling
“ and death rather than life.” These doubts
and terrors are now removed. Fear not, O
man! who strugglest under the adversities of
life, I bring you good tidings of great joy; the
afflictions which thou endurest are not the
stripes of an hard master, who seeks thy de-
struction; they are the chastisements of a kind
father, who punishes only to reform. The
God of love has no pleasure in the misery, or
in the death of his creatures. His eye over-
flows with pity, whilst his hand is lifted up to
strike. Whilst he bruises, he binds up the
wound. This surely will administer consola-
tion to the wounded in mind, and speak peace
to the broken in heart, when they reflect that
the evils in their lot are a part of His provi-
dence, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve
the children of men; that they are not marks
of his wrath, but indications of his love.

Further, As a consolation to the afflicted and
distressed, Christianity assures us, that the va-
rious occurrences in human life are not acci-
dental, nor detached events, but parts of a great

plan that was concerted in the councils of Heaven before the world began, and is going on from age to age. If the moral world were a chaos without form, and void of order ; if every event in life was separate, unconnected, and final, men, under the pressure of affliction, would often have occasion to complain. But, when we take in the discoveries of revelation, and behold a general order of things established, and a great plan going on ; when we consider that every particular event is a part of the great system of Providence, and conduces to form a perfect whole ; when we call to mind that no part of our life is an ultimate event, but has a reference to a future state, and is only the means to an end, we will acquiesce in the established order of nature, and follow on, active and cheerful, wherever we are called by Providence. In the early part of our life, when we are under the discipline of a master, we are instructed in arts, and trained to exercises, of which we know not then the meaning, nor the use. This life is but the infancy of our being, and a state of moral discipline for a better world ; let us not therefore be surprised or murmur, if many things fall out which seem adverse to our present good. When the Christian considers that the sufferings of the pre-

sent life are connected with the enjoyments of heaven, and with the improvements of eternity, the unfavourable and hostile appearances of this world will vanish from his view. Familiarised to this grand and magnificent system of things, he will not complain concerning the conduct of Providence, nor think the universe in confusion when he is in disorder. He does not look upon himself, as self-love would suggest, as a whole separated and detached from every other part of nature; he regards himself in the light in which he imagines the great Spirit of the world regards him. He enters into the sentiments of the Divine Being, and considers himself as a particle, as an atom in an infinite system, which must and ought to be disposed of according to the good and the conveniency of the whole.

Lastly, As a ground of joyful consolation to the distressed, let me remind you, that afflictions are not only requisite parts of our education for heaven, but that they are also necessary means of our improvement in the virtues and graces of the divine life. Adapted to the progressive and probationary state of fallen man, the administration of Providence assumes a variety of forms. Light and shade, the sunshine of prosperity, and the storm of

adversity, succeed each other, and chequer the scene of human life. In this mixed dispensation of suffering and enjoyment, the wisdom of Providence shines conspicuous. Were we always to be favoured with the smile of prosperity, and the candle of the Lord ever to shine upon our head, we would be apt to grow intoxicated with pride, to prove ungrateful to the Author of our being, and reserve to ourselves some part of that incense which we ought to burn upon his altars. On the other hand, were we always to be under the cloud of adversity, were Providence for ever to frown upon our designs, we would be ready to resign ourselves to despair, and cry out with the good men of old, "Is the mercy of Heaven clean gone? Will he be favourable no more?" This mixed dispensation of Providence is not only most favourable to religion, but is also best adapted to the nature of man. Man is made for suffering as well as for action. There are many principles in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, and many qualities of the heart, which would lie for ever latent, were they not called forth to action by the adversities of life. Man was never destined by his Maker to slumber on the couch of repose, and to bask in the sunny season : He was ap-

pointed to labour and to action; to struggle with the tempest; to weather with the winter of affliction; to encounter peril; to endure pain, and, by Christian magnanimity and heroism, by patience, by perseverance and invincible vigour, to reach the crown of glory which is reserved on high for all the sons of God. The afflictions of life present an occasion for this spirit to exert itself, and for these graces to appear. If there were no adversities in human life, the scene of action would be limited, the career of virtue would be shortened, and a wide field of moral glory be lost to the world. Had we no trials in our lot, what need were there for the exercise of patience and resignation to the Divine will, which form such a striking part of the Christian character? Had we no afflictions to encounter, and no evils to fear, what occasion would there be for that strength of mind which enables us to brave the dangers of life, to bid defiance to the evil day, and to repose, at all times, firm and unshaken, upon the arm of the Almighty? Were there no dangers to combat, why should we take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation? Not only does adversity present the occasion of spiritual im-

provement, but has also in every age produced an host of saints, who, clothed with this divine armour, have fought the good fight, and have come forth conquerors. You have recorded to you the faith of Abraham ; you have recorded the meekness of Moses ; you have recorded the patience of Job ; but had it not been for the trials which they underwent, the dangers they had to combat, and the distresses they had to bear, their glory might have perished, and their names been lost in oblivion. As the nightingale, it is said, when bereft of her young, fills the woods with the music of woe, and, from the impulse of sorrow, warbles her sweetest strains ; so, from the wounded mind, and from the broken spirit, the fervour of devotion, and the eloquence of prayer, come up with such pathetic memorial before the throne, that the Divine ear listens delighted. True religion, true virtue, brightens in distress ; she emerges from the deep with ten-fold radiance, and never shines with such transcendent, such triumphant, such immortal, beauty, as when wandering through the darkness of an eclipse. You see, then, that in these paths you are in the company of the good, and are encompassed with a cloud of witnesses. You are not left alone to climb the arduous ascent.

On these mountains, the feet of patriarchs, the feet of prophets, and the feet of martyrs, have trode. On these mountains, a greater than patriarchs, than prophets, than martyrs, appeared.

The *fourth* and *last* thing proposed, was, To consider Christianity as affording a joyful consolation against the fear of death.

Many and various are the evils to which human life is subjected. To finish the mighty sum of them, and to make the scene end with pain, as it began with sorrow, comes the evil of death. The king of terrors, with his black train of attendants, even when seen at a distance, makes the firmest knee to shake, and the stoutest heart to tremble; and when exerting his influence upon feeble minds, and assisted by the power of the imagination, has kept multitudes all their days under the cloud of melancholy, and under subjection to bondage. It is the great excellence of the Christian Religion, that as it affords consolation in all the evils of life, so it also provides a remedy against the fear of death. Hence the prophet, looking forward unto the days of the Messiah, breaks out into these strains of exultation: "I will redeem them from death: "I will ransom them from the power of the

“grave: O death, I will be thy plague; O
“grave, I will be thy destruction.” Hence
says the Apostle Paul, “Forasmuch as the
“children were partakers of flesh and blood,
“he himself also took part of the same, that
“he might destroy him that had the power
“of death, that is the devil, and deliver them
“who, through fear of death, were all their
“lifetime subject to bondage.”

The evils attending death to men, in a state of nature, are manifold.

One of these is the uncertainty of our future destination. Reason gives us little information concerning the state of the soul when it departs from the body. We see the body mingle with its kindred elements, and return to the dust from whence it was taken. But what becomes of the soul? Does it too cease to exist, and vanish into air? Or does it still live and act in another scene? here we are lost in conjectures and uncertainty. We see the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not assuredly of any morning that awaits him. The ocean spreads before us vast and dark, but we know not with certainty if it will waft us to any shore. What a disconsolate situation of mind is this! Afflicted with the view of our past life; tormented

with present pain ; and hovering over an abyss from which we are uncertain if we shall ever emerge ! To pass for ever into the dominion of darkness ; to go we know not where ! Lost in these doubts, troubled with the fears of futurity, the Roman Emperor addressed his departing soul : “ O my soul, thou art leaving thy once loved haunts, thy former companions, and thy wonted joys ; but into what unknown regions and dark abodes art thou now going ? Alas ! thou canst not tell ! ” These doubts and perplexities are now removed by the coming of Christ. When the Sun of Righteousness rose in our region, it dispelled the shadows of the everlasting evening ; it poured its radiance upon the path of immortality, and brought full to view the scenes of the invisible world. The future scenes of happiness and glory are not only discovered by the Gospel of Jesus, but are set before our eyes. In the inspired oracles, we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God ; we see the dead arising from their graves ; a mighty army of saints and martyrs springing with joy from dust and corruption. We see Jesus upon the throne, and the faithful at his right hand. We hear the happy sentence pronounced upon them, “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, in-

“ herit the kingdom prepared for you before
“ the foundations of the world were laid.”—
We see them with palms of victory in their
hands, and with crowns of glory on their heads,
ascending up on high with their Lord, and sit-
ting down with him upon his throne.

Another evil attending on death is the sense
of our sins and transgressions, which then ris-
ing up to our memory in black colours, over-
whelm us with horror of mind. But to those
who receive the privileges of Christianity, the
bed of death will not be a scene of terror.
With a faith which overcometh the world,
they give up their souls into the hands of him
who made them. “ I have indeed sinned,
most merciful Father, against Heaven and in
thy sight. Mine iniquities compass me about,
I am covered with confusion, and condemn
myself, and often have been afraid lest thy
judgment should confirm the sentence of my
own heart. But thou art merciful and gracious.
Thou hast no pleasure in death. I am un-
worthy of the least of all thy mercies. But
worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive
blessing, and glory, and honour, and power.
In his death I see the price of my redemption.
In his life I see the path which leads to immor-
tality. In his resurrection I see the proof of

my own, and evidence of my immortal existence. I have accepted the offers of thy mercy, and have endeavoured to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I was called. With whatever failings I may have been encompassed, thou knowest that it has been the study of my life to approve myself to thee, and to obtain the testimony of a good conscience. Trusting to thy mercy, and relying on the merits of my Redeemer, Father of all, I come to thee! With the joy of the Patriarch, I follow thy call into the land unknown."

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to set before you some of the joyful consolations derived from the gospel of Jesus; consolations which not only serve to support and animate us under the afflictions of this present life, but which also enter within the veil, and constitute our happiness through everlasting ages. But before I conclude, regard to my duty prompts me to warn and admonish you, that though the glad tidings of the Gospel are proclaimed to all, yet the consolations which they contain are not intended for, and are not conferred upon, all who hear the gospel. It is only they who believe, who repent, who reform, that will ever reap any solid advantage from the Christian religion. The profession

of Christianity will avail us nothing. It will avail us nothing to say that we have faith. We may easily deceive ourselves, and make a lively imagination pass for a strong faith. But unless our faith purifies the heart, unless it works by love, unless it produces the fruits of righteousness, it is no better than the faith of devils, who believe and tremble. Let me therefore persuade you, never so much as in thought to separate the ideas of faith and morality,—of belief in Christianity and a good life. If you make the attempt, you are undone for ever.

SERMON II.

ON REPENTANCE.

ACTS xvii. 30.

*And the times of this ignorance God winked at ;
but now commandeth all men everywhere to re-
pent.*

THIS is part of a sermon which the Apostle Paul delivered at Athens. The Athenians were the most ingenious and most illustrious people of Greece. Situated in a happy climate, and blessed with the highest degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the sciences and arts. These they carried to such a pitch of perfection, as gained the palm from the contending world, and has attracted the eyes and admiration of all succeeding ages. But to shew the darkness and the ignorance of the human mind, when not enlightened by the wisdom which cometh from above, as soon as they turned themselves to religion, they displayed nothing but their own absurdities and follies. In place

of a rational and liberal form of religion, a gross and stupid idolatry universally prevailed; in place of the true God, they bowed the knee to a dumb idol; and instead of the worship of the heart, consecrated to his service impure and profane observances. Zealous to destroy this fabric of superstition, the Apostle Paul, rising in the midst of an assembly that was convened on the hill of Mars, reproved those masters of science, those lights of the Heathen world, with the boldness and the majesty of an apostle of the Lord. “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious:—the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”

Repentance towards God is the great and leading duty enjoined both in the Old and in the New Testament. Along with every revelation of the Divine will; along with every new commission to prophets and holy men to preach this Divine will, the duty of repentance is always inculcated in the strongest terms. The Patriarch Noah preached repentance to the world before the flood. John the Baptist began his public ministry by preaching the doctrine of repentance. “Except ye repent, ye shall perish,” was the awful denunciation of our

Lord. And his apostles constantly began or ended their sermons with exhortations to this duty. This message, so often delivered to the world, I now address to you; and demand your serious attention to this most important subject. And, in further treating upon it, I shall, in the *first* place, Explain to you the nature of repentance; and, *secondly*, Lay before you the motives which ought to influence your minds to the practice of this duty.

The *first* thing proposed, was, To explain the nature of true repentance.

Repentance unto life, as it is well defined in that excellent summary of theology, the Shorter Catechism, is, “A saving grace, “whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his “sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God “in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his “sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose “of, and endeavour after, new obedience.” According to this definition, repentance includes, *first*, A true sense of sin; *secondly*, Grief and hatred of sin; *thirdly*, Apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, the forsaking of sin, and endeavouring after new obedience.

First, A true sense of sin. This must be the ground-work of all the rest, because it is

impossible to hate what we do not feel. It is impossible to conceive a hatred and aversion against a thing of which we are not sensible, or to flee from a danger of which we have no apprehension. Where there is no sense of sin, therefore, there can be no repentance. Accordingly the Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous, was too proud, even when he was praying to God, to confess any guilt of his own. "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men are." He was conscious, it seems, of no sin, though inwardly full of rottenness and hypocrisy. Such insensibility is a certain sign of a hardened and impenitent heart, and can proceed from nothing but a gross and conceited ignorance, a wretched inconsideration, or a long continuance in sin, that has rendered the conscience callous and past feeling. This first step of repentance supposes the sinner, in the first place, to be feelingly affected with a sense of his sins; to have his mind enlightened and his conscience awakened by the word of God; to be convinced from thence of the irregularity of his ways, and their contrariety to the holiness of the Divine nature; to labour under the load of his guilt; and, in the consciousness of his own ill-deserving, to be ready

to sink under the number and weight of his transgressions. Such were the sentiments of David's heart, and such the confession of his tongue. " I acknowledge my transgression ; " my sin is ever before me ; mine iniquities " are gone over my head ; as a burden they are " too heavy for me." This sense of sin is often accompanied with the emotions of fear. For when the sinner, already convicted in his own conscience, begins to reflect upon his past life, and at the same time to look up to God whom he has offended, and forwards to eternity, upon the brink of which he daily stands shivering ; what a spectacle of terror must this be to a man who has been long spiritually blind, and whose eyes are but just opened to see this startling scene ! And, behold, behind him a formidable troop of sins ; sins red as crimson, and numberless as the sand upon the sea-shore ! Above, a holy and a just God, the judge of the world, armed with the thunders of his wrath ! Before him the infernal world disclosing all its horrors, and ready to swallow him up in perdition ! Doubtless, the terrors of the Lord, when thus set in array against a self-condemned sinner, will fill him with fear and dismay, especially when he considers that God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.

The *second* step of repentance is, being affected with a grief and hatred of sin. The former was a selfish feeling; this is a generous passion. The former respects sin as ruinous to the sinner; this regards it as offensive to God. When the penitent is already affected with a deep sense of the danger of his sin, how will it wound his mind, and pierce him to the heart, to consider that he has not only been long an enemy to himself, but also an enemy to God; to consider that he has trespassed so far upon infinite goodness; that he has dallied so long with infinite justice; that he has mispent the precious talents committed to him of Heaven; that he has abused the faculties of his immortal soul; that he has been defacing the image of God his maker; and that with his own hands he has been excluding himself from happiness, from heaven, and from the presence of the Lord. These, and such alarming thoughts, pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; enough to constrain the sorrowful penitent to lift up his eyes in the midst of his torment, and to cry out with Job in the bitterness of his soul, “ I have sinned, and what shall I answer to thee, O thou Preserver of men? Alas! the arrows of the Almighty are within me! the poison of them drinketh

up my spirit. But what grieves me most is, that I have offended thee, the Author of my life, and the preserver of my being; that I have sinned against so much goodness, and provoked such tender mercy. Mine iniquities deserve thy wrath and vengeance. But thy goodness reacheth from heaven to earth. Thy mercy, like thyself, is infinite. Let this remorse which I now feel, be the only punishment of my sin; and let me not be finally delivered over to the tormentors. This I request and pray on account of the merit of my Redeemer. His righteousness is all-sufficient and meritorious. By it may I obtain favour and acceptance with thee, and be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God."

The *third* step in repentance towards God, is an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and a forsaking of sin. This is properly an act of faith. Faith and repentance are twin graces of the soul, and can never be separated. True repentance includes faith, and true faith includes repentance. The mercy of God through a Redeemer being proclaimed in the Gospel, and a new and living way to the holiest of all being set open by the blood of Jesus, the true penitent flies for refuge to the hope set before him, and lays hold

on eternal life. He forsakes his sins, and walks in newness of life. He begins with alacrity to run the race set before him, and feels, to his blessed experience, that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. This is the crowning act of true repentance, and the test of its sincerity. That is not true repentance, when the sinner, after feeling some compunctions of mind, some touches of remorse, forms a few feeble resolutions, which he breaks at the first approach of temptation. He is not a true penitent, who, after mourning over his old sins, begins a new course of wickedness. This is only changing one sin for another. A man who has spent his youth in profusion and extravagance, may devote his riper years to avarice and the cares of the world. Such a person is indeed a different man, but he is not a penitent. In like manner, a person who has been at the head of the follies and the vices of the world, who has taken the lead in all fashionable and criminal gratifications, may grow tired of such a course of life, as human nature will tire of every thing: Such a person may take a fit of devotion, and rush into a variety of gloomy superstitions and severities; but this is not true repentance. This is only passing from

one error to another. This is only giving a different direction to your passions. Repentance must effect a thorough change, or it is no repentance at all. Neither is he a true penitent who, after being affected with remorse for sin, falls into the same course again ; who is always sinning, and always repenting ; and who goes on in a sad circle of making resolutions, and breaking them as soon as they are made. True repentance is repentance from dead works to serve the living God. It consists in confessing and forsaking our sins. It consists in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness unto eternal life.

I do not mean by this, that any man in this life is altogether free from sin. Imperfections cleave to the best. Who can say that he has made his hands clean, or his heart pure ? Good men oft-times may be off their guard ; they may be surprised in the hour of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault ; but they will never sin upon a plan ; they will never make a system of iniquity ; they will not deliberately concert plots of wickedness upon their beds, and rise up to execute with warmth what they have contrived with coolness. The grace of God does not act by fits and starts ; is not a

transient, but an abiding principle. The Christian is fixed and immoveable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. He is not of those apostates, mentioned by the Apostle Jude, who resemble the morning clouds, that are ever varying their form, and are carried about with every wind; who resemble wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. But he advances from strength to strength; his path is like the light of the morning, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is one other part of repentance which I have not yet mentioned, and which merits your serious attention; that is, making restitution and reparation, as far as lies in your power, for the evils you have done. "If I have wronged any man," said Zaccheus when he repented, "lo, I restore him fourfold." Have you wronged any man in his property? Have you taken away his goods? Make restitution. Have you wronged any man in his reputation? Have you taken away his good name? Make reparation: Confess that you was a defamer: Confess that you was a liar. Have you offended and injured any one? Ask his forgiveness. Let no false shame hinder you from doing your duty. You have good cause

to be ashamed. Be always ashamed to offend ; but never blush for your returning virtue. Let no false shame, therefore, no foolish obstinacy, no pride of heart, prevent you from a thorough reformation. Better be exposed to shame here, than be doomed hereafter to everlasting pains.

The *second* thing proposed, was,—To lay before you the motives to repentance.

And, in the *first* place,—The superior light and information derived to the world by the Christian religion, concerning the rule of righteousness according to which we ought to conduct our lives, suggests a strong motive and inducement to repentance. God indeed never left himself without a witness in the world. He made the firmament bright with his glory, and commanded the heavens, with all their host, to declare his handiwork. With his own finger he inscribed the laws of justice and of virtue upon the heart of man. Attentive to this voice of God within, and assisted by those impressions of Divinity without, the moral teachers among the Gentiles struck out many useful discoveries, and taught many valuable lessons of wisdom to the world. They wandered not in the dark concerning the es-

entials of natural religion. They were not ignorant of the chief duties of life. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, they discovered by the works of creation; and having the law of nature written in their hearts, they were a law unto themselves. But the defect which they laboured under, was the want of authority to enforce the discoveries which they made, and the want of a proper sanction to the rules of life which they established. When keen and violent, the passions of men push them forward; they will not be restrained by the voice of reason and philosophy. On these occasions, men will reply to such an instructor, "Who gave thee a commission to teach and reform the world? Did the voice of Heaven come to thine ears? Who invested thee with authority and dominion over the mind? Who appointed thee instructor of the nations, and legislator of the moral world?" The heathen teachers could pretend to no such authority. But Jesus of Nazareth was invested with a divine commission. He descended from heaven to teach the will of God upon earth. He performed miracles in confirmation of his religion. He set the seal of heaven to the doctrines which he taught, and guarded

the laws which he established with the sanction of rewards and punishments. Such was the difference betwixt a human teacher and a prophet of the Lord; and such ought to be the difference betwixt the lives of heathens and the conduct of Christians. What signifies the superior excellency of your religion, unless its superiority appear in your life? What avails the light to you, if ye continue to walk in darkness? Unless ye repent, it had been better for you that the kingdom of God had never come amongst you. If ye still walk in the region and shadow of death, it had been better that the day-spring from on high had never risen over your benighted land. The heathens shall rise up in judgment against you, and shall condemn you. It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities of sin, those monuments of the vengeance of God to all succeeding times; it shall be more tolerable for these, than for those wicked Christians, who have disregarded the voice which spoke from heaven; who have profaned that blessed name by which they were called; and who, by their obstinacy and impenitence, have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing.

A *second* motive and encouragement to repentance, is the hope and prospect of success. Before the introduction of Christianity, when the world lay in darkness as well as in wickedness, a sense of guilt burdening the conscience, and a dread of future punishment as consequent upon that guilt, drove the nations to a variety of expedients, in order to avert the vengeance of Heaven, and make an atonement for their sins. Hence various rites and ceremonies were instituted. Hence so many sacrifices were offered up, and so much blood was shed. Reason indeed could have told them that these means were unavailable; that the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, could never take away sin. But reason could not assure them, that any other means, that even their repentance, would be effectual to that end. Here Revelation steps in to our aid. The Gospel assures us, that the wrath of God is not only averted from men, that He is not only reconciled, but also that he is a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The gate of mercy is set open by the blood of Jesus; and an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is promised to all those who sincerely repent of their sins, to all who be-

lieve and obey the Gospel. He that confesseth and returneth shall find mercy. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite spirit; a broken and a contrite heart the Lord will not despise. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, "whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." Seeing then that the favour of God, and all the blessings of the new covenant, are promised to true repentance, will you, by your impenitence and unbelief, cut yourselves off from these blessings? When such strong consolation is offered, will you not fly for refuge to the hope set before you? When heaven is opened for your reception, will you refuse to enter in? When the fruits of the tree of life are presented to you, will you not put forth your hand, and take and eat, and live for ever?

A *third* motive to repentance is the assistance of the Spirit, which the Gospel offers. Christianity is called the ministration of the Spirit. The effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost upon the Apostles, which enabled them to speak all languages, and to work miracles, was extraordinary, and intended to cease with that age. But the heavenly Com-

forter still abides with all the disciples of Christ, to guide them into all truth, and incline them to the practice of every duty. The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the glory of the latter days, or times of the Messiah, says, “ It shall “ come to pass in those days, that I will pour “ out upon the house of David, and upon the “ inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace “ and of supplication, and they shall look up- “ on me whom they have pierced, and they “ shall mourn and be in bitterness.” The Spirit of grace and of supplication then poured out abundantly, shall impress men with sorrow and contrition for their sin ; shall incline them to renounce their former sinful ways, to repent of their past transgressions, and to walk in newness of life. This operation of the Divine Spirit upon the mind, does not impel men to action by mechanical influence, and obstruct the exercise of their natural powers. The grace of God does not turn man into a machine. It draws him, as the Scripture happily expresses it, with the cords of love, and with the bonds of a man. It acts in such a manner as is adapted to the powers of a rational being, and to the liberty of a free agent. When such gracious aids are offered to us, when the spirit of God strives in order

to reclaim and reform us, it must be a high aggravation of our wickedness to resist his operations, and by our hardness and impenitence of heart, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. What more could the good husbandman have done to his vineyard than he has done? He calls upon you to repentance by the voice of nature; he calls you by the voice of reason; he calls you by the voice of providence; he calls you by the voice which spake from heaven: He sends down his Holy Spirit to second these Divine calls, to help your infirmities, to enlighten your darkness, to strengthen your feeble powers, and to work in you both to will and to do that which is his good pleasure. Not only does he prepare the crown of glory, but he also assists you to fight the good fight, and to finish your course, that you may obtain that crown. Not only does he open the heavens to receive you, but he also stretches out his hands to conduct you thither. And if, after all, you resist his Holy Spirit; if you counterwork his saving plan; if you defeat the efforts of mercy, the labours of Heaven used for your recovery, your guilt is upon your own head, your ruin is owing to yourselves, with your own hand

you push yourselves over the brink into the pit of utter perdition.

In the *fourth* place, as an inducement to repentance, consider the cross of Christ, who suffered the punishment due to our sins. How great must be the evil of sin, and how strong the obligation for us to repent of our sins, when such a sacrifice was required in order to expiate our guilt, and atone the wrath of Heaven. Burnt-offerings, thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, the first-born offered up for the transgression, the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, could not suffice. The Lamb of God could alone take away the sin of the world. Look then on him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn. Every groan that he utters, every tear that he sheds, every drop of blood that he pours, calls thee to repentance. View him stretched out on the cross, groaning under the pains of death, inclining his blessed head, and addressing his last words to you, "Sinners, behold your Saviour! behold him who was persecuted by Satan and by wicked men; behold him who was forsaken by God; behold this head which was crowned with thorns; behold these hands which were nailed to the tree; behold this side which was wounded with the spear; behold

the blood that flows from every part ; sinner, it was shed for you !” Canst thou, O man ! behold that scene without emotion ? Canst thou continue impenitent in the practice of those sins, which brought thy Saviour to that painful and ignominious death ?

Lastly, It is another motive to repentance, that God “ has appointed a day in the which “ he will judge the world,” as is mentioned in the verse following the text. That the soul of man survives the body, that there is a state of rewards and punishments beyond the grave, has been the general belief among all nations. Testimonies of this truth everywhere abound. Whether we turn to the east or to the west ; whether we consult the history of ancient or of modern times ; whether we listen to the accounts of the old world or of the new, we are presented with proofs and evidences of this important doctrine. How this opinion came to be so general, as to form an article in the popular creed of all nations, is a question of some difficulty. To those who have no guide but the light of nature, and who have no supernatural aids to assist the efforts of their own understanding, the arguments on both sides seem to be so equally balanced, that, upon principles of reasoning, it is almost impossible

to come to any determination. But, in all inquiries concerning human nature, we ought to attend to the heart more than to the understanding. Man is oftener guided by sentiment and feeling, than by abstract reasoning. Almighty God hath endowed us with a sense of moral good and evil. He hath placed within us a principle of conscience, which passeth judgment upon human actions, approving the good, and condemning the bad. This tells us, that in the Divine administration it ought to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. In confirmation of this, we see that by the original appointment of Heaven, and in the daily course of Providence, there is no peace to the wicked, and that they have great peace who love the law of the Lord. At the same time, we frequently observe in the course of human affairs, that the lot of the wicked falls to the righteous. We see many instances in life of good men depressed, and of bad men exalted; of vice holding a sceptre, and virtue pining in chains. How often have we seen the best of men reduced to eat the bread of sorrow, and to drink the waters of affliction, whilst the worthless and the infamous have rioted in the abundance of life, and enjoyed what their hearts could wish. When such

scenes are presented to our eyes, our heart rises within us. Shall it always continue thus, we say within ourselves, shall it always continue thus in a world that is governed by God? Shall oppressed righteousness never be taken into the protection of Providence, and triumphant wickedness never fall under his censure? Shall the cry of the innocent, of the oppressed, and of the persecuted, never reach the throne of justice? Are the wrongs and grievances of the good and the righteous, the wrongs and grievances which they have suffered in the cause of goodness and of righteousness, never to be redressed? Is wickedness finally to triumph over oppressed virtue; to triumph over the laws of nature; to triumph over the providence of Heaven? Will the time never come when the Almighty shall rise from his throne to adjust and rectify the affairs of the moral world? If not in this, certainly in some future state, he will assume the part of a Judge, to reward the just, and to take vengeance upon the wicked.

All this has at last been fully revealed. It was reserved to the Divine Prophet, who came from the bosom of the Father to bring life and immortality to light by his Gospel. He taught that God had appointed a day in which he was

to judge the world; that the dead were to be raised, and all that ever lived upon the earth to appear at his tribunal. Of this doctrine he gave assurance unto all men by his own resurrection from the dead; and as surely as he arose, shall we at the time appointed arise. When the mystery of God is finished the last trumpet will sound. The voice of the Son of God will pierce the caverns of the tomb, will be heard over the kingdoms of the dead, will reanimate the ashes of thousands of generations, and sit an assembled world at the seat of judgment. By the unalterable appointment of Heaven, every thing has its period. The cedar of Lebanon fades away like the leaf upon its top. Lebanon itself decays in the course of years. States and empires have their day, like mortal man. Limits are set to time, and the world has its last hour. A few generations more having passed away, the day comes which God hath appointed to judge the world; the great day for which all other days have revolved. When this period approaches, heaven opens wide its everlasting doors, and behold the Judge comes forth! He comes in the glory of his Father; in the effulgence of unveiled Divinity he comes, attended with all the host of heaven! Before him the harbinger of his ap-

pearance, the destroying angel of nature descends, clothed with a cloud, having his face like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He sets his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; he lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears “by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more!” As the doom of nature is denounced, the thunders of heaven for the last time utter their voices: the laws of nature are dissolved; the stars fall from the firmament; the moon is turned into blood; and that sun, whose beams you now behold, sinks in the darkness of eternal night; the earth hears its last sentence, and shakes to the centre; the four corners of the world hear it; all that are alive hear it; all the dead hear it, and live; from the presence of their Creator, the heavens depart like a scroll rolling itself together; the earth vanishes, and there is no place found for it; every mountain and every island is fled; creation fades away to give place to uncreated glory; the great tribunal is erected; the books are opened; the judge descends; the world is assembled; the sentence is pronounced; the sentence is executed: down to the prison of darkness and despair, the habitation of unquenchable and everlasting fire, the wicked are driven, where, bound

in chains, they feel the torment of the worm that never dies, and suffer in the flames of the lake whose smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever; whilst enthroned in glory above, and adorned with the beauties of immortality, the righteous ascend with their Lord, and approaching to the fountain of life, partake of those pleasures at the right hand of God, which shall occupy and animate the praises of eternity.

Let me now ask you, my brethren, do you believe what you have now heard? Do you believe that there is a judgment to come, and that each of you shall bear a part in that tremendous scene? I appeal to a witness that cannot lie. I appeal to your own conduct. Do you live and act in such a manner as becomes those who have one day to answer for their lives and their actions? Is your conversation in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour and the Judge? Are your loins girt about, your lamps burning, and you yourselves like unto men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Were the general judgment now to begin, were these heavens to open, and the sign of the Son of Man to appear overhead, could you face his tribunal? Could you lift up your heads with confidence and joy amidst the ruins of nature, and the crash of a dissolving world?

If not, I call upon you to repent, and reform your lives. You are still under the administration of grace, and have the hope of glory set before you. Heaven and immortality are in your offer. God graciously calls you to repentance and newness of life. The Spirit helps your infirmities, and strives to conquer the stubbornness of your spirits. But he will not always thus wait to be gracious. Your day of grace does not last for ever. If mercy reclaims you not, you are delivered over to the hands of justice. If you reject the golden sceptre when it is held out to you, a rod of iron succeeds to destroy the children of disobedience. Repent you must, in one form or other. If your sins affect you not with sorrow and contrition here, they will fill you with unavailable remorse and despair hereafter. You must either be affected with the kindly emotions of that repentance which is unto life, or be tormented with the stings of the worm that never dies.

Knowing these terrors, we endeavour to persuade men. Happy for men, if they would endeavour to be persuaded! If these things, my brethren, which you have been now hearing, be true; if it be true that we shall be raised up at the last day; that the day of judg-

ment shall as surely arise as this morning arose, in obedience to laws which can no more fail to bring it forth than the sun could this morning refuse to arise at the command of its Creator ; if it be true that all of us who are here assembled shall be assembled again around the judgment-seat of God ; if it be true that this is our only state of probation, and that life and death are now in our choice, that heaven and hell are now set before us ; if these things be true, (and true they are, otherwise this book is a collection of fables,) if these things be true, —then, O my brethren, what manner of persons ought we to be !—then, O my God, what manner of persons ought we to be !

SERMON III.

ON THE DANGER OF DELAYING REPENTANCE.

2 COR. VI. 2.

—*Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

THERE is not a man upon the earth but who has some sense of religion upon his mind, and intends one day or another to work out his salvation. When we look into the world, we find that all men are just about to reform. However loose in their principles, however profligate in their lives, they seriously purpose to amend their conduct, and the sinner of to-day resolves to be a saint to-morrow. Seeing then that all men are so favourably disposed towards religion ; seeing that all men are in earnest one day to repent ; how does it come to pass that so many men never repent ; that such multitudes live and die in their sins ? It

is because they delay their repentance ; it is because they put off the day of salvation ; because they begin not a course of reformation, but are only *about* to reform. This infatuation is not confined to the inexperience of our early years ; it extends through every period of life. In this the hoary head is no wiser than the youth of yesterday ; and the same lying spirit that deceived us at twenty, is believed at threescore and ten. In this experience does not make us wise, and when we buy instruction it avails us not. The fool who, wanting to cross the river, lay down on its bank till the waters all ran by, is but a just emblem of that man who delays his repentance from time to time, who is always purposing but never performing, and who, neither warned by the past, nor alarmed for the future, purposes on to the last, and dies the same. Such is the life which numbers of men lead in the world, spending the prime and vigour of their life in vain pursuits ; letting all their religion evaporate in empty resolutions, till, in an hour in which they are not aware, the warning is given : at midnight is the cry made, and when they seek to enter in with the bridegroom, the door is shut !

That you may understand the expressions

made use of in the text, I must recall to your remembrance, that in the language of Scripture, the period of our probation is called a time, a season, or a day. There is an accepted time, there is a season of merciful visitation, there is a day of grace, which, if we let slip, the night cometh, in which no man can work, in which we shall grope for the wall like the blind, in which we shall stumble at noon-day as in the night, and be in desolate places as dead men. This does not arise from a defect of mercy in God, from a defect of merit in Christ, or from a defect of grace in the Holy Spirit; it arises from ourselves and from the nature of things. Almighty God hath appointed this life to be our state of probation. He hath set apart a time to fix the character for eternity. When, therefore, by repeated acts, and by long habits, this everlasting character is fixed, no alteration can succeed. To give an instance that may have occurred to the observation of you all; you have seen, or you have heard of, criminals who have been trained up from their youth in the practice of vice, who have advanced from lesser to greater crimes, who have been punished according to law, who have been imprisoned, who have been banished, who have returned from banish-

ment, and for greater crimes have been condemned to die, who, from some artifice or incident have escaped in the critical moment, and who, instead of being reformed by all these punishments, have fallen into the same crimes again, and even grown bolder in wickedness. There have indeed been instances of great sinners who have turned penitents, and been good Christians; but it is much to be questioned if there be any such instances among those who have been *long* sinners, who have committed iniquity, not by fits and starts, but upon a fixed and determined plan, who have spent in the service of sin all the fire of youth and coolness of age.

Having explained to you the meaning of the phrase used in the text, before proceeding further, take next a view of life, and you will see, that a great part of men let slip the accepted time and day of salvation, till it be too late. It is the happiness of most men in countries where the Christian religion is professed, to receive a good education, and to be trained up from their youth in the principles of religion, and in the practice of virtue. But when this period of discipline is over, when a man sets out in life, and becomes his own master, he frequently becomes a different person

in that different state, and looks upon the good habits of his youth as some of those childish things which he ought now to put away. If his education has been severe and rigorous ; if his parents restrained him in that gaiety of heart and flow of the spirits which is the portion of youth ; if he pined in his closet, whilst his equals in age frequented those entertainments which can be enjoyed with innocence, he then generally goes to the other extreme, and plunges with a precipitant step into all the follies and vices of the age. The prisoner having got loose, grows wild and extravagant. Being formerly shut up, he now wants to know the world ; and in order to this, ventures on forbidden paths, resigns the reins of conduct to inclination, and gives a loose to all his desires. Having found his former principles to be inconsistent with the enjoyment of life, he confounds his early prejudices with true piety ; for which cause he throws off religion altogether ; he becomes a patron and defender of vice ; he laughs at every thing that is serious : and perhaps, out of contempt to this day, in which we assemble together to worship the God of our fathers—out of contempt to the sacred rites of his country, which all wise heathens have revered—out of contempt to the

venerable institutions of our holy religion, spends this day in dissipation and profaneness, and open impiety.

But not to draw the character with such black stains, let us suppose men at that period passing their days in folly rather than in vice, at the head of every idle scheme, first in every fashionable amusement, and, as the Scripture happily expresseth it, "walking in a vain show." Behold them making amusement one of the cares of life; spending those precious hours, which no power can ever recall, which no future labour can ever compensate, spending those precious hours in vanity and folly, whilst all along they forget the business of their salvation, and are no more affected with the prospect of a world to come, than with a tale that is told. But whilst thus they dance round in a circle of folly; whilst they solace themselves with the prospect of pleasures rising upon pleasures, never to have an end, and say in secret to their souls, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant;" whilst, like the foolish virgins, they slumber and sleep in the arms of this Delilah, at midnight is the cry made, O man, thy hour is come! And the trembling soul takes its departure, unawares and unprepared, to God the Judge of all!

To guard you against the fatal error which has undone its thousands, allow me to recommend to your practice the necessity of instant repentance and reformation. In the *first* place, No time is so proper as the present ; *secondly*, If you delay, your reformation will be difficult ; *thirdly*, If you delay long, it may become altogether impossible.

In the *first* place, then, There is no time so proper as the present.

The prodigal son exhibits to us a scene which we often see realized in life : A young man, who had been educated in the paths of virtue, declining from these paths, and going astray into forbidden ground, from the fond expectation of meeting with some strange, vast unknown happiness in the gratification of sensual desire. In the course of this unhallowed pilgrimage, he gives loose reins to his mind, he indulges every wandering inclination, he denies himself nothing that his heart wishes for. At last he comes to himself, he sees the folly of his ways, he repents, he resolves, he amends. Such a change of life we can easily conceive. In his former situation, he knew not what he did ; he was transported by passion, he went headlong down the torrent. But

when once he began to reflect, he found that that was the critical moment of life, which, if he had neglected, his return would have been more difficult. In his former situation, he went forward in the path which seemed right in his own eyes, without looking back. He did not act against the admonitions of conscience; he did not think at all. But if, after his eyes were open to discern the state of wretchedness and guilt into which he had fallen; if after this, he had returned to folly again, it would have been much more difficult to restore him by repentance. Let this then be your conduct: whenever you come to the knowledge of your sins, whenever you perceive any thing amiss in your lives, seize the favourable moment, as the proper time to reform.

What is it, I beseech you, that you do by delaying? You allow corruption time to strengthen and fortify itself; you give temptation double force, by yielding to it, not from surprise, but with deliberate consent; you weaken the power of conscience, that check which God appointed to you in your evil courses; and with your own hand, you throw obstacles in the way of your conversion. You now see you are sinful and undone; you now resolve to repent and amend; you are now set-

ting out in the path which leadeth to life ; you are not far from the kingdom of God : but if you resolve and perform not ; if, when you are once engaged you draw back ; you then fly off from the path of life to the way of destruction ; you throw yourself further from the kingdom of God than if you had never set out. At once, then, at once make your escape from the allurements of sin ; break the chains by which you are held ; cut off all the avenues and approaches to the sin that besets you ; give no time to the enemies of your soul to collect their strength ; by faith and repentance now enter into the way that opens into the heavens ; when you say, with sincere purpose of heart, “ I will arise and go to my “ Father,” in that moment arise and go to thy Father ; *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.

In the *second* place, By delaying, your conversion will become extremely difficult.

Thou sayest, O man ! that thou wilt repent in some future period of time ; but thou knowest not the danger of such a resolution. It is amazing to think with what ease we can impose upon ourselves. In spite of all his boasted wisdom, man is more simple than the

beasts of the field. Do you consider, my friends, that delaying from day to day, and from year to year, that postponing the work of your salvation to some future period of time, is little better than a fixed determination that you will never begin it at all? Do you reflect, that the time to come, if it ever comes, will be the same to you *then*, that the present time is to you *now*? There will occur the same difficulties to deter you, the same pleasures to allure you, the same dangers to terrify you. Objects will then be as present, and strike the senses as strongly as ever; and the time of reformation will still be to-morrow. Nay, it will then be more difficult to be saved than it is now. You will have more sins to repent of; more bad habits to subdue; a more corrupted nature to put off. It is a remarkable fact, and deserves your most serious attention, that among all the conversions recorded in Scripture, there is not one of a sinner who delayed his repentance. Among all the returning penitents there mentioned, there is not one in the situation of a Christian, who daily hears the Gospel without its having any effect upon his life. Zaccheus, upon hearing Jesus Christ proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, yielded to the influences of that grace to which he had

hitherto been a stranger, and surrendered himself to a call which had never been made before. The apostles, in the course of their ministry, converted Jews and Gentiles. They converted the Jews, by proposing to them an idea, which was new to them, the Lord of glory, whom they with wicked hands had crucified and slain. They converted the Gentiles, by working miracles, in proof of their divine commission, and by preaching the doctrines of salvation to them, which they had never heard before.

But what new methods can we attempt with *you*? Is there any motive to repentance which hath not already been urged upon you? Is there one avenue to the heart which has not already been tried, and which has not already been tried in vain? Shall we address ourselves to your conscience, to give you the alarm? But, alas! you have often heard its voice, you have often disregarded its voice, and by efforts too successful, have lulled it into a profound sleep. Shall we address ourselves to your hopes, by describing to you the joys of heaven, the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand, the happiness of the blessed, the triumphs of eternity? All these have been already presented to your eyes, and to all these you have preferred the enjoyments of an hour.

You have sold your birth-right to immortality for a sordid gratification, and you now only mind earthly things. Shall we endeavour to alarm your fears, by setting before you the horrors of hell, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power? These have been traced out to you an hundred times, and you have learned the fatal art of freeing yourselves from the fears of them. Shall we implore you by the grace of the Gospel, and by the tender mercies of the God of Peace? But, alas! you have undervalued his mercy, you have turned his grace into wantonness. Shall we set before you the image of a Saviour dying on the cross for the redemption of the world? But, alas! a crucified Redeemer hath been often preached to you, the memorial of his sacrifice hath been renewed in your sight, and, after all, you have counted his blood as a common thing; you have looked upon the Son of God suffering on the cross with as much unconcern as the Jews of old, when they cried out, "Away with him, away with him!"

In the *third* place, By long delaying, your conversion may become altogether impossible.

Habit, says the proverb, is a second nature ; and indeed it is stronger than the first. At first, we easily take the bend, and are moulded by the hands of the master ; but this nature of our own making is proof against alteration. The Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, and the leopard his spots ; the tormented in hell may as soon revisit the earth ; as those who have been long accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. Such is the wise appointment of Heaven to deter sinners from delaying their repentance. When the evil principle hath corrupted the whole capacity of the mind ; when sin, by its frequency and its duration, is woven into the very essence of the soul, and is become part of ourselves ; when the sense of moral good and evil is almost totally extinct ; when conscience is seared as with a hot iron ; when the heart is so hard that the arrows of the Almighty cannot pierce it ; and when, by a long course of crimes, we have become what the Scripture most emphatically calls, “ vessels of wrath fitted for “ destruction ;”—then we have filled up the measure of our sins ; then Almighty God swears in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest ; then there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for wrath,

and indignation which shall devour the adversary. Almighty God, weary of bearing with the sins of men, delivers them over to a reprobate mind, when, like Pharaoh, they survive only as monuments of wrath ; when, like Esau, they cannot find a place for repentance, although they seek it carefully with tears ; when, like the foolish virgins, they come knocking, but the door of mercy is for ever shut.

Further, let me remind you, my brethren, that if you repent not now, perhaps you shall not have another opportunity. You say you will repent in some future period of time ; but are you sure of arriving at that period of time? Have you one hour in your hand ; have you one minute at your disposal? Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Before to-morrow multitudes shall be in another world. Art thou sure that thou art not of the number? Man knoweth not his time. As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil hour. Can you recall to mind none of your companions, none of the partners of your follies and your sins, cut off in an unconverted state, cut off perhaps in the midst of an unfinished debauch, and hurried, with all their trans-

gressions on their head, to give in their account to God the Judge of all? Could I shew you the state in which they are now in; could an angel from heaven unbar the gates of the everlasting prison; could you discern the late companions of your wanton hours overwhelmed with torment and despair; could you hear the cry of their torment which ascendeth up for ever and ever; could you hear them upbraiding you as the partners of their crimes, and accusing you as in some measure the cause of their damnation!—Great God! how would your hair stand on end! how would your heart die within you! how would conscience fix all its stings, and remorse, awaking a new hell within you, torment you before the time! Had a like untimely fate snatched *you away then*, where had you been *now*? And is this the improvement which you make of that longer day of grace with which Heaven has been pleased to favour you? Is this the return you make to the Divine goodness for prolonging your lives, and indulging you with a longer day of repentance? Have you in good earnest determined within yourself that you will weary out the long-suffering of God, and force destruction from his reluctant hand?

I beseech, I implore you, my brethren, in

the bonds of friendship, and in the bowels of the Lord ; by the tender-mercies of the God of Peace ; by the dying love of a crucified Redeemer ; by the precious promises and awful threatenings of the Gospel ; by all your hopes of heaven and fears of hell ; by the worth of your immortal souls, and by all that is dear to men ; I conjure you to accept of the offers of mercy, and fly from the wrath to come. “ Behold, now is the accepted time, behold “ now is the day of salvation.” All the treasures of heaven are now opening to you ; the blood of Christ is now speaking for the remission of your sins ; the church on earth stretches out its arms to receive you ; the spirits of just men made perfect are eager to enrol you amongst the number of the blessed ; the angels and archangels are waiting to break out into new alleluiahs of joy on your return ; the whole Trinity is now employed in your behalf ; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, at this instant call upon you, weary and heavy laden, to come unto them that ye may have rest unto your souls !

SERMON IV.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE XV. 18.

I will arise and go to my Father.

THE parable of the prodigal Son is one of the most beautiful and affecting pieces of composition which is anywhere to be found. The occasion on which it was spoken, and the persons to whom it was addressed, are well known to you. Dropping, therefore, what was peculiar at the first narration, I shall consider it as representing in general the return of sinners to God by true repentance.

Such a return is not a single act in the Christian life ; it is the habitual duty of every man who is subject to infirmities and defects. For such is the weakness of human nature in this imperfect state, such is the strength of temptation in this evil world, that frail man is often led astray before he is aware. Alas ! in

our best estate we are but returning penitents ; and to the last hour of this mortal life we stand in need of amendment.

We may observe the following steps in the return of the prodigal to his father's house : *First*, His restoration to a better mind, by means of consideration. " When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare !" *Second*, Ingenuous sorrow for sin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. " Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee." *Third*, A resolution to return to a sense of duty. " I will arise and go to my father." And, *fourth*, His immediate performance of that resolution. " And he arose and came to his father."

First, His restoration to a better mind by means of consideration. " He came to himself."

With great propriety is this expression used ; for a wicked man is *beside himself*. Madness, saith Solomon, is in the heart of the sinner. As madness is a disease of the rational powers, so is vice of the moral. Sin, in like manner, unhinges the whole frame of the moral being, tinges with its baleful colours every sen-

timent of the heart, and presents to view a spectacle more melancholy still,—a being, made after the image of God, sinking that image into the resemblance of a brute, or the character of a fiend. Mad, however, as such persons are, they are not always so. Sin cannot always keep its ground. The evil principle has its hour of weakness and decline. There is no man uniformly wicked. The exertion is too strong to last for ever. Nature does not afford strength and spirits sufficient to keep a man always in energy. The most abandoned have fits and starts of soberness and recollection. There are lucid intervals in the life of every person. At such a time is the crisis of a man's character. At such a time the prodigal son came to his right mind. At once the spell was broken and the enchantment dissolved. He is amazed, he is confounded to find himself degraded from the rational character; cast down to the herd of inferior animals; making one at the feast where the vilest of brutes were his associates and companions. Then the false colours with which fancy had gilded his life, vanish away. The flattering ideas which imagination and passion presented to his mind, disappear in a moment. Disenchanted from the delusions of the great deceiver,

what he esteemed to be the garden of Eden, he finds to be a desolate wilderness. “Then he came to himself.”

You know that when a man recovers from a fit of lunacy, and is restored to his reason, the mind annihilates the lurid interval, forgets the events of such a state like a dream, and resumes the train of ideas it had pursued in its sound state. Thus, the penitent in the parable, awaking as from a dream, recovering as from a delirium, transports himself into the time past, his former life recurs to his mind, his father's house rises to view, he recalls the first of his days before he went astray. Happy days of early innocence and early piety, before remorse had embittered his hours, or vice corrupted his heart! Happy days! when the morning arose in peace, and the evening went down in innocence; when no action of the past day disturbed his slumbers by night; when no reflection on the riots of the night threw a cloud over the succeeding day; when he was at peace with his own heart; when conscience was on his side; when reflection was a friend; when memory presented only welcome images to the mind; when, under the wings of paternal care, he was blessed in his going out and

coming in ; when his father's eye met his with approbation and delight.

Having viewed the picture, he compares it with his present situation. Sad contrast ! By his own folly, a vagabond in a foreign land ; banished from all that he valued and held dear ; cut off from the joys of his better days ; languishing out life under the most abject form of misery ; pining under poverty ; sunk into servitude ; feeding swine, and himself desiring to partake with them in their husks ; miserable without, but more miserable within ; a spirit wounded by remorse, a heart torn by reflection on itself ; an accusing conscience, which told him that he merited his fate, and which held up to him his past life in its blackest colours of folly and guilt. Astonished at himself, startled at his own image, which, in its true colours, he had never seen before, he was ashamed of his conduct, and came to a better mind. Such were the effects of consideration, and such will ever be the effects of consideration to those who duly exercise it. Why does the sinner go forward in the error of his ways ? Because he does not consider. “ Hear, O heavens ; give ear, O earth : the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but my people do not consider.” Consider

your ways, is the voice which God addresses to mankind in every age; and unless you consider, the calls of the gospel and the offers of grace are made to no purpose. The world which is to come has no existence to you but what you give it yourselves; the eternity that is before you, the happiness of heaven and the pains of hell, are no more than dreams, unless you realize them to yourselves, unless you give them their full force, by bringing them home to the heart. When a man reviews the error of his ways, nothing is wanting to a further reformation but reflection and thought. Think, and the work is done. “ I considered my ways,” saith the Psalmist. What was the consequence? “ I turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”

The *second* step in the return of the prodigal, is ingenuous sorrow for sin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. “ Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.”

We are formed by the Author of our being to feel contrition for the offences we commit. This pungent sense of infirmities, this penitential sorrow for errors and defects, is a beauty in the nature of man. It is an indication

that the sense of excellence exists in its full vigour, and the mark of a nature that is not only improvable, but that also is making improvements. When a man seriously considers that the tenor of his life has been irregular and disorderly ; that much of his time has been misemployed, and great part of it spent altogether in vain ; that he has walked in a vain show, unprofitable to himself or others, an idler upon the earth, a cumberer of the ground ; that by his negligence and perversion of his powers he has been lost to the world which is to come, has marred the beauty of his immortal spirit, and stopt short in the race which conducts to glory, honour, and immortality ; when he further considers, that his offences have extended to his fellow men, that by his conduct he has been the cause of misery to others, has disturbed the peace of society, done an injury to the innocent,—such reflections in a heart that is not altogether callous, will awaken contrition and sorrow.

This penitential sorrow will be increased when he considers against whom he has offended ; that he has sinned against infinite goodness, and saving mercy, and tender love ; that he has resisted the efforts of that arm that was lifted up to save him ; that he has rebelled

against the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed him. This is one of the characteristics of true repentance. The penitent does not mourn for his sins as being ruinous to himself, so much as for their being offensive to God. The returning prodigal, in the address he makes to his Father, dwells not upon the misery he had brought upon himself, upon the ruin to his character, his fortune, and his expectations in life. "I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight." "What grieves me most is, that I have offended thee; that I have sinned against goodness unspeakable; against that goodness to which I am indebted for the care of my infant years; against that goodness to which I owe my preservation; against him who visited me while I was flying from his presence; who supported my powers while they were employed against him. It is my Benefactor whom I have offended; it is my best Friend that I have injured; it is my Father himself against whom I have risen in arms.³"

This sorrow for sin is accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. To wicked men, labouring under the agonies of a guilty mind, the Deity appears an object of terror. They figure to themselves an angry tyrant, with his thunder in his hand, delighting to punish and

destroy. Like Adam when he had sinned, they are afraid, and flee from the presence of the Lord. But from the mind of the penitent these terrors vanish, and God appears, not as a cruel and malignant power, but as the best of beings, the Father of mercies, and the Friend of men, as a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Encouraged by these declarations, the penitent trusts to the Divine goodness, and flies for refuge to the hope set before him. It is the wicked man only that despairs. Horrors of conscience and forebodings of wrath affright and overwhelm the sons of reprobation. Such horrors felt Cain and Judas Iscariot. But the penitent never despairs. He sinks indeed in his own eyes, and throws himself prostrate on the ground, but still throws himself at the footstool of mercy, not without the faith and the hope that he will be taken into favour. The language of his soul is, “ Though I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again to thy holy temple. I will arise and go to my Father, for though I have offended him, he is a Father still. He now sits upon a throne of mercy, and holds a sceptre of grace. At thy tribunal former offenders have been forgiven, and former sinners have been taken into favour. To thy

ears the cry of the penitent has never ascended in vain. Thou art ever nigh to all who call upon thee in sincerity of heart. When we tend to thee, at the first step of our return, thou stretchest out thy hand to receive us." So different is that repentance which is unto life, from the sorrow of the world which worketh death. Different as the look of melancholy upon the face of the virtuous mourner, is from the unkindly glow which burns the cheek of shame; different as the tender tears which a good man sheds for his friends, are from those bitter drops which fall from the malefactor at the place of execution.

The *third* step is, a resolution to return to a sense of duty. "I will arise."

Without determined purposes of amendment, contrition is unavailing and ineffectual. The Deity is not delighted with the sufferings of man. Sorrow for sin is so far pleasing, as it softens the heart, and makes it better. It is the resolution of amendment, the purposes pointed to reformation, that make the broken heart and the contrite spirit an acceptable sacrifice; such is the nature of true repentance; it flows not so much from the sense of danger as from the love of goodness.

In true repentance, there is not only a change of mind, but a change of life. When the day-spring from on high arises on him who is in darkness, when God says, Let there be light, the scales fall from his eyes, a new world breaks upon his sight, futurity becomes present, and invisible things are seen; then first he beholds the beauty which is in holiness, and tastes the joy which flows from returning virtue. In that happy hour he forms the pious purpose, and seals the sacred vow to be holy for ever. Then he prefers the peace which flows from virtue, and the joy which ariseth from a good conscience, to every consideration. Then the servants of God appear to him the only happy men; and he would rather rank with the meanest of these, than enjoy the riches of many wicked. "Great God, withhold from me what thou pleasest, but give me to enjoy the approbation of my own mind, and thy favour. I would rather be the humblest of thy sons than dwell in the tents of wickedness." None shall enter into the New Jerusalem, and sit down at the right hand of the Father, but they who prefer the testimony of a good conscience, the smiles of Heaven, and the sentence of the just, to all the treasures of the world.

Had the penitent not been in earnest, false shame might have prevented or retarded his return. Conscious of guilt, and covered with confusion, how shall he appear before his friends and acquaintance? "I know (might he have said) the malice of an ill-judging and injurious world. The sins which are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance are not forgotten by them. Let me fly rather to the uttermost parts of the earth, retire to the wilderness untrod by the foot of man, and hide me in the shades which the beams of the sun never pierced, than be exposed to the scorn, and contumely, and reproach of all around me."

But the penitent was determined and immoveable. * * * * *The rest of the MS. was not legible.*

SERMON V.

ON A HEAVENLY AND A WORLDLY SPIRIT.

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 12.

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit which is of God.*

TH**ERE** are two characters which, in Sacred Scripture, are set in perpetual opposition, the man of the earth, and the citizen of heaven. The first character pertains to that class of men, who, whatever speculative opinions they entertain, yet in practice consider this life as their only state of being. A person of this character centres all his regards in himself; confines his views entirely to this world, and pursuing avarice, ambition, or sensual pleasure, makes these the sole objects of pursuit. Good dispositions he may possess, but he exercises them only when they are subservient to his

purposes. Virtues also he may cultivate, not for their own sake, but for the temporal advantages they bring along with them. The citizen of heaven moves in a nobler sphere. He does not indeed affect the character of sanctity, by neglecting his temporal concerns. He looks upon the maxim of David as inspired wisdom, "If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself." But although he has his temporal interest in his eye, he has a higher interest in his heart. What is necessary, what is useful, will often be a subject of attention ; but what is generous, what is lovely, what is honourable, what is praiseworthy, become the chief objects of pursuit. He cultivates good dispositions from a sense of their beauty, previous to his experience of their utility ; he esteems the possession of virtue more than the earthly rewards it procures ; he lives in a constant discharge of the duties of life in this state, and with a well-grounded faith, and an animating hope, looks forward to a better world, and a higher state of being.

These two characters, which divide all mankind, are always represented in Scripture as inconsistent and incompatible with each other. It is impossible, says our Lord, at one 'and the same time to serve God and to serve

Mammon. If any man love the world, says the Apostle John, the love of the Father is not in him. The principles that actuate these characters, are represented in the text as two spirits opposite to one another, the spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God. The spirit of any thing is that vital principle which sets it agoing; which keeps it in motion; which gives it its form and distinguishing qualities. The spirit of the world is that principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life, of the man of the earth. The spirit which is of God, is that vital principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life, of the citizen of heaven. One of these spirits actuates all mankind. While, therefore, I represent the striking lineaments in these opposite characters, take this along with you, that I am describing a character which is your own; a character which either raises to eminence, or sinks down to debasement.

In the *first* place, then, The spirit of the world is mean and grovelling; the spirit which is of God is noble and elevated. The man of the earth, making himself the object of all his actions, and having his own interest perpetu-

ally in view, conducts his life by maxims of utility alone. This being the point to which he constantly steers, this being the line from which he never deviates, he puts a value on every thing precisely as it is calculated to accomplish his purposes. Accordingly, to gain his end, he descends to the lowest and the vilest means ; he gives up the manly, the spirited, and the honourable part of his life ; he makes a sacrifice of fame, and character, and dignity, and turns himself into all the forms of meanness, and baseness, and prostration. The Prophet Isaiah, with infinite spirit, derides the idols of the Heathen world. “ A man,” saith he, “ planteth a tree, and the rain doth nourish “ it ; he heweth him down cedars, and taketh “ the cypress and the oak ; and of the tree which “ he planted, he maketh to himself a god. The “ carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh “ it out with a line ; he fashioneth it with planes, “ and maketh it after the figure of a man ; and “ then he worshippeth it as a god. Part there- “ of he burneth in the fire, with part thereof “ he maketh bread, and with the residue he “ maketh a god.” Similar to this is the creation of these earthly gods. Read the pages of their history, and behold them rising to divinity by compliance, by servility, by humiliating

meanness, and the darkest debasements. How dishonourable often is that path which conducts to earthly grandeur ; and how mean a creature frequently is he whom the world calls a great man ! So low and grovelling is the spirit of the world.

It is a spirit of a different kind that animates the citizen of heaven. He is born from above ; he derives his descent from the everlasting Father, and he retains a conscious sense of his divine original. Hence Christians, in Scripture, are called “ noble ;” are called the “ excellent ones of the earth.” It is unworthy of their celestial descent, it is unbecoming their new nature, to stoop to the meanness of vice. The citizen of heaven scorns the vile arts, and the low cunning, employed by the man of the earth. He condescends, indeed, to every gentle office of kindness and humanity. But there is a difference between condescending, and descending from the dignity of character. From that he never descends. He himself ever feels, and he makes others feel too, that he walks in a path which leads to greatness, and supports a character which is forming for heaven. Such is the difference between the spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God. Suppleness, servility, abject

submission, disgrace the one; dignity, elevation, independence, exalt the other. The one is a serpent, smooth, insinuating, creeping on the ground, and licking the dust: the other is an eagle, that towers aloft in the higher regions of the air, and moves rejoicing in his path through the heavens.

In the *second* place, The spirit of the world is a spirit of falsehood, dissimulation and hypocrisy: the spirit of God is a spirit of truth, sincerity, and openness. The life which the man of the earth leads is a scene of imposture and delusion. Show without substance; appearance without reality; professions of friendship which signify nothing; and promises which are never meant to be performed, fill up a life which is all outside. With him the face is not the index of the mind, nor the tongue the interpreter of the heart. There is a lie in his right hand. He is perpetually acting a part, and under a mask he goes about deceiving the world. He turns himself into a variety of shapes; he changes as circumstances change; he goes through all the forms of dissimulation, and puts off one disguise to put on another. He does not hesitate to counterfeit religion when it serves a turn, and to act the saint in

order to gain his ends. Hence the spirit of the world hath often passed for the spirit which is of God, and Satan, under this disguise, hath been mistaken for an angel of light. Such is the spirit of the world.

The spirit which is of God is a spirit of truth, sincerity, and openness. The citizen of heaven esteems truth as sacred, and holds sincerity to be the first of the virtues. He has no secret doctrines to communicate. He needs no chosen confidants to whom he may impart his favourite notions; no private conventicles where he may disseminate his opinions. What he avows to God he avows to man. He expresseth with his tongue what he thinketh with his heart. He will not indeed improperly publish truths; he will not prostitute what is pure and holy; he will not, as the Scripture says, throw pearls before swine; but neither will he on any occasion partake with swine in their husks. He is what he appears to be. Arrayed in the simple majesty of truth, he seeks no other covering. Supported by the consciousness of rectitude, he holds fast his integrity as he would guard his life. Such is the difference between these characters. The man of the earth turns aside to the crooked paths and insidious mazes of

dissimulation; the citizen of heaven moves along in the onward track of integrity and honour. The spirit of the world seeks concealment, and the darkness and the shade; the spirit which is of God loves the light, becomes the light, adorns the light.

Thirdly, The spirit of the world is a timid spirit; the spirit which is of God is a bold and manly spirit. Actuated by selfish principles, and pursuing his own interest, the man of the earth is afraid to offend. He accommodates himself to the manners that prevail, and courts the favour of the world by the most insinuating of all kinds of flattery, by following its example. He is a mere creature of the times; a mirror to reflect every vice of the vicious, and every vanity of the vain. His sole desire is to please. If he speak truths, they are pleasing truths. He dares not risk the disapprobation of a fool, and would rather offend against the laws of Heaven than give offence to his neighbour. To sinners he appears as a sinner; to saints he appears as a saint. In the literal sense he becomes all things to all men, without aspiring to that faith which would set him above the world, or to that spirit which would enable him to assert

the dignity of the rational character. He is timid, because he has reason to be so. Wickedness, condemned by its own vileness, is timorous, and forecasteth grievous things. There is a dignity in virtue which keeps him at a distance; he feels how awful goodness is; and in the presence of a virtuous man, he shrinks into his own insignificance.

On the other hand, the righteous is bold as a lion. "I fear my God, and I have no other fear," is the language of his heart. With God for his protector, and with innocence for his shield, he walks through the world with an erect posture, and with a face that looks upwards. He despises a fool, though he were possessed of all the gold of Ophir, and scorns a vile man, though a minister of state. The voice of the world is to him as a sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal. The applauses or the censures of the high or the low affect him not. Like distant thunder they vibrate on his ear, but come not to his heart. To him his own mind is the whole world. There sits the judge of his actions, and he appeals to no other tribunal upon the earth. He possesses the spirit which rests upon itself. He walks by his own light, he determines upon his own deeds. Supported by the consciousness of in-

nocence, and acting with all the force of providence on his side, he has nothing to fear ; knows that he can no more be hurt by the rumours of the idle, impious, and hypocritical, than the heavens can be set on fire by the sparkles that arise into the air, and that die in the moment they ascend. Animated with this spirit, the feeble becomes strong in the Lord. Apostles, who on former occasions had been weak and timid, whom the voice of a woman frightened into apostacy, who deserted their Master in his deepest distress, and hid themselves from the fury of the multitude ; these Apostles no sooner felt the impulse of this Spirit, than they appeared openly in the midst of Jerusalem, published the resurrection of Jesus to those priests and elders who had condemned him to death, and discovered a boldness and magnanimity, a spirit and intrepidity, which shook the councils of the Jewish nation, and made the kings of the earth to tremble on their thrones.

In the *last* place, The spirit of the world is an interested spirit : the spirit which is of God is a generous spirit. The man of the earth has no feeling but for himself. His own interest is his only object ; he never loses sight

of this ; this is his all ; every line of his conduct centres in this point. He has a design in every thing he does. As the prophet Malachi says, "He will not shut the doors for nought." He deliberates not whether an action will do good, but whether it will do good to him. That generosity of sentiment which expands the soul ; that charming sensibility of heart which makes us glow for the good and weep for the woes of others ; that Christian charity which comprehends in its wide circle all our brethren of mankind ; that diffusive benevolence, reduced to a principle of action, which makes the human nature approach to the Divine, he considers as the dreams of a visionary head, as the figments of a romantic mind that knows not the world.

But the spirit which is of God is as generous as the spirit of the world is sordid. One of the chief duties in the spiritual life is to deny itself. Christianity is founded upon the most astonishing instance of generosity and love that ever was exhibited to the world ; and they have no pretensions to the Christian character who feel not the truth of what their Master said, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive." This is not comprehended by worldly men ; and the more worldly and

wicked they are, the more it is incomprehensible. “Does Job serve God for nought?” said the first accuser of the just. Yes, thou accursed spirit! he serves God for nought. Thy votaries serve thee for lucre and profit and filthy mammon; but the children of God serve him from reverence and love. Rewarded indeed they shall be in heaven, while thine are to be tormented, and by thyself, in hell; but they account that to be a sufficient reward which they have even here in their own hearts, —the consciousness and the applauses of generosity.

SERMON VI.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LUKE XI. 13.

—How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

IN the beginning of this chapter, our Lord prescribed to his disciples a pattern of prayer. He discovered the Deity to them under the tender name of a Father; and he taught them to approach the throne of Grace with the affection and the confidence of children. To encourage them still more to the practice of this duty, he assures them of success upon their perseverance in devotion; and to impress his instructions in the strongest manner upon their minds, he delivers a parable to them, which he concludes with these words: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye

“ shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened
“ unto you. For every one that asketh, re-
“ ceiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and
“ to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.
“ If a son shall ask bread of any of you that
“ is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if
“ he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a
“ serpent ? or if he shall ask an egg, will he
“ offer him a scorpion ? If ye then, being
“ evil, know how to give good gifts unto your
“ children, how much more shall your heaven-
“ ly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that
“ ask him ?” As if he had said, “ I have told
you that God is your Father ; that his ear is
ever open to your cry, and that his hand is
ever stretched out in your behalf.” You that
are fathers can judge of the paternal affection.
If you see a child in distress, will your bowels
of compassion be shut against him ? When
he utters the voice of sorrow, will you turn a
deaf ear to his complaint ? Will you refuse to
stretch out the hand to save him from the pit ;
and instead of relieving him, push him down
into destruction ? There is no father so bar-
barous, and no heart so cruel. If you, then,
evil and corrupted as you are ; if clothed as
you are with human frailties and infirmities,
you know how to give good gifts unto your

children ; if the workings of nature, and the yearnings of paternal affection, prompt you to perform good offices, how much more will the infinite benevolence of the Deity prompt him to bless all his offspring, and open his bountiful hand to the whole family of heaven and earth ! As the Most High God who inhabiteth eternity, excels his meanest creature, the being of a day, so far doth the infinite benignity and everlasting love of your Father in heaven, exceed the fondest affection of an earthly parent.

In further discoursing to you upon this subject, I shall explain what is meant by giving the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps these words may refer to the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, when they received the gift of tongues, and were endued with the power of working miracles. Though these words may include this meaning, yet they chiefly refer to the ordinary influence of the Divine Spirit, which extends to every generation ; which is the principle of the spiritual life within us, and continues with the faithful in all ages. Reason and revelation concur in assuring us, that the great Creator hath ne-

ver withdrawn himself from his works. Above us, around us, and within us, God is seen, God is felt. The vast universe is one great temple, which he fills with his presence. As he is ever present in the world, he is ever employed. The hand that at first stretched out the heavens, still supports the pillars of the firmament. The breath which kindled the vital heat of nature, still keeps the flame alive and glowing; God still acts through all his works, preserving and upholding the whole system of things, and carrying forward the designs of infinite wisdom and goodness. His providence is a continued exertion of creating power. As he is employed in the material, he acts also upon the moral world. The Father of spirits communicates himself to holy men, enlightens their understandings with divine knowledge; by secret ways, at once strengthens and ravishes the mind, and fills them with a conscious sense of his own presence. Hence the wisest among the heathens, guided only by the light of nature, acknowledged the necessity of supernatural aids, and taught that nothing great or good could be performed without the influence of a Divine Spirit. But as this doctrine hath been by some denied altogether, and by others involved in mysticism and absurdity, it will be

proper to give you that just and rational account of it, which the Scripture authorises.

There is hardly any one thing of which mankind may be made more sensible from their own experience, than the necessity of divine aids. For, alas! the balance in human nature, between reason and appetite, between the powers of the mind, and the inclinations arising from the body, is in a great degree lost. There may be, and there once was, a more harmonious temperament in the human frame. The rational part of our nature was better enlightened and more vigorous; the passions and appetites of the animal part moved under its controul. But that state of innocence is no more. Our nature is now degenerated; we find a law in the members warring against the law of the mind. This disorder of our frame is more and more increased by those false notions of happiness which we are apt to imbibe, and by the many bad examples among which we pass our early years, insomuch, that by the time that we are grown up to the full power and exercise of reason, we find ourselves brought under the dominion of sensual and wicked inclinations. How then shall we recover our liberty? How shall we regain the original rectitude of our nature, and obtain a victory over

the vices which war against the soul? Is nature, such as it now is, sufficient for these things? Is reason alone an equal match for the passions and desires of the heart, broke loose from all their restraints, authorised by custom, and inflamed by example? Can we cease to do evil and learn to do well, purely of ourselves, and be able to turn the stream of our affections from sensible and earthly things, to objects worthy of the choice and pursuit of a reasonable creature? Can we, in short, convert ourselves by our own strength, and turn from the power of Satan unto the living God? Are we sufficient for these things?

We are not. When we would do good evil is present with us; the sensual part of our nature obtains dominion over the rational; we are chained down to the earth while we attempt to soar to the heavens. Here, therefore, God hath graciously interposed for our recovery. As he sent his Son into the world to redeem us from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law, he gives us his Holy Spirit to deliver us from the dominion of sin, and to translate us from the bondage of Satan into the family of Heaven, and the glorious liberty of the children of God. Hence he is said to

work in us both to will and to do that which is his good pleasure. We are said to receive the Spirit, and our bodies are styled the temples of the holy Ghost.

Concerning this Spirit given to those that ask him, I observe, in the *first* place, That his influence is consistent with the freedom of a reasonable being. The assistance which we receive from above, both in our first conversion from sin, and through the whole course of a religious life, are entirely rational, and have only a persuasive and moral influence. They do not resemble the inspiration of the prophets of old, which was sudden and violent, and overpowered the mind; which superseded the use of reason, and suspended for a while the exercise of the natural faculties. The prophets were but the instruments of the Spirit, but we work together with God. The grace of Heaven does not take away the powers of the mind, but exalts them. It does not destroy the natural liberty of the mind, it makes us free indeed. If a man loses his free agency he ceases to be a man. He is a machine, and is acted upon. In opposition to this, God is said, in scripture, to draw us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man; that is, in

such a manner as is most consistent with freedom of choice, and agreeable to the constitution of a reasonable nature. Reason being the noblest faculty of the human frame, it first partakes the influence of the Divine Spirit. Its views are enlarged to take in the system of divine truth, and its power is increased to govern the whole man. These divine aids extend to the heart and the affections, place them on proper objects, and give them their noblest joys. In short, they take in the whole of the Christian life. They inspire good resolutions and purposes of new obedience; they carry us on, and encourage us in the ways of righteousness; they render the practice of our duty easy and delightful, and bring us at last to the enjoyment of uninterrupted and everlasting happiness.

Thus you see, that the influence of the Divine Spirit is in a way agreeable to the frame of human nature, gentle and persuasive; not controlling or obstructing the use of reason, but by the use of reason influencing the will, moderating the affections, and regulating the whole conversation. It is no argument against the reality of such divine aids, that they are not distinguishable from the operation of our own minds, and that we feel them not in a sen-

sible and striking manner. How difficult is it in our own character to distinguish what is natural from what is acquired ; to distinguish between the natural treasures of the mind, and those foreign stores which she imports from education. The Spirit of God acts in such a manner as is most agreeable to the faculties of the mind. It is in this manner also, that God acts in the material world. Whatever is done in the heavens, or in the earth, or in the sea, is brought about by Divine Providence. Yet all that chain of causes and effects, from the lowest up to the throne of God, we call by the name of the course of nature. But what is this? The course of nature is the energy of God.

In the *second* place, I observe, concerning the influence of the Spirit, that its reality is only known by its operation and effect upon our lives. “Marvel not,” said our Lord to Nicodemus, “that I say unto you, Thou must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the spirit.” That is, as if he had said, the influences of the Spirit are indeed

imperceptible to sense, and cannot be distinguished in the precise moment of their operation, but they are visible and certain in their effects, and in the fruits which they produce. A life of obedience and holiness, therefore, is the proof, and the only proof, that the Spirit dwells in us. The fruit of the Spirit, say the Scriptures, is goodness, and righteousness, and truth. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and temperance. The life, then, my friends, the life is the criterion and test by which we shall know if we are born of the Spirit. There are indeed other marks, easier attained, which some people have found out to themselves. A light within, a call from heaven, a secret voice, and an extraordinary impulse, these are often the effects, not of a divine favour, but of a weak understanding, and a wild imagination, and often of something worse, even of arrant hypocrisy and unblushing impudence. These indeed are the marks of a spirit which hath often appeared in the world, but which is very different from the Spirit of God. These are the symptoms of that intolerant and persecuting spirit, the offspring of darkness and of demons, which, excepting a few favourites, pursues the human race with unrelenting hatred

in this world, and consigns them over to eternal pains in the next. This is a spirit which hath slain its thousands. Fire and sword mark its approach ; its steps are in the blood of the just, and it shakes the rod of extermination over the affrighted earth. But the Spirit of God is the spirit of love. It fills us with affection and benevolence towards all our brethren of mankind. For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him.

This doctrine of the Spirit dwelling in us, and assisting us to perform good works, furnisheth a strong argument for humility. Why boastest thou, O man ? What hast thou which thou has not received ? From God descendeth every good and every perfect gift. We can do nothing of ourselves, not even so much as to think a good thought. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. He graciously accepts of our sincere endeavours to please him ; and at last rewards those services, which by his grace he enables us to perform. Let us therefore be sensible of our own imperfections, and give all the praise to him. Let this stir us up to activity in our Christian course. The proper use and improvement of this doctrine is not to sit still and take our rest, because God gives us his Holy Spirit, but, re-

lying on the assistance of his Spirit, to move forwards in our Christian race. Seeing God worketh in you, therefore work out your salvation. Up, therefore, and be doing, seeing the Lord is with you. You not only act with the force of Providence on your side; you have not only the Captain of Salvation fighting with you, but you have also his Spirit within you, leading you on to victory.

In the *last* place, Let us express our gratitude and praise to this Divine Guest, who vouchsafest to be our guide and comforter; let us be careful not to grieve and offend him by wicked actions, lest he withdraw himself from us; and let us always remember, that He who is a pure and a holy Spirit, cannot dwell in polluted hearts, and in temples that are not his own.

SERMON VII.

ON RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT.

ISAIAH XXVI. 20.

*Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,
and shut thy doors about thee.*

WITHOUT viewing these words in connection with what goes before or follows after, I shall consider them as containing an exhortation to religious retirement. Man was intended by his Creator for society. All the powers of his frame, the faculties of his mind, and the qualities of his heart, lead him to the social state as the state of his nature. But, although man was made for action, he was also intended for contemplation. There is a time when solitude has a charm for the soul; when, weary of the world, its follies, and its cares, we love to be alone, to enter into our chamber, to shut the door about us, and in silence to commune with our

heart. Such a retirement, when devoted to pious purposes, is highly useful to man, and most acceptable to God. Hence the holy men are represented in Scripture as giving themselves to meditation; hence Jesus Christ himself is described as sending the multitude away, and going apart to the mountain.

An opinion once prevailed in the world, and in many parts of it still prevails, that all virtue consisted in such a retreat; that the perfection of the Christian life consisted in retiring from the world altogether, in withdrawing from human converse, in shutting ourselves up in the solitude of a cell, and passing our days in barren and unprofitable speculation. Such notions of a holy life have no foundation in the word of God. Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles themselves, acted a part in public life, and enjoined their disciples not to withdraw from the world, but to go about doing good; not to wrap up their talent in a napkin, but to improve it by their industry; not to put their light under a bushel, but to make it shine before men. The retreat, therefore, which Scripture recommends is temporary, and not total; is not the retreat of a monk to his cell, or a hermit to his cave; but of men living in the

world, going out of it for a time to return with greater improvement. To retire at times into the closet for these purposes, is of general obligation upon all Christians. To induce you, therefore, to the practice of this duty, I shall now shew you the advantages which thereby you may expect to reap.

The advantages attending religious retirement are these: it takes off the impression which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind; it is favourable for fixing pious purposes in the mind, and strengthening our habits of virtue; it brings us to the knowledge of ourselves; it opens a source of new and better entertainment than we meet with in the world.

In the *first* place, Religious retirement takes off the impression which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind. The world, my friends, is not in general a school of virtue; it is often the scene of vanity and vice. Corrupted manners, vicious deeds, evil communications, surround us on every side. From our first entrance into life, we become spectators of the vicious, and witnesses to the commission of sin. This presence of the wicked lessens our natural hor-

ror at a crime, it renders the idea of vice familiar to the mind, and insensibly lulls asleep that guarded circumspection which ought always to be awake. Besides this contagion of evil example, the unhappy proneness of men to imitate the manners of those with whom they live, adds strength to the temptations of the world. Our favourable opinion of the person extends to the action he commits; and by our fatal fondness of imitation we do what we see done. Our way then in the world lies through snares and precipices; we see and we hear at the peril of our souls. The contagion in which we live, transfuses itself into our own minds. How often is the purity of the closet lost amid the pollution of the world! The good resolutions of the morning give way to bustle and business, or to the career of pleasure; and the day that began with innocence and devotion, ends in vanity and vice. Temptations in every form assault your innocence, and the adversary of your soul is for ever on the watch. One false step may send you to the bottom of the precipice. One word spoken in passion hath given rise to quarrels that have lasted through life. A single glance of envy, of revenge, or of impure desire, hath raised a conflagration which could only be

quenched by blood. To avoid the pollution with which the world is infected, to keep off the intrusion of vain and sinful thoughts, enter into thy chamber, and shut the doors around thee. There the wicked cease from troubling, there the man who is wearied of the world is at rest. There the glare of external objects disappears, and the chains that bound you to the world are broken. There you shut out the strife of tongues, the impertinencies of the idle, the lies of the vain, the scandal of the malicious, the slanders of the defamer, and all that world of iniquity which proceeds from the tongue. In this asylum thy safety dwells. To thy holy retreat an impure guest dares not approach. Enjoying the blessed calm and serenity of thy own mind, thou hearest the tempest raging around thee and spending its strength ; the objects of sense being removed, the appetites which they excited depart along with them. The scene being shifted, and the actors gone, the passions which they raised die away.

In the *second* place, This devout retirement is favourable for fixing pious purposes in the mind, and strengthening our habits of virtue. We are so formed by the Author of our nature, that the material objects with which we

are surrounded raise ideas in us, and make impressions upon us merely by their own nature, and without any assistance from ourselves. There are motions in the body which are involuntary and spontaneous, and there are impressions in the mind which are as much out of our power. At the presence of certain objects, we feel certain passions whether we will or not; we cannot command the emotions which arise in the mind; on many occasions we are merely passive to the influence of external things. When imminent danger threatens, or the shriek of jeopardy is heard, the heart throbs, the blood takes the alarm, and the spirits are agitated without our direction or consent. As the nature of the plant is affected by the soil where it grows; as the nature of the animal is affected by the pasture where he ranges; so the character of the man who never thinks, who never retires into himself, arises from the mode of life in which he is engaged. His mind is in subjection to the objects which surround him. He passes from object to object as the scene changes before him, and he is delivered over from passion to passion, according to the events which vary his life. Thus in society we are in a great measure governed by accidents, and the mind is passive to the impressions which it receives.

But in solitude we are in a *world of our own*. We can call up what ideas, and converse with what objects we please. We can say to one desire, "Go," and to another "Come." Dazzled no longer with the false glitter of the world, we open our eyes to the beauties of that better country which is a heavenly one; stunned no more with the noise of folly, we can listen in silence to the still small voice. Escaped from the broad way, we set out on the narrow path. That is the place, and then is the time to seal the useful truth, and to fix the pious purpose. Then you can best recollect your native strength, and stir up the grace of God which is in you. Then at leisure you can reflect by what temptations you were formerly foiled, that you may guard against them in the time to come; foreseeing the evil day, you will look out for the best support when it comes; and putting on the whole armour of God, you will be able to resist the fiery darts of the evil one, and to go forth conquering and to conquer. By these means, the good thoughts which were scattered up and down your life will be collected together, and settle in a fixed purpose of new obedience. The various rays thus converging into one, will kindle into a fervent flame.

In the *third* place, By means of religious retirement, thou wilt be brought to the knowledge of thyself. This is a part of our superiority to the other creatures, that we are not confined to present objects ; that we can extend our view beyond the province of sense, and turn our attention wherever we please, throughout the whole system of nature. The mind can arrest itself in its motion, and become the object of its own contemplation. The noblest of sciences is to know ourselves. But however useful and important this study is, there is none with which we are so little acquainted. Delighting to wander abroad, and familiar everywhere, you are strangers at home, strangers to your own character, strangers to your own hearts, strangers to all that is most important for a rational creature to know. You give your thoughts to wander through the whole world ; on the wings of imagination you fly from pole to pole ; but you never descend into yourself. For what reason art thou so averse to know thyself? Because thou art afraid of losing thine own good opinion ; because thou wantest to impose upon thyself, and then to impose upon the world. For this cause thou darest not appeal to thine own mind, thou darest not meet

thy heart alone. Thou avoidest the light, lest thine evil deeds should be made manifest. Thou fliest from the God within, as Adam when he had fallen fled from the Lord, because thou art afraid. What can be more suspicious than for reasonable creatures to decline the bar of reason? What can be more shameful than for those who have an understanding, not to be able or willing to give an account of their actions to themselves? What can be more reproachful than for men to allow themselves in a course of life, which they have not the courage or the confidence to reflect upon?

Sinner! deal plainly with thyself. If thou wert not ashamed of thyself, why, in the name of the all-knowing God, shouldst thou decline conversing with thyself? If all were well at home, what should make thee so fond of rambling abroad, and losing the remembrance of thyself in a crowd of vain amusements? Here, here is the cause of thy love of noise and hurry, and tumult and dissipation, and perpetual diversions: thy aim is by this means to escape from thyself, to employ and divert thy mind, that it may not be forced upon such an ungrateful subject. Yet here wisdom begins. Thou never canst ascend to the knowledge of Him

whom to know is life eternal, without knowing thyself; and thou canst never know thyself, without retiring from the world, without stripping off whatever is artificial about thee, without throwing off the veil which thou wearest before men, and devoting thy secret hours to serious consideration. Enter then into thy chamber, shut the doors about thee, commune with thine own heart, be still, say with the Psalmist, "Search and try me, O Lord; see " if there be any evil way in me, and lead me " in the way everlasting."

In the *fourth* place, Retirement and meditation will open a source of new and better entertainment than you meet with in the world. You will soon find that the world does not perform what it promises. The circle of earthly enjoyments is narrow and circumscribed, the career of sensual pleasure is soon run, and when the novelty is over, the charm is gone. Who has not felt the satiety and weariness of the king of Israel, when he cried out, "All is " vanity and vexation of spirit?" Unhappy is the man who in these cases has nothing within to console him under his disappointment. Miserable is the man who has no resources within himself, who cannot enjoy his own

company, who depends for happiness upon the next amusement, or the news of the day.

But the wise man has treasures within himself. He has a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed. The hour of solitude is the hour of meditation. He communes with his heart alone. He reviews the actions of his past life. He corrects what is amiss. He rejoices in what is right, and, wiser by experience, lays the plan of his future life. The great and the noble, the wise and the learned, the pious and the good, have been lovers of serious retirement. On this field the patriot forms his schemes, the philosopher pursues his discoveries, the saint improves himself in wisdom and goodness. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion in every age has adopted as its own. There her sacred inspiration is felt, and her holy mysteries elevate the soul ; there devotion lifts up the voice ; there falls the tear of contrition ; there the heart pours itself forth before Him who made, and Him who redeemed it. Apart from men, you live with nature, and converse with God.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE UNHAPPY STATE OF THE WICKED.

ISAIAH lvii. 21.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

IT is universally agreed that the works of creation demonstrate the being and the attributes of the Deity. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power, his unerring wisdom, and his infinite goodness, are everywhere legible throughout the great Book of Nature. It is very astonishing, however, that many persons, who from the *creation* of the world infer the existence and perfections of the Deity, should, from the *government* of the world, infer the necessity of a day of judgment to rectify the course of Providence, and vindicate the ways of God. The works of God must certainly be uniform and of a piece. According to the representations of Sacred Scripture, the day of judgment was not appointed to account

for the conduct of Providence, but to pass sentence on the actions of men. All the administrations of God are conducted with supreme wisdom and goodness. He is for ever employing the power of his providence to favour the cause of righteousness, and to diffuse happiness over the world. When the blessed above sing the wonders of creating power, and cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;" they also add, "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints." If the Almighty is possessed of infinite perfection; if, as the Scriptures assert, he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, we may naturally infer it to be one of his eternal decrees, that righteousness and happiness, that sin and misery, must be inseparable in the course of things.

Notwithstanding the force of the arguments that prove this truth, opinions pretty general prevail to the contrary. Many persons are of opinion that the wicked man has more enjoyment in life than the good man has; that virtue exposes us to many evils; and that if it were not for a future state, Christians would be of all men the most miserable. The origin of this opinion it is not difficult to unfold. It is natural for men to judge of the course of

things by what happens in their own lot. When we are in a prosperous situation, when the candle of the Lord shineth upon our heads, all nature puts on a face of beauty, and wears a smiling appearance. But, when adversity, and a train of afflictions come in their turn, the eye of the impatient sufferer tinctures every thing around him with its own baleful colours. To his disordered mind, darkness seems to involve the system of nature, malignant demons to usurp the sceptre of Providence, and invade the throne of God. Hence the many complaints of good and holy men in sacred writ, that the righteous were cut off from the earth, whilst the wicked flourished like a green bay-tree. But these were not the maxims which governed their lives; they were only sudden exclamations made in the moments of impatience under distress. The universal voice of Scripture is expressly on the other side. "Say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with him; " say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him. There is no peace, saith my God, " to the wicked. Great peace have they who " love the laws of the Lord."

In further treating upon this subject, I shall endeavour to shew you, that there is no peace or happiness to the wicked, whether you con-

sider him as a subject of the divine government, as a member of society, or as an individual.

In the *first* place, then, Let us consider the wicked in his religious capacity, as a subject of the divine government.

Religion is the distinguishing quality of our nature, and is one of the strongest features that marks the human character. As it is our distinguishing quality, so it possesses such extensive influence, that however overlooked by superficial inquirers, it has given rise to more revolutions in human society, and to more changes in human manners, than any one cause whatever. View mankind in every situation, from the earliest state of barbarity, down through all the successive periods of civilization, till they degenerate to barbarity again, and you will find them influenced strongly by the awe of superior spirits, or the dread of infernal fiends. In the heathen world, where mankind had no divine revelation, but followed the impulse of nature alone, religion was often the basis of the civil government. Among all classes of men, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, and the worship of the gods were held in the highest reverence. Judge what a strong hold religion must have taken of the human

heart, when, instigated by horror of conscience, the blinded wretch has submitted to torture his own flesh before the shrine of the incensed deity, and the fond father has been driven to offer up, with his own hands, his first-born for his transgression, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. It is possible to shake off the reverence, but not the dread, of a Deity. Amid the gay circle of his companions, in the hour of riot and dissipation, the fool may say in his heart that there is no God; but his conscience will meet him when he is alone, and tell him that he is a liar. Heaven will avenge its quarrel on his head. Judge, then, my brethren, how miserable it must be for a being made after the image of God, thus to have his glory turned into shame. How dismal must the situation be for a subject of the divine government to consider himself as acting upon a plan to counteract the decrees of God, to defeat the designs of eternal Providence, to deface in himself the image and the lineaments of heaven, to maintain a state of enmity and war with his Creator, and to associate with the infernal spirits, whose abode is darkness, and whose portion is despair!

Reflections upon such a state will give its full measure to the cup of trembling. Was not Belshazzar, the impious king of Babylon,

a striking instance of what I am now saying? This monarch made a feast to a thousand of his lords, and assembled his princes, his concubines, and his wives. In order to increase the festivity, he sent for the consecrated vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem; and in these vessels, which were holy to the Lord, he made libations to his vain idols, and in his heart bade defiance to the God of Israel. But, whilst thus he defied the living God, forth came the fingers of a man's hand, and on the wall, which had lately resounded with joy, wrote the sentence of his fate! In a moment his countenance was changed, his whole frame shook, and his knees smote one against another, whilst the Prophet in awful accents denounced his doom: "O man, thy kingdom is departing from thee!" Although Providence should not now particularly interpose to punish thee, O guilty man! yet the sentence of thy doom is written in thy heart, and there is a prophet within, who, upon the commission of crimes, will tell thee, that for these the kingdom of heaven is departed from thee.

In the *second* place, As wickedness makes a man miserable in his religious character, so does it also in his social.

However corrupted men may be in their lives, their moral sentiments are just and right; that is, although from an immoderate self-love we may excuse wickedness in ourselves, yet such is the force of conscience within, so deeply rooted in the mind is the eternal difference between good and evil, that, by the very frame of our natures, we abhor wickedness in others. When we are conversant in the world, or give our attention to a story that is a faithful picture of human manners, from the impulse of natural feeling, we attach ourselves to the side of innocence; we take part with the virtuous hero, and consider his enemies as our own. There is no vice but what tends to make a man contemptible or odious to society. Against the greater and more atrocious crimes, the sword of the law is for ever drawn, and its stroke is death. Other vices which come not under the cognisance of the laws, either have ways of punishing themselves, or are marked with public infamy. Pride makes every affront a torment, and puts a man's happiness in the power of every fool he meets with. The envious man is literally his own tormentor, and preys upon his own bowels. The drunkard exposes himself to the derision of man-

kind, and falls into follies that cover him with shame in his sober hours. Does not a habit of intoxication deprive a man of all sense of decency, indispose him for the business of life, and render him a sorrow to all his friends? Will the atheist conciliate the love of men by shewing us that he possesses not the fear of God? Is not the miser pointed at with the finger of scorn, and doomed to the double curse of hoarding and guarding? Is not a liar universally odious, and does he not prepossess us against him even when he speaks truth? Do not fraud and dishonesty mar a man's fortune, ruin his reputation, and hinder his success in life?

In truth, my brethren, there is not a sin but what, one way or another, is punished in this life. We often err egregiously by not attending to the distinction between happiness and the means of happiness. Power, riches, and prosperity, those means of happiness and sources of enjoyment, in the course of Providence, are sometimes conferred upon the worst of men. Such persons possess the good things of life, but they do not enjoy them. They have the means of happiness, but they have not happiness itself. A wicked man can never be happy. It is the firm decree of Heaven,

eternal and unchangeable as JEHOVAH himself, that misery must ever attend on guilt; that when sin enters, happiness takes its departure. There is no such thing in nature, my brethren,—there is no such thing in nature,—as a vicious or unlawful pleasure. What we generally call such, are pleasures in themselves lawful, procured by wrong means, or enjoyed in a wrong way; procured by injustice, or enjoyed with intemperance; and surely neither injustice, nor intemperance have any charm for the mind; and unless we are framed with a very uncommon temper of mind and body, injustice will be hurtful to the one, and intemperance fatal to the other. Unruly desires and bad passions, the gratification of which is sometimes called pleasure, are the source of almost all the miseries in human life. When once indulged, they rage for repeated gratification, and subject us, at all times, to their clamours and importunity. When they are gratified, if they give any joy, it is the joy of fiends, the joy of the tormented; a joy which is purchased at the expence of a good conscience, which rises on the ruins of the public peace, and proceeds from the miseries of our fellow-creatures. The forbidden fruit proves to be the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Go-

morrah. One deed of shame is succeeded by years of penitence and pain. A single indulgence of wrath has raised a conflagration which neither the force of friendship, nor length of time, nor the vehemence of intercession, could mitigate or appease, and which could only be quenched by the effusion of human blood. One drop from the cup of this powerful sorceress, has turned the living stream of joy into waters of bitterness. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

If a wicked man could be happy, who might have been so happy as Haman? Raised from an inferior station, to great riches and power, exalted above his rivals, and above the princes of the empire, favourite and prime minister to the greatest monarch in the world. But with all these advantages on his side, and under all these smiles of fortune, his happiness was destroyed by the want of a bow, usual to those of his station, from one of the porters of the palace. Enraged with this neglect, this vain great man cried out in the pang of disappointment, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." This seeming affront sat deep on his mind. He meditated revenge. A single victim could not satisfy his malice. He wanted

to have a glutting vengeance. He resolved, for this purpose, to involve thousands in destruction, and to make a whole nation fall a sacrifice to the indulgence of his mean-spirited pride. But, as it generally happens, his wickedness proves his ruin, and he erected the gallows on which he himself was doomed to be hanged !

In the *third* place, If we consider man as an individual, we shall see a further confirmation of the truth contained in the text, “That there “ is no peace to the wicked.”

In order to strengthen the obligations to virtue, Almighty God hath rendered the practice of sin fatal to our peace as individuals, as well as pernicious to our interest as members of society. From the sinner God withdraws his favour and the light of his countenance. How dark will that mind be, which no beam from the Father of lights ever visits? How joyless that heart which the spirit of life never animates! When sin entered into paradise, the angels of God forsook the place. So from the soul that is polluted with guilt, peace, and joy, and hope, those good angels, vanish and depart. What succeeds to this family of heaven? Confusion, shame, remorse, despair.—
Cætera desunt.

SERMON IX.

ON OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE LAW.

PSALM lxxviii. 1.

Give ear, O my people, to my law.

THIS is the call which God addressed to his ancient people, and which at sundry times and in divers manners he addresses to the world. It is the voice of the Almighty to mankind in every age. His voice all nature hears, and his law all nature obeys. The sun moves in the path marked out for him by his Creator; the moon keeps her appointed course, and the host of heaven proceed from age to age in their original beauty. The seasons know their time, and the earth obeys the law impressed upon it at first. The elements confess their Lord; the tempest hears his voice, and the sea submits to the mandate which said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; here shall thy waves be stayed." The orders of celestial spirits, the principalities and powers of heaven,

obey the command of their King, minister to the purposes of his providence, and, in acts of goodness, or on errands of mercy, perform his pleasure.

Throughout all nature, one being alone is deaf to the voice and disobedient to the command of God, that is, the *sinner*. He alone has departed from his sphere, has rebelled against the law of his nature, and rejected the universal dominion of the Deity in the universe. To recall him from this rebellious state, to replace him in his original station, and restore him again to the kingdom of God, is the end of true religion. For this purpose Moses and the prophets were inspired, Jesus and the apostles were sent. For this purpose the heaven was opened, the Almighty appeared, and the voice uttered to the world, "Give ear, my people, to my law."

Your obligation to obey this law will appear, if you consider that it is the law of your nature, that it is the law of heaven, that it is the law of society, and the law of happiness.

In the *first* place, It is the law of your nature.

When God created man, he did not leave him to act at random, or to live in a state of

anarchy. He gave him a law, the emanation of eternal wisdom and the transcript of Divine perfection. The same fingers that upon Mount Sinai wrote the commandments upon tables of stone, had written them beforehand upon the living tables of the human heart. The foundation of morality is laid deep in human nature ; its principles result from the constitution of our frame ; and its authority will be supreme, while there is a mind to discern, or a heart to feel, or a conscience to judge. Darkness is not more different from light, nor bitter from sweet, than good is from evil, and virtue from vice. You are no more masters of the emotions that rise in the mind, than of the sensations which rise in the body. You can no more give the law to internal nature than to external nature. You may as well call the sun to come down from the firmament, as aim to extinguish the light of heaven which shines in the breast. Inferior animals are incapable of morality. They have no law but instinct ; they are left to obey the call of appetite, and to follow blindly the prevailing impulse. But it is not so with man. Reason is his law, and the dictate of virtue is the dictate of nature. The question with him is not, what is the call of appetite ? but what is the

voice of reason? Not what is the prevailing impulse? but what is the impulse which ought to prevail?

If, therefore, you disown the obligation of this law, you renounce your nature and unman yourself. If you claim an exemption from the authority of reason, and sentiment, and conscience; if you take the licence to indulge every appetite and every passion without restraint or controul; you may;—but first come down from your rank in the scale of being; break off all intercourse with rational creatures; depart from the society of men; go to your equals; herd with the animals of the field, and eat grass with the brutes that perish: there display humanity degraded: exhibit thyself a monument of folly and guilt, to be pointed at by the hand of scorn, and to be shunned like the pestilence. If ever, like the Monarch of Babylon, thou shalt rise from thy degraded state; if ever thine understanding shall return, and thou shalt be able to lift up thine eyes to heaven, like him thou wilt praise, and extol, and glorify the King of heaven, and give ear to that law which he promulgates to the armies in heaven and to the inhabitants of the earth.

In the *second* place, Your obligation to obey

this law will further appear when you consider that it is the law of Heaven.

It comes to you not only recommended by your own authority, but it comes enforced by a higher authority, that of God himself. The appearances of the Almighty, to confirm the law, the prophets, and the gospel, were made for the instruction and improvement of those who saw them, and are recorded for the instruction and improvement of those who read them. The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to where he goeth down. The first promulgation of the law was from mount Sinai. To strike a rude and barbarous people, to reclaim a perverse and obstinate generation, it was requisite that the arm of power should be stretched out, and that the majesty of terror should be displayed. Accordingly, when the law was given from Sinai, there was blackness, and darkness, and tempest; there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; and when Moses brought the people from the camp to meet with God, they trembled as one man; and hill Sinai was altogether on a flame, and the smoke thereof went up as the smoke of a furnace, for the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the moun-

tain quaked ; and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, God called Moses up to the top of the mount, and gave the law.

The same precepts that were given upon Mount Sinai, Jesus Christ came to confirm and to extend. At his first public appearance, in his sermon on the mount, he republished, restored, and perfected the law. The new dispensation indeed was different from the old. The God of Abraham dwelt in darkness, and was clothed with terror. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ dwells in light, and is clothed with grace. Miracles of power confirmed the one ; miracles of grace distinguished the other. We come not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion. At the publishing of the gospel no fire descended, no thunders rolled : at the publishing of the gospel, when our Saviour, being baptized, entered upon his ministry, the heaven was opened over his head, the Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, the messenger of peace, and a voice came from the overshadowing cloud, “ This is my “ beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Revelation then concurs with reason in establishing the law, and to the voice of nature is added the voice of God. Such an authority

you will not despise. You will not join with the impious king of Egypt, who hardened his heart, and said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?"

In the *third* place, Our obligation to obey the law will be further manifest, when we consider that it is the law of society.

That righteousness exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach, but also a depression to any people, are truths so universally received as to require no confirmation. All lawgivers in all ages have thought so, and made it their object to cultivate justice, and temperance, and fortitude, and industry, conscious that public virtue is the source of public happiness. Philosophers and moralists have been of the same opinion; and have taught, with one consent, that the good morals of the people were the stability of the government, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of these speculations. If we consult the history of the most renowned nations that have made a figure in the world, we shall find that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sunk into contempt through vice; that they obtained dominion by their temperance and probity of manners,

and a serious regard to religion; and when they grew dissolute, corrupted, and profane, they became slaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political constitution is broken, it is hastening to its decline. When internal symptoms of weakness appear, the least external violence will accomplish its dissolution.

It is a duty, then, which we owe to society, and to our country, to observe the rules of righteousness; for in order to be good members of society, and true patriots, we must be virtuous men.

To shew your obligation to give ear to this law, let us, in the *last* place, consider that it is the law of happiness.

This, in some measure, follows from what has been already said; for if virtue be necessary to the happiness of public societies, it is also necessary to the happiness of private families, and of private men, unless we can suppose the body politic to be flourishing, while every individual is in misery and distress. In consulting for others, all agree that virtue leads to happiness; but if for others, why not for

you? When you consult for them, you have no passions to darken your understanding, and perplex your judgment. When you consider with coolness and with candour, the observation and experience that all of us have had occasion to make, will be sufficient to convince you, that the law of the Lord is truly favourable to the interests, and friendly to the happiness of man; that it corresponds to the just dictates of the mind, and consults the best affections of the heart. What does it forbid? desires, passions, and vices, from which, for our own sakes, we should abstain, though there was no such prohibition. It forbids the gratification of desires which would lead us to ruin; the indulgence of passions, which are the troublers of human life, and the source of our greatest misery; the commission of vices which weaken remorse, and deliver us up to the tormentors. What does the law of the Lord command? What is lovely, and pure, and praiseworthy; what tends to make men peaceable, gentle, humane, merciful, benevolent, and happy.

SERMON X.

ON JESUS CHRIST DYING FOR SINNERS.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

THE Apostle Paul, the author of this epistle, was bred at the feet of Gamaliel, and instructed in all the learning of the Jews. To his Hebrew literature he superadded the erudition of the Gentiles; for we find him, in his epistles, quoting their celebrated authors, and alluding to their remarkable customs, and the events in their history. These verses which I have now read, carry an allusion and reference to a distinction of characters which prevailed among the Jews, and to some illustrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addressed this epistle.

The Jews distinguished men with respect to their characters, into sinners, just men, and good men. Sinners are those who violate the laws of God and man, who disturb the public peace, and are bad members of society. A just man is one who does no injury to his neighbour, who gives no cause of offence to the world, who pays his debts, who conforms to the letter of the law, and who is not deficient in any of the great duties of life. A good man is one who goes farther ; who is not only innocent, but useful ; who is not only decent, but exemplary ; who is generous, beneficent, public-spirited ; who sacrifices his ease, his pleasure, his safety, and, when his country calls for it, who sacrifices his life for the public good. Such was the character of this Apostle himself. In order to propagate the Christian religion among the nations, the greatest blessing of God to the world—in order to diffuse the knowledge of this religion, he gave up all that was dear in life, undertook long and hazardous journeys, exposed himself to the dangers of the deep, to the chains of captivity, to the sword of the persecutor, to the derision and hatred of Jews and Gentiles. Accordingly, he met with this return, which he here mentions as being sometimes made to superior

goodness ; for we read in the sixteenth chapter of this epistle, that he found persons who for his life would have laid down their own.

The Apostle also in these verses alludes to some illustrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addresses this epistle. The love of their country is the darling passion of that great people. All the soul went out in this generous ardour, and every private affection flowed in the channel of the public welfare. Judge what a strong hold it must have taken of the heart, when it glowed even in the female breast ; when the wife encouraged the husband, and the mother exhorted the son, to die for their country. It was a principle in the breast of every Roman, that he owed his life to his country. This being the spirit of the people, gave birth to many illustrious and heroic actions. The spirit of patriotism glowed among the people for many ages of the republic ; one hero sprung from the ashes of another ; and great men arose from age to age, who devoted themselves to death for the public good. These being the most celebrated actions in the history of mankind, the Apostle here compares them with the death of Jesus Christ. Following the train of thought suggested by the Apostle, I shall shew you the

infinite superiority of that love which prompted Jesus to die for the sins of the world, to that patriotism which prompted the heroes and great men of old to die for their friends or for their country.

In the *first* place, then, Those who devoted themselves to death for their friends or their country, submitted to a fate which they must one day have suffered: But Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and possesseth eternal life, submitted to death for our redemption.

We are all born mortal creatures. Sprung from the dust, we return to the dust again. The sentence of the Lord is passed upon all flesh, and there is no exemption from the law of mortality. We know not how soon our last hour may come. The darts of death are continually on the wing; the arrow of destruction flieth by night, and smiteth at noon-day; victims are daily falling at our right hand and at our left, and we know not how soon we too may fall a sacrifice. He, therefore, who exposes himself to danger, or devotes himself to death for the good of others, only anticipates the evil day, only resigns a life which he must soon part with, and submits to a doom which, sooner or later, he must lay his account to en-

ture. But Jesus Christ was the King eternal and immortal. His outgoings were from everlasting, and he is God blessed for ever. He would have remained happy in himself, happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of his own perfections, happy in the administration and government of the moral world, though he had never cast an eye of pity upon mortal man.

He would have inhabited the praises of eternity though man had never been redeemed. Yet for our sakes he left the glories of the heavens, he veiled his Divinity in a form of flesh, he took our nature with all its infirmities upon him, he submitted to every affliction which embitters human life, and he suffered an excruciating, an ignominious, and an accursed death. For the salvation and the happiness of the world which he had made, the King of Kings appeared in the form of a servant, and the Lord of life was crucified at Jerusalem. A crown of thorns was put on that head where the diadem of nature was wont to sit. Where is the deed of human virtue that can stand in comparison with this meritorious exertion of the Divine benevolence? All the perfection of created nature fades before it, and is but a foil to set off the brightness of redeeming love.

In the *second* place, Those among the sons

of men who devoted themselves to death for the good of others, made the sacrifice for their friends, for those by whom they were beloved ; but Jesus died for his enemies.

We are united to our friends by the strongest ties of affection ; we are interested in all that befalls them, and adopt their joys or their sorrows. Long habits of attachment, and a mutual intercourse of good offices, draw close the cords of friendship, and make them twine with every string of life. Hence we are fellow-sufferers with our friends in distress ; we are afflicted in their afflictions ; so that suffering a great temporal evil for them is in reality removing a load from our own minds. Thus strongly are we attached to our friends, nor is the charm less which binds us to the community. The sacred name of country strikes us with veneration ; we feel an enthusiasm for our native land ; when it is in danger, hardships are cheerfully undergone, and death scarce appears an evil in such a glorious cause. Such inducements there are to him who dies for his friends or his country. But Jesus died for the redemption of his enemies, for those who threw off their allegiance to him, who rebelled against his authority, and rose up in arms against their benefactor. Their groans would never

have reached his ear, nor afflicted his heart, had he not graciously inclined to sympathise. The misery of mankind would never have disturbed the happiness of the Divine nature, would never have thrown a cloud over the serenity of the heavens, nor made a pause in the alleluias of the blessed, had he not chosen to bear their sorrows. It was unmerited goodness, it was sovereign mercy, it was pure benevolence, it was love truly divine, that moved him to interpose in our behalf. He saw the race of men on the very brink of destruction ; he saw the bottomless pit just opening to swallow them up, and, in the moment of danger, the Redeemer appeared, gracious to pity, mighty to save. A cloud had long been gathering over the nations, the hand of the Omnipotent was stretched out in wrath, the thunder of his power was ready to burst over a devoted world, when the Patron and Intercessor of the human race stepped in, and stayed the avenging arm with the words of mercy :
“ Lo, I come to do thy will. Sacrifice and burnt
“ offerings thou dost not desire. On me let
“ thine anger fall. Let me die that these may
“ live.”

In the *third* place, he who dies a martyr for

the public good, departs with honour; but Jesus made his departure with ignominy and shame.

It is honourable, it is glorious, to die for the public good. He who falls a martyr to the happiness of mankind, is supported by the native fortitude of the soul, is carried forward by the consciousness of a good cause, is encouraged with the admiration and applause of the world, and becomes famous to all succeeding times. To him the temple of fame spontaneous opens its gate, his name is repeated with applause, honours are paid to his memory, and he is the heir of perpetual praise. Circumstances of such a nature take away the terror of death. The secret consciousness of a great soul, the approach of an event which is so glorious in itself, and so beneficial to the world, the anticipation of the praises of succeeding times, exalt the man, and fill him with the elevation and magnanimity of virtue. Few enjoyments in life can be compared with a death so glorious. But Jesus Christ submitted to the ignominious death of the cross. The greatest trial and exercise of virtue is when an innocent man submits to the imputation of a crime, that others may be free from the punishment. This our Lord did. In his life

he was branded with the blackest names, and accused of the most flagitious crimes ; branded with the names of publican and sinner, accused of associating with the profligate, and of being in compact with the powers of darkness. But at his latter end, in a peculiar manner, he endured the shame. He was betrayed like an impostor by one of his own disciples, apprehended like a robber by a band of soldiers, led like a malefactor through the streets of Jerusalem, nailed like a murderer to the accursed tree, and, in the sight of all Israel, died the death of a traitor and a slave, that he might atone for the real guilt of men. In all these respects, the merit of Jesus was infinitely superior to the heroism of men. As the heavens are higher than the earth, as the Most High God excels the offspring of the dust, so much superior was his love to their beneficence.

To conclude, Let me ask you, my brethren, what impression does the love of Jesus make upon your hearts, what influence does it exert upon your lives? They whose minds are dazzled with the ideas of false glory, with arms and conquests, and fields of battle, and triumphal processions, and songs of victory, may not be disposed to relish those acts of heroism which have nothing of the sword

in them. But to the mind that is freed from vulgar prejudice, and acquainted with true glory, the triumphs of Jesus will appear the greater that they are the triumphs of peace, that they were not obtained at the expence of slaughtered thousands, nor erected on the ruin of nations, but rose on the basis of general happiness, and everlasting life to all good men.

Are you then actuated with a proper sense of gratitude to this Captain of our salvation? The temporal hero and deliverer is received with a tribute of applause; every heart beats with admiration, and every tongue is vocal in his praise. Let us also celebrate the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of our fallen race, who delivered us from everlasting wrath, and opened a way to the heavens by the blood of his cross. Beautified with his salvation, let us rejoice in the Saviour, saying with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ." Let us also love Him who first loved us. Let us give the chief place in our hearts to that Divine Friend of mankind, whose affection to us was stronger than death.

SERMON XI.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PROVERBS xii. 26.

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

THE sentiments of men concerning virtue, and their own particular practice, form a very strange and striking contrast. Notwithstanding their own irregular or imperfect conduct, a general feeling, with regard to morality, pervades the human species. Philosophers have differed about the origin of moral distinctions, and delivered various theories concerning virtue; but the people who judge from their feelings, have no system but one; and whenever right or wrong becomes the subject of decision, if the fact be fully explained, the voice of mankind is uniform and constant.

Without this moral sense or sentiment, the

question with regard to virtue had never been started at all, nor exercised the ingenuity of the greatest and best spirits in every age of the world. For, independent of the national religions, men arose among the heathens who strove to improve or reform their countrymen; the lights of one age shone to another; the great and the good not only left their example, but lifted up their voice to ages which were to come.

Religion gives its powerful sanction to the maxims of morality, and this volume was written to republish that law which is engraven on the heart.

The book from which these words are taken was the work of a great king who sometimes left the throne to adorn it the more, and retiring from the splendid follies of a court, consecrated his hours to the benefit of all posterity. It was addressed by Solomon to his son, and contains such ideas of religion, and urges such motives to virtue, as are most effectual with the young: representing them as the perfection of human nature, and the true excellence of man. "The righteous," says he, "is more excellent than his neighbour." With great propriety is this picture set before the young; for the love of excellence is natural

to the youthful mind. What is manly, what is generous, what is honourable, are then the objects of admiration and pursuit; fired with noble emulation, each ingenuous disciple aspires to be more excellent than his neighbour.

The objections against a holy life have proceeded on maxims directly contrary to the text. The inducements to vice, which have been powerful in all ages, are the same that were presented by the tempter to our first parents. Wisdom was promised, "Ye shall be wise to know good and evil;" the attractions of ambition were presented, "Ye shall be as gods;" the allurements of pleasure were added, and the forbidden fruit recommended as "good for food and pleasant to the eye." If, in opposition to those it shall be shewn, that the righteous man is wiser, and greater, and happier, than his neighbour, the objections against religion will be removed, the ways of Providence will be vindicated, and virtue established upon an everlasting foundation.

In the *first* place, The righteous man is wiser than his neighbour.

There is no part of his nature in which man is so earnest to excel, and so jealous of a de-

fect, as his understanding. Men will give up any part of their frame sooner than this ; they will subscribe to many infirmities and errors : they will confess a want of temper, and the proper government of their passions ; they will even admit deviations with regard to the lesser moralities, but never yield the smallest iota in what respects their intellectual abilities.

No wonder that man is jealous of his understanding, for it is his prerogative and his glory. This draws the line between the animal and the intellectual world, ascertains our rank in the scale of being, and not only raises us above the inferior creatures, but makes us approach to a nature which is divine. This enters into the foundation of character ; for without intellectual abilities, moral qualities cannot subsist, and a good heart will go wrong without the guidance of a good understanding. Without the direction and the government of wisdom, courage degenerates into rashness, justice hardens into rigour, and benevolence becomes an indiscriminate good nature, or a blameable facility of manners. Where then is wisdom to be found, and what is the path of understanding ? If you will trust the dictates of religion and reason, to be virtuous is to be wise. The testimony of all who have

gone before you, confirms the decision. In opposition, however, to the voice of religion, of reason, and of mankind, there are multitudes in every age who reckon themselves more excellent than their neighbours, by trespassing against the laws which all ages have counted sacred, the younger by the pursuit of criminal gratification, the old by habits of deceit and fraud.

The early period of life is frequently a season of delusion. When youth scatters its blandishments, and the song of pleasure is heard, "Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered, and let no flower of the spring pass away;" the inexperienced and the unwary listen to the sound, and surrender themselves to the enchantment. Not satisfied with those just and masculine joys which nature offers and virtue consecrates, they rush into the excesses of unlawful pleasure; not satisfied with those fruits bordering the path of virtue, which they may taste and live, they put forth their hand to the forbidden tree. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till sinful pleasure becomes a pursuit that employs all the faculties, and absorbs all the time, of its votaries.

There is no moderation nor government in vice. Desires that are innocent may be indulged with innocence ; pleasures that are pure may be pursued with purity, and the round of guiltless delights may be made without encroaching on the great duties of life. But guilty pleasures become the masters and the tyrants of the mind ; when these lords acquire dominion, they bring all the thoughts into captivity, and rule with unlimited and despotic sway.

Look around you. Consider the fate of your equals in age, who have been swept away, not by the hand of time, but by the scythe of intemperance, and involved in the shade of death. Contemplate that cloud which vests the invisible world, where their mansion is fixed for ever. When the sons of the Siren call you to the banquet of vice, stop in the midst of this career, pause on the brink, look down, and while yet one throb belongs to virtue, turn back from the verge of destruction. Think of the joyful morning that rises after a victory over sin, reflection thy friend, memory stored with pleasant images, thy thoughts like good angels announcing peace and presaging joy.

Or, if that will not suffice, turn to the shades

of the picture, and behold the ruin that false pleasure introduces into human nature. Behold a rational being arrested in his course. A character that might have shone in public and in private life, cast into the shades of oblivion ; a name that might have been uttered with a tear, and left as an inheritance to a race to come, consigned to the roll of infamy. All that is great in human nature sacrificed at the shrine of sensual pleasure in this world ; and the candidate for immortality in the next, plunged into the irremediable gulf of folly, dissipation, and endless misery.—*Cætera desunt.*

SERMON XII.

RÉLIGION, AN ANTIDOTE TO THE DANGERS AND
TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLD.

DANIEL xi. 32.

The people that do know their God shall be strong.

THE follies and vices which disfigure human life, do not always proceed from a principle of depravity. The thoroughly abandoned who sin from fore-thought and contrivance, who commit iniquity upon a fixed plan, and who are wicked merely from a love of wickedness, I hope and believe are not a numerous class. The indiscretions and vices into which men fall, I am apt to imagine, proceed often from a weakness of mind rather than from a badness of heart. There is a certain feebleness in the springs of actions, a facility of disposition, a silliness of soul, which marks the character,

and runs through the life of many men, as pernicious to them in the conduct of life, as a principle of actual depravity could be. Persons of this class, properly speaking, sustain no character at all. They assert not the rights of an independent being, they make no original efforts of mind, but patiently surrender themselves to accident, to be guided by events, and to be fashioned by those with whom they live. They have not strength of mind to stand alone, they dare not walk in a path unless it is beaten. Feebleness, fluctuation, timidity, irresolution, fill up the period of their insignificant days, and often betray them into crimes as well as indiscretions.

This weakness of mind is not only pernicious but criminal. There are mental defects that are inconsistent with a state of virtue. The Sacred Scriptures never draw the line of distinction between intellectual and moral qualities, but prescribe both as requisite to form the character of the righteous man. Hence a sound mind, as well as a good heart, is mentioned as an ingredient in the character of a saint. Hence, in the sacred books, religion and virtue go under the name of *wisdom*, vice and wickedness under the name of *folly*. Hence intellectual qualities become the subject of

divine precept, and we are called upon to be wise and to be strong, as well as to be holy and to be pure. In opposition to the feeble-minded, it is said in the text, that they who know their God, or are truly religious, are strong. Religion, when rightly understood, and virtue, when properly practised, give nerves and vigour to the mind, infuse into the soul a secret strength, and, presenting a future world to our faith, make us superior to the dangers and temptations of the present.

To shew what this strength is, I shall set before you some of the most remarkable scenes in human life in which the feeble-minded give way, and in which they who know their God are strong. This strength, then, inspired into the mind by the knowledge of God, makes us superior to the opinion and fashion of the world, superior to the difficulties and dangers of the world, superior to the pleasures and temptations of the world, and superior to desponding fears at our departure from the world.

In the *first* place, It makes us superior to the opinion and fashion of the world.

To sustain an amiable character so as to be beloved by those with whom we live, to maintain a sacred regard to the approbation of the

wise and good, and to follow those things which are of good report, when at the same time they are pure, and lovely, and honourable, is the duty of every honest man. But unhappily the bulk of the world is not composed of the wise and good ; religion and virtue are not always in the fashion ; to fix the rule of life, therefore, by the public approbation or dislike, is to make the standard of morality uncertain and variable. According to this doctrine, the Christian life would be the work of mere caprice, there would be a fashion in morals as well as in dress, and what is virtue or vice in one age or country, would not be so in another. In such critical cases, when truth is to be defended, or integrity to be held fast against the current of popular opinion, the feeble-minded are apt to make shipwreck of the faith. The feeble-minded man rests not upon himself, he has nothing within to support him, he thinks and acts, and lives by the opinion of others. "What will the world say?" is the question that he puts to himself on all occasions. Thou fool ! look inwards, thine own heart will tell thee more than all the world. This pusillanimous deference to the opinions of others, this criminal compliance to

the public voice, will make you lose your all, your soul.

Hence, in certain companies, men are ashamed of their religion. They lend a pleased ear to arguments that shake the foundations of their faith; they join in the laugh that is raised at the expence of all that they hold sacred and venerable, and themselves assume the spirit, and speak the words of profaneness, while the heart often secretly agonizes for the liberties of the tongue. In opposition to such characters, the man who is truly religious, performs his duty through bad report as well as through good. The applause of such fools as make a mock at sin, he despises. His standard of moral conduct is his own conscience, well informed by the word of God. He knows that the fashion of the world passeth away, and vice or folly is not recommended to him by being practised by others. He remembers the words of his Master, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed." He dares to be singular and good: "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I."

In the *second* place, This strength inspired

by true religion, makes us superior to the difficulties and dangers we meet with in the world.

The feeble-minded man is intimidated upon the slightest occasion : he starts at difficulties, and shrinks from dangers, whenever they present themselves. Happy to catch at any subterfuge, he finds or makes a thousand obstacles to the discharge of his duty ; and when any thing great is to be done, “ there is a lion in “ the way.” What infinite mischief has this pusillanimity done in the world ! How often has the best and most generous cause been lost by the weakness of its defenders ! How often have the most innocent and worthy characters suffered by the shameful cowardice of their friends ! How often have men purchased to themselves an inglorious ease, an infamous tranquillity, at the expence of character and conscience, and every thing great and good !

Very different is the character of him who is strong in the Lord. When he is assured he is in the right path, he sees no obstacles in the way. Nothing is difficult to a determined mind. Through the divine aid, resolution is omnipotent. To the unwearied efforts of persevering courage, art and nature have yielded : and there is a ladder by which the heavens

may be scaled. Through Christ strengthening him, the man of God can do all things. No appearance of difficulty, no form of danger, no face of death, terrifies him from doing his duty. He gives up his possessions, his country, his parents, his friends, his wife and children, his own life also, rather than desert the post of honour assigned to him by Providence. "None of these things move me," saith an apostle; "neither account I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy. What, mean you to weep and to break my heart? for I am willing not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

This was not the vain boast of men who were brave when the day of battle was distant, and who, in the midst of tranquillity, talked of despising danger. It was the speech of one who acted what he spoke. To the confirmation of it, we can adduce a cloud of witnesses, an host of martyrs, multitudes of all nations, and ages, and conditions, for whom the flames of the tormentor were kindled to no purpose; against whom the sword of persecution was drawn in vain; who held fast their integrity, though they knew death to be the consequence, and followed their Redeemer in the path that was

marked with blood. Among these martyrs, doubtless there were many who naturally were as feeble and flexible, and timorous, as any of you are: but when they were inspired with this hidden strength, and were supported by the everlasting arms, the timorous waxed valiant, and the feeble became strong in the Lord.

Cætera desunt.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE DANGER OF FOLLOWING A MULTITUDE TO
DO EVIL.

EXOD. XXIII. 2.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

IMITATION is one of the great characteristics of the human species. As the passion for society is strong in the breasts of all rational creatures, the gratification of it is sought after as one of the highest enjoyments of life. The same passion that impels us to society, impels us to take part with our companions in their interests and inclinations. Insensibly and without thought we fall into their customs and their manners; we adopt their sentiments, their passions, and even their foibles, and follow the same course as if we were actuated by the same spirit. This principle appears in children even in the infant state. From their earliest years

they love to mimic whatever strikes the organs of sense ; and soon as the young idea begins to shoot, and the embryo of the manly character to appear, they form themselves insensibly upon the model of their parents, and the persons with whom they converse. To this, and not to any fancied physical cause, is owing that strong and striking resemblance, which we frequently find between the parents and the offspring ; a resemblance as remarkable in the temper and character, as in the features of the face.

This principle is not confined to individuals, it extends to nations. There is a national character, a national spirit, and even a national mode of thinking, down the current of which we are insensibly carried. When any novelty, any improvement in art or in science, makes its appearance in a nation, it flies from man to man, and from place to place by a kind of contagion, till it has overspread the whole country. So powerful is sympathy, and the love of imitation among men : and thus are our minds framed by the hand of our Maker, to accord with those of others ; like the strings of musical instruments in unison, when one is struck, the rest correspond to the impression, vibrate in the same key, and sound the same

note. As this principle is implanted in us by the Author of our nature, it must no doubt be intended for great and important purposes. It serves to strengthen the bonds of society, to promote friendship and love, and is the aptest and most successful means, not only to teach wisdom and goodness, but also to inspire them.

But as all principles have their unfavourable and vicious extreme, to which they may be carried, so likewise hath this. Here, therefore, hath the Almighty interposed, and set bounds to it which it ought not to pass, and on the farthest verge of innocence hath engraven this inscription, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; here shall the progress of thy imitation be stayed;" or, as it is expressed in the words of our text, "Thou shalt not imitate men in their wickedness; thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

In further treating on this subject, I shall, in the *first* place, endeavour to shew you by what means we are to keep ourselves from following a multitude to do evil; and, in the *second* place, adduce some arguments that urge the necessity of this duty.

The *first* thing proposed, was to shew you

by what means we are to guard ourselves from the multitude that do evil.

And, in the *first* place, In order to this, let us be early and firmly established in the principles of our holy faith. When we look about us into life, and behold how many persons enter into the world, without having their minds instructed, or their hearts established in the great principles of virtue and religion, we cannot be surprised that they go astray on occasion of the first temptation, and follow the multitude to do evil. Perhaps, they have acquired some general knowledge of Christianity, but their knowledge of it is merely speculative, has played round the head, but has not reached the heart. Accordingly, as mere speculation is utterly unfit to combat the strength of passion, and the violence of temptation, they soon fall off and sink into all the corruptions of the world around them. This course of life is well described in the beautiful parable of the sower and the seed.—“ Behold a
“ sower went forth to sow ; and as he sowed,
“ some seeds fell upon the stony places, where
“ they had not much earth, and forthwith they
“ sprung up, because they had no deepness of
“ earth ; and when the sun was up they were
“ scorched, and because they had no root, they

“withered away.” That is, they had received the knowledge of the Christian religion, but they had not attained to that true faith, which is not barely an assent of the understanding to speculative truth, but which is also a principle of action which purifies the heart, works by love, and regulates the whole conversation.

It is education chiefly that forms the human character; and it is a virtuous and religious education that forms the character of the Christian. The mind at that early and innocent period, being untainted with actual guilt, and all alive to every generous impression, bends without labour to the force of instruction; is easily formed to all the beauties of holiness, and by frequent and repeated acts, acquires habits of devotion and virtue. The principles that are then imbibed, and the habits that are then acquired, although they may be sometimes shaken and weakened by the contagion of evil example, are seldom or never entirely obliterated. When the good seed is thus sown, we have the promise of Almighty God, that he will grant it the increase, and cause it to spring up into everlasting life. When the Christian doctrines are thus received, not merely as articles of belief, but also as principles of action, through the blessing of God, they will attain the ascendant

over the unruly passions, and exert such an entire influence over the mind, as will enable it to resist temptation, and to come off triumphant. When the good foundation is thus laid, the winds may arise, and the rains may descend; the tempest may blow and beat upon the house, but the foundation of the structure shall not fail, for it rests upon a rock.

Next, In order to preserve our innocence and integrity uncorrupted from the world, let us beware with what company we associate. Evil communications corrupt good manners. It is not indeed always in our power to avoid falling into the company of the wicked, but it is always in our power not to make such persons our confidants and companions. It is the grand secret of life, both with respect to virtue and to happiness, to select good and worthy persons to be our friends and companions; such persons with whom we would not only wish to live, but also desire to die; such persons whom we would not only choose to be the companions of our careless hours, but also the partners of our enjoyments through all eternity.

There is something in the friendship and familiarity of 'good men, extremely great and honourable to human nature; and there are

some considerations in Christianity that carry these to their highest perfection. The great commandment of our Lord to his followers, was to love one another. In the holy sacrament of the supper, we are united together in such intimate bonds of union, as to become members of one body. We have one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord, the Father of all, one Saviour who died for the sins of the world, one Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the faithful. We are fellow heirs of the same grace of life, fellow expectants of the same heavenly rewards.

Under these considerations, the friendship of good men would be attended with the most beneficial effects. They would support each other in the temptations and afflictions of life, and by quickening each other's diligence, provoke one another to love and to good works. Such associations of good and worthy persons, in times of public degeneracy and corruption, are spoken of in Scripture with the highest honour. "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine,

“ saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I
“ make up my jewels ; and I will spare them
“ as a man spareth his own son that serveth
“ him.”

Further, In order to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, let us acquire firmness and fortitude of mind. There is no principle in human nature that is attended with a train of more dreadful consequences, than that facility of manners, that simplicity of disposition, that weakness of soul, which is easily persuaded from its resolution, to comply with every proposal. This good nature, as it is falsely called, is the worst nature in the world, and is the occasion of more calamities, and of more crimes, than the actual inclination to wickedness. To oppose the actual vicious inclination, Almighty God hath endued us with an understanding to discern its evil, and with a conscience to check its progress ; but this pernicious feebleness of mind has the appearance of sociableness and of virtue, and, by that appearance, deceives us to our ruin.

Persons of such a character make no original efforts of mind. They seem born to enlist under a leader, and are the sinners or the saints of accident. Fortitude of mind, and

strength of resolution, are requisite for every purpose of human life. In particular, they are necessary to keep us from the contagion of evil example. Let us be cautious in laying down resolutions—let us be cautious in concerting plans of action: but when we have once resolved, let us be immutable. When we have chosen our path, let us hold on, though the temptations of life should beset us on one hand, and the terrors of death on the other,—not suffering the commotions of the world, nor even the changes of nature, to shake or to disturb the more steadfast purpose of our souls. The most valuable of all possessions is a strenuous and a steady mind, a self-deciding spirit, prepared to act, to suffer, or to die, as occasion requires.

This is not an ideal character, which exists only in description. God hath never wanted his thousands who have not bowed the knee to the idols of the world. We can reckon up a venerable company of Patriarchs, and a sacred society of Prophets, a holy fellowship of Apostles, an innumerable army of Martyrs and Confessors, who were found faithful in the midst of the faithless, who approved themselves the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of an evil and profane generation; and

having received the recompence of reward, are now sitting on thrones, and singing hosannah in the heavens.

The contemplation of their lives should animate us, to run the race that is set before us, with the same alacrity and zeal. Did we frequently and seriously call up to our remembrance, the lives and the virtues of those who are now inheriting the promises ; did we, by faith and contemplation, represent to our minds those unseen rewards of which they are now in possession, we would feel our hearts burn within us : with zeal and emulation, we would inhale a portion of the same divine spirit, and beholding as in a glass reflected, their virtues and victories, we would be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the living God.—*Cætera desunt.*

N. B. The Sermon which was delivered in its finished state, by the Author, from this Text, was much admired by his hearers. The above is only a part of it, and a first copy.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY.

PSALM CXXii. 6.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

FELLOW-CITIZENS, we now assemble, in obedience to the command of our Sovereign, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and for the prosperity of those that love her. Loyalty to our king, and love to our country, are the passions which ought to animate us on this day. * That attachment which good citizens bear to their country, has ever been esteemed a virtue of the highest class. Not to mention the Greeks and the Romans, the history of the Israelites, with which you are better acquainted, presents us with grand and striking in-

* Upon a fast-day during the American war.

stances of patriotism and public spirit. They never mention the names of Zion and Jerusalem without gladness and rapture. The words which I have now read to you seem to have come from the heart, and breathe this spirit in the most lively manner.

During their captivity, when they sat by the rivers of Babylon, the Jews thought upon Zion, and wept. When they prayed to heaven, they turned their faces towards Jerusalem. At their return from captivity, they are described as halting on a hill, over which they had to march, taking a fond look of Judea, from which they had been banished so long; bursting into tears at the view, weeping as they went forward, at the recognizance of their ancient country, and their native land. Our Saviour, who was a pattern of all goodness, set us an example of this virtue. He loved his country, and uttered that celebrated exclamation of patriotism, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings.”

As we now meet to pray for the peace or welfare of our Jerusalem (for, in the language of Scripture, peace is put for all kinds of prosperity), I shall endeavour to shew you, at this time, wherein the public welfare consists.

It consists in the national liberty, the national wealth and industry, the national defence, and the national character.

The *first* ingredient in the public happiness is liberty ; a privilege invaluable, but frequently misunderstood, and still more frequently abused. Absolute liberty to do what we please, is absolute power. If one alone, or a few, possess this, the rest are in slavery ; if all have it, the whole must be in confusion. In order to prevent mutual encroachments, and ascertain each person's claims, liberty must be secured by a constitution, and guarded by law. In the state of nature, men are not only free, but independent ; among the wandering tribes of savages, none claim authority over others ; but as such a state cannot subsist long, whenever men enter into formed society, they give up some of their natural rights, in order to preserve the rest ; they no longer wield the sword of justice themselves ; it is given to the magistrate ; they intrust their property to the laws, and their protection to the king.

Still, however, that is the happiest form of government, which best secures the natural rights of men. It is here that the British constitution triumphs. Possessing advantages which no other form of government ever pos-

sessed, it stands forth the envy of the neighbouring nations, and a pattern to succeeding times. Liberty is the birthright of every Briton. That grand charter of nature to her children is established and confirmed by law. The constitution, like the providence of Heaven, extends its gracious regards to all : while it protects the poor in the possession of their legal rights, it checks the insolence of the great, and sets bounds to the prerogative of majesty itself, saying to the king, “ Thus far, “ and no farther does thy power extend.” All the members of the state are represented in the great council of the nation, and have a voice in the Legislature ; the subjects are taxed by their own consent. There is no despotic or discretionary power in any part of the constitution. No action must be deemed a crime, but what the laws have plainly determined to be such ; no crime must be imputed to a man, but from a legal proof before his judges ; and these judges must be his fellow-subjects and his peers, who are obliged, by their own interest, to have a watchful eye over encroachments and violence. “ We must ever admire as a masterpiece of political wisdom, and as the key-stone of civil liberty, that statute which forces the secrets of every prison

to be revealed, the cause of every commitment to be declared, and the person of the accused to be produced, that he may claim his enlargement, or his trial, within a limited time." By these means, Great Britain hath become what ancient patriots wished, a government of laws, and not of men. Highly favoured nation and happy people, if they knew their felicity, and did not, upon occasions, by their own fault, turn the greatest of civil blessings into a curse !

In the *second* place, The national welfare consists in the national industry and wealth. It is a vulgar error to suppose, that the greatness of a nation depends upon the number of its inhabitants. It is not the number of the people, but their being usefully employed, that adds to the true grandeur and felicity of a state. A nation is a great family, where every member has a sphere marked out and a part to perform, and which, if it abounds with the idle, must fall to ruin. " Men crowd where the situation is tempting, and multiply according to the means of subsistence." Present the proper object ; let the mechanic arts be cultivated ; let manufactures abound, and commerce flourish ; and citizens will come from the east and from the west, and from the

south and from the north. Every thing in the world is purchased by labour and by industry.

Our passions and desires are the causes of labour and industry. When a nation introduces manufactures and commerce, new desires are created, and new passions are raised ; men increase the enjoyments, and refine upon the pleasures of life. Not satisfied with what is *necessary*, which is a vague term, and has a reference to the fancy, and to the habit of living, they look out for what is comfortable, what is elegant, and what is delicate in life. In order to supply these recent wants, the possessor of land, the manufacturer, and the merchant, redouble their labour and attention. Thus new industry is excited, greater numbers of men are employed, the grandeur of the sovereign and the happiness of the state come to coincide. By this means, a stock of labour comes to be laid up for public use.

Trade and industry are in reality nothing but a stock of labour, which, in times of peace and tranquillity, are employed for the ease and satisfaction of individuals ; but in the exigencies of state, may in part be turned to public advantage. The cultivation of these arts is favoured, and forwarded in our country, by

that security which we enjoy. What every man has, is his own. The voice of the oppressor is never heard in our streets. The hand of rapacious power is never stretched out to rob the industrious of the fruit of his labour.

Thirdly, The public welfare consists in the national defence. The police of every well-modelled state has a reference to war and to national safety. The legislator of Sparta, one of the most famous of the ancient republics, thought that nations were by nature in a state of hostility : He took his measures accordingly, and observing that all the possessions of the vanquished pertain to the victor, he held it ridiculous to propose any benefit to his country before he had provided that it should not be conquered : a most necessary provision, for unless a state be sufficient for its own defence, it must fall an easy prey to every invader. It was the intention of nature, that nations, as well as men, should guard themselves. Hence lessons of war are delivered in Sacred Scripture, and principles of emulation and dissension are strongly implanted in the soul of man. Human nature has no part of its character, of which more striking examples are given in every part of the globe. What

is it that stirs in the breasts of ordinary men when the enemies of their country are named? Whence are the prejudices that subsist between different provinces and villages of the same empire and territory? What is it that excites one half of the nations of Europe against the other? The statesman may explain this conduct upon motives of national jealousy and caution; but the people have dislikes and antipathies, which proceed from sentiment, not from reasoning. Among them the materials of war and dissension are laid without the direction of government, and sparks are ready on every occasion to kindle into a flame.

This being the disposition of the people, happy is that institution which prevails in a part of this island,* of putting arms into the hands of the people, of making every citizen a soldier in his turn, and by this means having a force at hand to rise in arms at any sudden emergency. When such a system of military arrangements takes place, the prosperity of a state becomes independent of single men; there is a wisdom which never dies, and a valour which is immortal. A state may hire troops, but valour is not to be bought; the wealth of a na-

* Originally published before the institution of Scottish Militia.

tion will procure soldiers to fight its battles, but let it not be forgot, that the possessions of the fearful are easily seized, that a timorous multitude falls into rout of itself. Ramparts may be erected, and implements of war may be furnished, by a specific people ; but let it be remembered as an eternal truth, that there is no rampart which is impregnable to valour, that arms are only of consequence when they are in the hands of the brave, and that the only price of freedom is the blood of the free. When an ancient Spartan was asked what was the wall of his city ? he pointed to a band of brave men ;—a defence more permanent and more effectual than the rock and the cement with which other cities are fortified.

Lastly, The public welfare consists in the national character. That righteousness exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach, but also a depression to any people, are truths so universally received, as to require little confirmation. All lawgivers, in all ages, have thought so, and made it their object to cultivate justice and temperance, and fortitude, and industry, conscious that public virtue is the source of public happiness. Philosophers and moralists have been of the same opinion, and have taught, with one consent, that the

morality of the people was the stability of the government, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of these speculations. If we consult the history of the most renowned nations that have made a figure in the world, we shall find, that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sunk to nothing by vice; that they obtained dominion by their temperance, their probity of manners, and a serious regard to religion; and that, when they grew dissolute, corrupted and profane, they became slaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political constitution is broken, it is hastening to its decline. When internal symptoms of weakness appear, the least external violence will accomplish its dissolution. Besides the natural tendency of virtue to make nations great and happy, if we have just notions of Divine Providence, if we believe that the perfections of God are at all concerned in human affairs, virtuous nations will be his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection; he will counsel their counsellors, cover their armies in the day of battle, and crown them with victory and peace.

SERMON XV.

ON DEATH.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

*It is appointed to men once to die ; but after this
the judgment.*

DEATH is the conclusion of all events ; of all that ever have been, and of all that ever will be. The schemes of the base, the plots of the ambitious, the projects of the visionary, the studies of the learned, all terminate here. However different the paths be that we take in life, they all lead to the grave. Whilst, therefore, we make death the subject of contemplation, and meditate upon the house which is appointed for all living, let us take this thought along with us, that we shall bear a part in those scenes which we now describe, and that we are meditating on a fate which will one day be our own.

In the *first* place, Let us consider death as an event, the period of which is uncertain.

In the days when Noah entered into the ark, they did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. On the day that Lot went out of Sodom, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; and it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. As it was in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, even thus, my friends, shall it be to you when the day of death cometh. In the present state of things, the soul of man is blind to futurity. Surrounded with material objects, and occupied in present affairs, we make these the sole objects of attention; we find in them the only sources of attachment, and overlook those spiritual and distant events on which our future life and happiness depend. Hence, we are always surprised with our latter end, and the day of the Lord cometh like a thief in the night. No instruction can make us so wise as to consider our latter end; no warning can incite us to set our houses in order, that we may die; and no example give the alarm so strong, as to set us on serious preparation for meeting with God. Void of thought, and

careless of futurity, we live on from day to day, like the victim that plays and dances before that altar where its blood is to be shed. Even after the longest life, and under the most lingering sickness, death comes unexpected; the arrow is still unseen that strikes through the heart.

This is not peculiar to a few men; it describes a general character, and is exemplified in all the classes of life. This infatuation does not arise from ignorance. You all know that death is certain; you all know that it is generally unexpected. You assent to every thing that we can say upon this head, that there is no action of life but what may lead to its end, and no moment of time but what may be your last. You need not be informed, that death spares no age; your own observation presents you with many instances of persons cut off in all periods of life. In that church-yard, you see graves of every length; on those monuments of mortality, you read the histories of the promising boy, of the blooming youth, of the man in middle life, and of the hoary head, mingled together in sad assemblage amongst the abodes of the dead. You can reckon up instances of persons cut off in a sudden and unexpected manner; of a Herod who

was struck amidst the applauses of the people ; of a Jezebel who was thrown headlong from that window where she had prepared to display herself to the people ; of a Belshazar who was slain at a banquet, when he was carousing with his princes, his concubines, and his wives ; and of a Holofernes, who met his fate, surrounded with his army, and crowned with victory and fame.

With all these in your memory, you act as if you were *immortal*. Even the death of those who fall around us, and before our eyes, affects us not with serious concern. One person opposed us in a favourite object, and we rejoice at his decease ; another stood in our way to preferment and power ; the death of a third opens to us a prospect of rising to wealth and fortune : we profit not by all these lessons of mortality ; the voice from the tomb sends us back to the world, and from the very ashes of the dead there comes a fire that rekindles our earthly desires. We look upon all our neighbours as mortal ; we form schemes to ourselves upon their decease, but forget all the while that we ourselves are to die. O foolish and infatuated race, will you always continue deaf to the voice of wisdom ? Will neither the instructions of the living, nor the

warnings of the dead, induce you to serious thoughts? Will you continue to lengthen your prospects, when perhaps you stand upon the very verge of life; and can you enjoy the feast, when the sword hangs over your head, by a single hair? Who knoweth what a day may bring forth; the morning has smiled upon multitudes, who before the evening have slept the sleep of death. Who knoweth how soon you may be hurried to the judgment-seat of God? The ears which hear these sayings may soon be shut for ever; and the heart which now throbs at the thought, may, in a little, be mingled with the clods of the valley. Some who last Lord's day worshipped within these walls, are now gone to the eternal world, and God only knows how soon some of us may follow.

Seeing then that life is so uncertain, that the thread thereof breaks at every blast, let me exhort you to set apart some time for serious meditation upon your mortality. Let it be on some solemn occasion, in the silent hour of night, when deep sleep falleth on man, when midnight closeth awful all the world, and naught in nature is awake but God and thee: there, in deep and solemn meditation, think over the terrors of that house which is ap-

pointed for all living, and with the ancient patriarch, say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. Ask seriously at your own heart, “Should these eyes never open upon the light of another day; should the awful mandate issue forth from the Almighty Arbiter of life and death,—This night, this night, thy soul shall be required of thee;” could you, without fear and trembling, face the tribunal of God, the Judge of all? If frightened nature starts back and trembles at the thought of instant dissolution, make your former life pass before you in review, compare it with the law of God; if your former misspent time comes up before you in sad remembrance; if your past transgressions stare you in the face, and point to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, instantly and without delay, whilst the gate of heaven is yet open, whilst the throne of mercy is yet accessible, prostrate yourselves before God in deep humility and abasement, mourn over the sins of your past life in bitterness of soul, believe in a crucified Redeemer, who died for the sins of the world, implore compassion and forgiveness from the Father of mercies, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Thus continue fervent in prayer and supplica-

tion, and in the exercise of faith and repentance ; give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till you have made your peace with God, till you feel within yourselves that peace which passeth all understanding, that joy which is unspeakable and glorious. Thus continue, at solemn and stated occasions, to consider your latter end, till death shall grow familiar to your mind, till the grave shall gradually lose its terrors, and the Sun of Righteousness arise upon you in full glory.

In the *second* place, Let me remind you, that a good life is the best preparation for death. You may lay it down as a maxim confirmed by universal experience, that every man dies as he lives ; and it is by the general tenor of the life, not a particular frame of mind at the hour of death, that we are to be judged at the tribunal of God. It is a dangerous mistake which prevails amongst men, that it is sufficient for their eternal happiness, if they feel some serious emotions at their latter end. If your life has been wicked, what will it avail you, that on your death-bed you have been actuated with sorrow for your offences ? Judas Iscariot felt such a sorrow when he went to his own place. Late conversions are not to be trusted to, and death-bed repentances are

generally nothing more than the first gnawing of the worm that shall never die. Suppose death to halt a little, the sick person recovers, washes his couch with floods of penitential tears; a thousand vows of amendment are made; but if repentance last no longer than sickness, the disease and the devotion go off together; the man returns to walk in his former ways.

Be blameless, therefore, and harmless in the general tenor of your life. Keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. Let not the sun go down upon one unrepented sin. Make it your business every night to review the actions of the foregoing day. If, through the frailty of nature, or the force of temptation, you have sinned against God, prostrate yourselves before the throne of grace, ask pardon through Christ. As you would not wish to yourselves distress, and anguish, and tribulation, at the day of death; as you would not wish to bring down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; beware of persisting in a course of unrepented sin.

Notwithstanding, however, of the utility of such meditations, there is no subject on which we are so reluctant to fix our attention as our mortality. We shift from one speculation,

and from one pursuit to another ; we give our thoughts to wander through immensity, but cautiously avoid this theme which touches us so near : but this is the point where wisdom begins. We can never live as we ought, till we have learned how to die. I mean not by this, that we should make death the constant subject of our meditation, and have funerals always passing before our eyes. This would withdraw us from life altogether ; would indispose us even for its business and its enjoyments ; but although we cannot always employ ourselves in such meditations, let us at times give this subject its full weight ; that certainly merits some place in our thought which is the great close of our being here. It is awful, indeed, I acknowledge, my friends, to make approaches to the mansions of the dead ; it is melancholy to think upon the fall of this goodly structure, which was built by the hand of the Most High ; but fall it assuredly must. The present moment hastens us on to our last hour. Let us, therefore, prepare for an event which we cannot avoid. We may learn some lessons from the tomb, which will avail us through all eternity.

In the *third* place, I shall consider death as

becoming present to us, and endeavour to give you that view of it, which you will one day have.

None, indeed, ever returned from the invisible world to describe the bed of death, and tell us the agonies of the last hour. But up to that hour we can trace the man, and survey him stretched upon the bed from which he is to rise no more. A death-bed discovers the real character of men; dissimulation is then at an end. At the close of the scene, the mask drops off, and the man appears in his true colours. Then, then, often for the first time, a man turns a serious eye upon himself; cut off from all connection with the living world; bidding adieu for ever to all below the sun; entering within the dominions of the dead, and about to appear before the judgment seat of God; surrounded by the sad circle of his friends and attendants, he reads in their trembling looks that all is over with him—that his hour is come; then the illusion vanishes that was spread upon all earthly things; then the past rises up, often rises in bitter remembrance; then the future rushes upon his view with all its dark and unknown terrors; then the sense of Deity revives, which, however disguised, lies at the bottom of every heart;

then conscience rising up in majesty supreme, holds out such a picture of the eternal world, as convinces the most unbelieving mind, convinces him, that a future state is not the dictate of a wild imagination, is not the figment of priests and lawgivers, to terrify the ignorant, and to keep the people in awe; he sees and feels that it is an awful reality. When the time of his departure is announced by the cold sweat and the shivering limbs, and the voice faltering in the throat, he casts a last look, perhaps a sad one, on all that he leaves behind. Then the whole creation fades from his view, the world seems to be dissolved, and, to the closing eye, nothing appears but God alone; that God, before whose tribunal he is summoned to appear.

If this fate shall one day be ours, what manner of persons ought we now to be? At that hour, the very best shall wish that they had been better, and after all the preparation that we have made, we shall wish that we had made more. Let this thought have its influence in determining us to the choice of objects which we pursue, and the course of life which we embrace. The greatest part of mankind, having no fixed or certain plan of life, have no choice in the objects which present

themselves, but give the loose rein to a wandering inclination, and follow on without thinking, where accident points the way. Here, therefore, let us often pause, and seriously ask ourselves, Is the course of life which I am now engaged in, of such a nature that it will bear a review upon the bed of death? Are the motives of my present conduct, and the reasons which now determine me to action, so strong and well-founded, that I could plead them in my defence at the bar of eternal justice? If that is not the case, consider and be wise before it is too late. Why should you vex yourselves in vain? Why should you pass your time in such a manner, as to make its end bitter? Why will you treasure up to yourselves anguish and remorse, and tribulation, and make no other use of the present time, but to embitter your last hour? Be consistent with yourselves. You cannot live the life of the wicked, and die the death of the righteous. Let, therefore, your course of action be of that kind, that draws no repentance after it; then shall your path in life be like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Having thus set out, and made progress in the ways of righteousness, you will look for-

ward with joy. This will cause the evening of your days to smile, and the stream of life to run clear to the last. Let this consideration moderate our attachment to earthly things. What profit hath a man in that sore travel to which he is appointed under the sun? Why should we vex ourselves in vain, deny to ourselves the enjoyments of life, withdraw sleep from our eyes, and peace from our minds? Why should we add to the evils of life, and carry about with us a burden to the grave? Even with a view to present tranquillity and enjoyment, this is folly of the first magnitude; but when we take in the consideration of a future life, it is worse than folly, it is sin. If we are entirely immersed in the concerns of this world: if earthly things occupy and engross our whole attention, what shall we do when God taketh away the soul? How will the closing eye contemplate the pomp and glitter of life, the evil of avarice, the bustling of ambition, and all this circle of vanity to which we are now enchanted? Use this world, therefore, as not abusing it; let not the business or the pleasures of it take hold of your heart, make them not essential to your happiness, sit loose to them, remember that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that death soon puts a period to the

scene, which no wise man would wish to last for ever.

In the *fourth* place, By making the thought of death present to us, let us regulate our conduct with respect to the friendships which we form, and concerning the animosities which we entertain.

Affection and friendship are the best and most valuable part of human nature. The heart of man wishes to be kind, and looks around for objects. This fund of generous love is often misapplied; this favourable bias of humanity is often perverted; sometimes by that general and indiscriminate good nature which looks upon all men as alike; sometimes by frivolous attachments, founded upon a conformity of trifling dispositions; and sometimes by a more criminal alliance, by a partnership in iniquity. In the course of business, indeed, we must converse with persons of all kinds. No man has the choice of the companies into which he may fall; but every man has the choice of the friends with whom he cultivates more intimate connections. In forming these connections, therefore, let us look forward to the time when they shall be dissolved, and let us live only with such persons with whom we would desire to die.

This thought should also check us in the animosities which we are apt to entertain. In the present state of things, where men think so differently, where opposite passions are felt, and interfering interests occur, dissensions will naturally arise. And, where men have not the aid of philosophy to restrain, or the influence of divine grace to subdue, their passions, these will often be attended with dismal effects. From this root proceeds the wormwood which embitters the cup of human life. But when the blood begins to cool, when the passions grow calmer, reason reassumes its office, greater moderation will prevail: things will appear in a different light; honest and candid men will then look back with pain upon those excesses to which they have been carried by the impetuosity of passion. However some men chuse to live, all men would wish to die at peace with their neighbours; there is no enmity in the grave; there is no discord in the house which is appointed for all living: there, friends and foes rest together in peace, and the ashes of those who were mortal enemies mingle together in friendly alliance. Let us, therefore, now cultivate those benevolent dispositions to all men, and live in those habits

with our neighbours, which we would wish to prevail in us at the hour of death.

These exhortations, my young friends, I address particularly to you. You are apt to reckon yourselves privileged from death; you put the evil day far off; you promise to yourselves a length of happy days, and think that melancholy reflections upon mortality are ill suited to the bloom of your years, and the gaiety of your spirits. "Let the old," you say, "think upon death; let those who are drawing nigh to the grave, prepare for that better world to which they are advancing; but sure it is the duty of the young and the gay to make the most of life." True; and in order to make the most of life, you must conquer the fear of death. The king of terrors, when not subdued, is the most formidable of all foes. In every path of life he will meet you, and haunt you like a ghost: even at the banquet his form will appear; he will blast you in the midst of your joy, and turn the house of mirth into a house of mourning. Trust not, O man, to thy youth, nor presume upon impunity from the destroyer. How often, when the tree puts forth buds, and spreads its blossoms to the sun, does the winds of the desert come and blast the hopes of the year! The widow of Nain

wept over her son, who died fair in the prime of life; and many a parent hath followed his child to the grave, crying with bitter lamentation, "Would to God that I had died for thee, " my son! my son!" Your own experience may enforce this truth. None who now hear me, but have seen their equals in age cut off, and younger than they laid in the grave. As, therefore, you are always in danger, be always on your guard. Instead of filling you with gloom and melancholy, this is the true way to prevent them. Having subdued the last enemy, you have none other to fear. Adopted into the family of God, interested in the merits of Christ, entitled to the glories of immortality, you go forward through life and death, conquering and to conquer. Then all things are your's; death is a passage to a better life, and the gate to immortality.

Much more is it incumbent on you, my aged friends, to consider your latter end. Why stand you here all the day idle? Consider how vain, and foolish, and sinful, it is to be forming schemes of long life, when you are within the threshold of the house of death? Consider how terrible will be the hour, if you have never thought of death till you come to die; like Jonah, to be awakened from a sound

sleep, and to be cast into the ocean. Look into life, behold a young generation rising around you, and you yourselves left alone in a new world. Look into the records of mortality, into the repositories of the dead, and hear your equals in age calling to you from the tomb, and warning you to prepare for that fate which is their's to-day and may be your's to-morrow. Embrace, therefore, the opportunities of grace which you now enjoy. Whilst the Prince of Peace extends the golden sceptre, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from his presence. Be wise, and consider your end that is so near.

SERMON XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A LIFE OF EASE AND PLEASURE.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

JESUS hath lately been addressing to you the gracious invitation which here he gives to penitent sinners. With his invitation you have testified your compliance. Last Lord's day you confessed at those tables, that you were weary and heavy laden with the yoke of the world; that you came to Jesus in hopes of finding rest to your souls; and that you were resolved to learn of him, and to take his yoke upon you. The good confession, my friends, which you then witnessed, the happy choice which you then made, you will never have cause to repent. The world, indeed, will represent religion to you as a heavy burden and

a galling yoke ; but I assure you, upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and upon the testimony of all his disciples, that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light ; that his commandments are not grievous, and the ways he points out to his followers are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

The ease and pleasure of the Christian life, is to be the subject of the present discourse. But, before I enter upon it, I have one observation to make, which is, That in order to taste the joys of religion, we must have been accustomed to its government, and made advances in the divine life. We never can have a taste for any pursuit till we be acquainted with it : we can never enter into the spirit of any science, till that science be familiar to us. To those who have long engaged in a course of wickedness, the duties of religion will at first be grievous and irksome, because they oppose strong prejudices and confirmed habits of vice. But when these bad habits are removed, and good ones are contracted, when a man acquires the temper and enters into the spirit of religion, he then feels the joy which a stranger intermeddles not with. Give a musical instrument to an unskilful person, we hear nothing but harshness and discord from every

string : the artist alone makes music and harmony accompany all the motions of his hand. Religion is an art, and, like an art, is to be learned before it be understood.

In the *first* place, The Christian life is a life of ease and pleasure, on account of the principle from which the Christian acts.

The Christian is not a slave who obeys from compulsion, nor a servant who works for hire; he is a son who acts from ingenuous affection and filial love. When the Christian contemplates the goodness, and tender mercies, and loving-kindness of God, particularly his inexpressible love in the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus, he is constrained to new obedience, by the most powerful of all ties, by the chords of love, and the bands of a man; thus reasoning, and thus feeling, that if one died for all, then they which are alive ought not to live to themselves, but to him who died for them. Gratitude to a benefactor, affection to a father, love to a friend, all concur to form the principle of evangelical obedience, and to strengthen the cord that is not easily broken. Love, then, is the principle of the Christian life : love, the most generous passion that glows in the breast of man, the most

active principle that works in the human frame, the key that unlocks every finer feeling of the heart, the spring that puts in motion every power of the soul. Pleasant are the labours of love. Short is the path and cheerful the journey, when the heart goes along. A determined mind, enamoured of the object it pursues, removes mountains, and makes the crooked path straight: the fire cannot extinguish, nor the waters quench its force; it reigns supreme in the heart, and diffuses a gaiety over every path of life. By its influence labour is rendered easy, and duty becomes a delight.

In the *second* place, The ease and pleasure of the Christian life will appear, if we consider the assistance we receive from above.

“ Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh within you every good work and word.” There are difficulties in the Christian life; I have no intention to deceive you, my friends; you will often find it difficult to act the proper part, to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; to keep your passions within the bounds of reason; to subdue your irregular inclinations to the obedience of faith, and to hold fast

your integrity, uncorrupted amid the temptations of the world. These and many other difficulties will beset you in running the Christian race. But let me remind you, that one half of the pleasures of human life arise from overcoming difficulties ; and to overcome those difficulties which surround us, God bestows the influences of his Holy Spirit. The Lord is ever nigh to them who call upon him in the sincerity of their heart. To those who wait at the salutary stream, an angel descends to stir the waters. God never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. He never neglected the prayer that came from the heart : he never forsook the man that put his trust in him.

If you were left to climb the arduous ascent, by your own strength alone, then the Christian life would neither be easy nor pleasant ; then you might sit down in despair of ever attaining the top. But whatever duties God calls you to, he gives you abilities to perform them. According as your days are, he hath promised that your strength shall be. His grace is sufficient for us ; his strength is made perfect in our weakness. No, my friends, God hath never withdrawn himself from the world. The Father of Spirits is ever present with his

rational offspring ; he knows their frame, he helps their infirmities, assists their graces, strengthens their powers, and makes perfect what concerns them. He assists the feeble, he revives the languishing, he supports the strong. He aids the efforts of the captive, who endeavours to break loose from the fetters that hold him ; he favours the ascent of the devout mind, that with the confidence of faith rises to himself, and he forwards the pilgrim, journeying to his native country. The good husbandman superintends the vine which his own right hand planted. He waters his vineyard with dews from heaven, and breathes ethereal influence on those trees of righteousness that shall adorn the paradise of God.

Hast thou not felt him, O Christian ! restraining thy evil inclinations, suggesting holy thoughts, kindling heavenly affections, and drawing thee to thy duty with a hand unseen ? Hast thou not felt him as a Spirit within thy spirit, imparting secret strength, animating thy frame as with new life, actuating thy faculties, purifying thy passions, begetting in thee an abhorrence of sin, and a love of righteousness, and making all thy graces shine out with fresh beauty ? How easy and delightful then will the Christian life be, when you have divine

aids to strengthen, support, and assist ! It is God himself who is on your side ; it is God himself who works with you ; his wisdom is your guide, his arm is your support ; his Spirit is your strength ; you lose your own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection.

In the *third* place, It will appear that the Christian life is easy and pleasant, if we consider the encouragements the good man receives.

The good man waits not for all his happiness till he come to heaven ; he hath treasures in hand, as well as possessions in hope ; he hath a portion in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come. There is a sense of moral good and evil implanted in the mind ; a principle of conscience which condemns us when we do ill, and applauds us when we do well. This principle is the chief foundation of our happiness, and gives rise to the greatest pleasures and the greatest pains in human life. By means of this moral sense there is no peace to the wicked. Inward struggles, strong reluctance, and aversion of mind, precede the commission of sin. Sin, when committed, is followed by guilty blushes, alarming fears, terrible reviews, startling prospects, and remorse, with all its hideous train. Against the sinner

his own heart rises up in judgment to condemn him ; the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against him ; a fire not blown consumes him. “ There is no peace to the “ wicked.” The foundations of peace are subverted in his mind ; he is at enmity with himself, he is at enmity with his fellow-creatures ; he is at enmity with God. It is *not so* with those that take upon them the yoke of Christ. When pure religion forms the temper, and governs the life, all is peaceful and serene ; the man is then in his proper element ; the soul is in a state of health and vigour ; there is a beautiful correspondence between the heart and the life ; all is serene without, all is tranquil within. Delivered from the anxieties that perplex, and from the terrors that overwhelm the guilty man, the Christian resigns himself to peace and joy, conscious that he possesses a temper of mind which is acceptable to God, and leads a life which is useful to men. In the heart of such a man there is a blessed calmness and tranquillity, like that of the highest heavens.

But there is more than a calmness and tranquillity. The air may be calm and tranquil, when the day is dark ; the sea may be smooth, when there is a mist upon the waves ; the sky

may be tranquil when it is overcast with clouds : but the pious and virtuous mind resembles a sky that is not only calm, but bright ; resembles a sea that is not only smooth, but serene ; resembles an unclouded sky, beautiful with the rising sun. There are joys in the Christian life unknown to transgressors : there is a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, that refreshes the city of God ; there are secret consolations reserved for the just ; there are silent pleasures that flow into the pious mind ; there is a still small voice that comes to the pure in heart, and bids them be of good cheer ; there is an inward peace of God that passeth all understanding, there is a joy in the Holy Ghost, resulting from the well-grounded hope of a happy immortality, that is unspeakable and glorious.

When the heart is thus pure, it becomes the temple of the Deity ; and, as a temple is consecrated with the presence of God. “ If a
“ man love me, and keep my words, my Fa-
“ ther will love him, and we will come and
“ make our abode with him.” Who can describe the joy of those happy moments when a present Deity is felt, when God manifests himself to his people, so as he does not to the world, when our fellowship is with the Father

and with his Son Jesus Christ ? Then a fore-taste of immortality is given, the joys of the blessed are let down, and heaven descends to men.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, The ease and pleasure of the Christian life will appear, if we consider the joyful prospect that is set before us.

The Christian has joys in this life ; but he is not confined to these. His hopes do not terminate with life ; they extend beyond the grave. Death puts a final period to the happiness of the wicked man ; but it is then that the happiness of the righteous man begins. We are assured in Sacred Scripture, that there is a kingdom prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, when they shall enter into rest from all their labours, and sufferings, and sorrows of this mortal life ; when they shall enter into a state where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, and no vice pervert the will ; where nothing but love shall possess the soul, and nothing but gratitude employ the tongue ; where they shall be admitted to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the First-born ; where they shall see Jesus at the

right hand of the Father, and shall sit down with him upon his throne ; where they shall be admitted into the presence of God, shall behold him face to face, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory,—that glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

To conclude : It may be observed, that it hath been the fate of Christianity in all ages, to suffer more from its friends than from its enemies. Attacks from the enemies of our faith have generally proved subservient to its propagation and success ; but the misrepresentations and injuries of its friends have often wounded it in a vital part. One of the greatest of these misrepresentations, and one of the most flagrant injuries that ever was done to religion, was to represent it as a burdensome service ; as a grievous and a galling yoke, to which no man would submit, but from the terror of eternal punishment. What adds to the injury, this has sometimes been done by persons of real seriousness, who, unhappily possessed of a gloomy imagination, and who probably, in some period of their days, having been guilty of crimes, have been so deeply affected with remorse and contrition, that

they have continued all their lifetime subject to bondage. But blessed be God, my friends, that such unfavourable and forbidding delineations of religion have no foundation in truth. In these volumes, Christians are called upon to rejoice evermore. Religion promises happiness to us in the life which now is, as well as in the life which is to come. The wisdom that is from above is represented as having length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. The prophets and apostles ransack heaven and earth for images to express the joys of the just: they bring together the most beautiful and most delightful objects in the whole compass of nature, and introduce the inanimate parts of the creation as joining in the happiness of the good; the hills and the mountains breaking forth into singing, and all the trees of the wood shouting for joy. All concurs to prove the truth in the text, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

SERMON XVII.

THE EXPEDIENCY OF JESUS CHRIST APPEARING IN
A SUFFERING STATE.

HEBREWS ii. 10.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

WHEN Christianity was first published to the world, the earliest objection that was raised against it arose from the low and suffering state in which its Author appeared. It was a stumbling block to the Jews, and seemed foolishness to the Greeks, that a prophet sent from heaven to enlighten and reform the world, should lead a life of indigence and obscurity, and make his exit with ignominy and with pain.

If we consider the character and prevailing opinions of the Jews and the Greeks at the time when our Saviour appeared, we shall see the reason of the unfavourable reception which they gave to his doctrines. The Jews had been

the favourite people of God. By signs and miracles, and mighty works, he had delivered them from a state of slavery in Egypt, had conducted them through the wilderness, and at last given them a settlement in the promised land. The arm of the Lord was made bare in their behalf, the sea was divided to make way for them, and the waters stood as a wall on their right hand and on their left. During their wanderings through the wilderness, a pillar of fire conducted them by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. Manna descended to them from heaven, and water sprung from the flinty rock. Accustomed to these great and marvellous exertions of the Divine power, in the days of the Messiah they expected still greater and more marvellous. If a God was to descend, they looked for him in the whirlwind, they looked for him in the thunder, they looked for him in the earthquake, and when the still small voice came, it was neither heard nor regarded. Besides this, they had imbibed false notions concerning the Messiah, and the nature of his kingdom. They misinterpreted the ancient oracles, which foretold his coming; they took the magnificent style of prophecy for literal description, and, in place of a spiritual Saviour, expected a temporal prince. Accord-

ingly, at the time when our Saviour appeared, the whole nation was intoxicated with the idea of a triumphant conqueror, who was to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to erect an universal monarchy on earth, and to make Zion the seat of empire, and capital of the world. To persons under the influence of these prejudices, a suffering Messiah was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

A different set of prejudices prevailed in Greece. The Greeks were an ingenious and an active people. Situated in a fortunate climate, and blessed with the highest degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the arts. Smitten with the love of wisdom, they gave up their paternal estates to attend the schools of philosophy. They journeyed from region to region, and traversed the world, to bring home fresh accessions of knowledge, and new improvements in the arts. Under these favourable circumstances, Greece arose to fame, and beheld an age of glory, which is unrivalled in the records of history. The ideas of virtue and of merit amongst any nation are founded upon the splendid examples with which their history abounds, and upon a perfection in those arts which they cultivate, and in which

they excel. The Greeks excelled in the arts to which the imagination gives birth, as well as in the sciences, which reason brings to maturity, and their history abounded with the most splendid instances of public spirit, of heroic friendship, and of intrepid valour. Dazzled with the lustre of these arts, and with the glory of these virtues, they fixed the standard of excellence by them, and had no admiration to bestow upon the humble Prophet of Nazareth, and the mortifying doctrines of the cross. As they had been a stumbling-block to the Jews, to the Greeks they seemed foolishness.

It is then a subject worthy of our contemplation, to inquire into the reasons that might move Almighty God, thus, in direct opposition to the prejudices and expectations of both Jews and Greeks, to appoint the Captain of our salvation to be made perfect by a state of sufferings. It is hence proposed to shew the expediency and propriety of appointing such a Captain of our salvation. This will appear, from considering our blessed Saviour in these four capital views of his character: As the founder of a new religion, as a pattern of all perfection, as a priest who was to make atonement, and a king who was to be crowned with glory.

In the *first* place, If we consider our Saviour as the author of a new religion, his appearance in a suffering state frees his religion from an objection which applies with full force to every other religion in the world.

Amongst all the nations whose history we have recorded, the laws gave birth to the religion. The public faith was modelled by the sovereign authority, and established by the sovereign power. The prince was also the prophet. The religion which he established, was such as suited the genius of the people, the nature of the climate, or the views of the sovereign ; and, in short, was nothing more than a mere engine of civil government. When we take a view of Christianity, a different scene presents itself. Here we see a religion published by a person, obscure and unknown, amongst a nation hated and despised to a proverb, one day to become the religion of the world, and to be propagated by the efforts of a few illiterate fishermen, who had to combat against the prejudices of the Jews, the superstition of the Gentiles, the wisdom of the philosophers, the power of armies and of kings, the ancient systems of religion established over the whole world, and the combined wit, and genius, and malice, of all mankind.

Had our Saviour appeared in the pomp of a temporal prince, as the Jews expected him ; had he appeared in the character of a great philosopher, as the Greeks would have wished him, often had we heard of his power and of his policy, and been told that our religion was more nearly allied to this world than to the other. But when we hear the Author of our faith declaring from the beginning, that he must suffer many things in his life, and be put to an ignominious and tormenting death ; when we hear him forewarning his disciples, that they were to meet with the same fate ; these suspicions must for ever vanish from our mind. Thus, our religion stands clear of an objection, from which nothing, perhaps, could have purged it, but the blood of its Divine Author.

In the *second* place, If we consider our Saviour as a pattern of virtue and all perfection, the expediency of his appearing in a suffering state will further be evident.

One great end of our Saviour's coming into the world was to set us an example, that we might follow his steps. But, unless his life had been diversified with sufferings, the utility of his example had been in a great measure defeated. What we generally call a perfect

character is a cold insipid object, that does not interest mankind. Were it possible for nature to realize the man of virtue, as drawn by those who misrepresent the Stoic philosophy; a man without the feelings of nature, and the weaknesses of humanity, proof against the influence of passion, and the attacks of pain; we would turn aside from such a caricatura of humanity, and exclude the faultless monster from the number of our species. No example can make any impression upon the minds of men, but the example of men of like passions with themselves. Let us suppose, that the life of an angel were exhibited to the world, it might afford a pleasant subject of contemplation. But the question would naturally arise, What is this to me? This does not belong to my nature; I discover here no traces of my own character, no features of humanity. On the other hand, to set up an imperfect example for our imitation, would be attended with still worse consequences. We know, from the instances of the saints recorded in Scripture, how apt men are to quote their imperfections as an excuse for themselves, and, by copying after these, come short of that perfection to which they might have arrived.

But these defects are remedied in the example of Jesus of Nazareth. His example is perfect, and, at the same time, has all that effect upon us which the example of one of our brethren would have had. When we behold the man Christ Jesus involved in distresses similar to our own, clothed with all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and groaning like ourselves under the sinless miseries of life, we are touched with the feeling of his infirmities and his pains; our passions take part with the illustrious sufferer, and we behold him in some measure brought down to our own level. It is from these shades that this picture derives its beauty—derives its effect upon the world, and that, notwithstanding of the glory that surrounds it, we recognize our own image, we trace the features and the lineaments of humanity, and by these are drawn to copy after such an illustrious pattern of excellence and perfection.

The suffering state in which our Lord appeared, not only conduced to the efficacy of his example, but also to its more extensive utility, by presenting an ample theatre for the sublimest virtues to appear. It is observed by an historian, in relating the life of Cyrus the Great, that there was one circumstance

wanting to the glory of that illustrious prince ; and that was, the having his virtue tried by some sudden reverse of fortune, and struggling for a time under some grievous calamity. The observation is just. Men are made for suffering as well as for action. Many faculties of our frame—the most respectable attributes of the mind, as well as the most amiable qualities of the heart, carry a manifest reference to a state of adversity, to the dangers which we are destined to combat, and the distresses we are appointed to bear. Had the Greeks consulted their own writers, they would have given them proper information on this head. To approve a man thoroughly virtuous, said one of their sages, he must be tortured, he must be bound, he must be scourged, and having suffered all evils, must be empaled or crucified.

Who are the personages in history that we admire the most ? Those who have suffered some signal distress, and from a host of evils have come forth conquerors. If we look into civil history, need I call up to your remembrance the patriots of Greece, the heroes of Rome ; the wise, the great, and the good of every age, who grew illustrious as they grew distressed, and in the darkest hour of adversity shone out with unwonted and meridian

splendour. If we look into sacred history, we shall find, that the good and holy men, who are there pointed out as patterns to the world, like the Captain of their salvation, were made perfect through suffering. The most illustrious names that are recorded in the book of life, the patriarchs of the ancient world, the prophets of the Jewish state, the martyrs of the Christian church, are witnesses on record of this important truth, that the most honourable laurels are gathered in the vale of tears, and that the crown of glory sits brightest on the brows of those who have gained it with their blood. Jesus of Nazareth, too, was appointed to learn obedience by the things that he suffered. All the virtues of adversity shone forth in his life. The patience that acquiesces with cheerfulness in all the appointments of Providence, the magnanimity which triumphs over an enemy by forgiveness, the charity which prays for its persecutors, are striking and conspicuous parts in his character. But we injure his merit as a sufferer, if we consider it only as breaking out in single and occasional acts of virtue. His sufferings themselves, his condescending to become a victim for the sins of men, and to die for the happiness of the world, is an infinite exer-

tion of benevolence that admits of no comparison, that is transcendent and meritorious. The consideration of this, more than the circumstances of his departure—more than the rocks which were rent, than the sun which was darkened, than the dead which arose, had we been present at the scene, should have made us cry out with the centurion, “ Surely this “ man was the Son of God.”

In the *third* place, If we consider our Saviour as a priest, who was to make an atonement for the sins of men, the expediency of his making this atonement by sufferings and death will be manifest. It is one of the doctrines revealed in the New Testament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As therefore he was our immediate Creator, and as his design in our creation was defeated by sin, there was an evident propriety that he himself should interpose in our behalf, and retrieve the affairs of a world, which he had created with his own hands. But it is evident, at first sight, that redemption is a greater work than creation ; that it requires a more powerful exertion to recover a world lying in wickedness, to happiness and virtue, than to create it at first in a state of innocence. In the work of

redemption, therefore, it was expedient, that there should be a brighter display of the divine perfections, and a greater exertion of benevolence than was exhibited in the work of creation. Now, if God, without a satisfaction by sufferings, and by a mere act of indemnity, had blotted out the sins of the world, such a display of the divine attributes would not have been given : But by the Son of God's appearing in our nature, and suffering the punishment which was due to our sins, a scene is presented, on which the angels desire to look.— This, in the language of Scripture, was the glory that excelleth ; here the almighty made bare his holy arm, and gave testimony to the nations what was in the power of a God to effectuate. Hereby all the perfections of the divine nature were glorified. That immaculate purity, which cannot look upon sin, and that astonishing love which could not behold the ruin of the sinner, were awfully displayed.— The majesty of the divine government was sustained, and the rigour of the law was fulfilled ; justice was satisfied ; mercy, without restraint, and without measure, flowed upon the children of men. In short, more glory redounded to God, and greater benevolence was made manifest to men, than when the morning

stars sung together at the birth of nature, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

In the *last* place, If we consider our Saviour in that state of glory to which he is now ascended, the propriety of his being made perfect by sufferings will more fully appear. Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, therefore hath God highly exalted him, hath given him a name above every name, and committed to him all power in heaven and in earth. By the appointment of Providence, suffering hath ever been the path to honour. Ought not Christ, therefore, also to have suffered, and to enter into his glory? As, upon earth, he submitted to the lowest degree of abasement, and appeared in the form of a servant, he is now in heaven exalted to the highest pinnacle of honour, and appears in the form of God. As, in his state of humiliation, he was poor, and had not where to lay his head, he is now the lord of nature, and inherits the treasures of heaven and of earth. Instead of the mock title of King of the Jews, which they wrote upon his cross, he is now in very deed the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Instead of the crown of thorns, which pierced and wounded his blessed head,

he is now for ever encircled with a crown of glory.

What dignity does it reflect upon all our race, that one who wears our likeness, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, now sits upon the throne of nature, now holds in his hand the sceptre of Providence, and exercises uncontrolled dominion over the visible and invisible worlds ! What abundant consolation will it administer to Christians in all their afflictions, what openings of joy will it let down into the vale of tears, when we recollect that the Governor of the world is a God who partakes of our own nature, who, in the days of his humanity, had a fellow-feeling of all our wants ; who, like ourselves, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; who, by consequence, will be more apt to sympathise with his fellow-sufferers, and to send relief to those sorrows of which he himself bore a part !

SERMON XVIII.

ON GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

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

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

“MY ways are not as your ways, and my thoughts are not as your thoughts,” said the Lord to the Old Testament church. And never, surely, did the Eternal Wisdom so disappoint the expectations and blast the hopes of men, as by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Had men been consulted concerning the state in which it was most proper for the Messiah to appear, they would have introduced him into the world with all the circumstances of external pomp and splendour; they would have put into his hand the sceptre of dominion over the nations, and subjected to his kingdom all the people of the earth, from

the rising to the setting of the sun. A Messiah, whose glory should not strike the senses, whose kingdom was not to be of this world, who was to be made perfect through sufferings, who was to triumph by humiliation, who was to become victorious by a shameful death, and in whose humiliation, and sufferings, and cross, the world was to glory; that was an idea which never presented itself to their minds, and which, if it had presented itself, would have been immediately rejected, as having no form nor comeliness, for which it could have been desired: yet, such was the method contrived by Infinite Wisdom to accomplish the redemption of the world. One great end of all the divine dispensations has been to humble and confound the *pride* of man. It was pride that at first introduced moral evil into the world. It was pride that tempted the angels to rebel against their Maker, that brought them down from the mansions of light to the abodes of darkness and despair. It was pride that tempted our first parents to disobey the divine commandment. The language of their apostasy was, "I will ascend into the heavens, I will rise above the height of the clouds, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High." Pride, although not

made for man in his best estate, hath not forsaken him in his worst. Even the fall did not efface the strong impression from his mind. As if he had continued the same noble being he came from the hands of his Creator ; as if he had been still the happy lord of the inferior world, he retained the consciousness of his original excellence, when that excellence was no more ; he surrendered himself to delusions which flattered his vain mind ; he tried new paths to elevation and worldly greatness ; he even appropriated to himself the attributes of the divinity, and, possessed with the madness of ambition, arrogated to himself those honours which are due to God only. Hence the world deified mortal men, worshipped as its creators those to whom it had lately given birth, and adored as immortal and divine the human creatures whose death it had beheld.

As man fell by pride, it was the appointment of Heaven that he should rise by humility. This doctrine was early delivered to the world. God testified by his prophets, that he knew the proud afar off ; that the proud in heart was an abomination to him, but that he would hear the cry of the humble ; that though he dwelt in the high and holy place, he would dwell also with that man who was of a humble

and contrite spirit. But more than instructions were requisite to reform the sentiments, and change the spirit, of a world which had been so much intoxicated with dreams of earthly greatness, and so long enchanted with spectacles of human glory. Accordingly, it pleased God, in the fulness of time, to send forth his own son into the world, in fashion as a man, in the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and hath appointed all Christians to glory in his cross, nay, to glory in nothing else. “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These words might give occasion to many useful discourses. All that I intend at present is, to shew you by what means we are to glory in the cross of Christ.

In the *first* place, then, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by frequently meditating upon the circumstances of his death and passion.

The human actions and events in which we glory, become often the objects of contemplation ; they present themselves spontaneously to the mind, and become the favourite ideas of the soul. We turn them on all sides, we view them in every light, we delight in them, we dwell upon them, we make them our me-

dition day and night. Surely, then, it becomes us to revolve often in our mind this great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh and dying on a cross for the salvation of the world. The angels in heaven, as we are told in scripture, desired with earnest eyes to look into the sufferings of Jesus; much more should we make the sufferings of Jesus the object of our meditation, for he took not on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham.

Call up to thy mind, then, O Christian! the doleful circumstances of thy Saviour's passion, the sad variety of sorrows which he suffered, the torment of body and agony of mind which he underwent, the cruel, the ignominious, and accursed death which he endured: Make these things present to thy mind, till the blended emotions of contrition and sorrow, of awe and wonder, of joy and pleasure, of gratitude and love, take possession of thy heart. "Can you not watch with me one hour?" said our Lord to his disciples, when he entered into his agony: "Can you not watch with me one hour?" saith our Lord to his disciples in every age, when they are about to renew the memorials of his death and passion. Agreeably to his dying charge, accompany thy Redeemer, O Christian!

in the last scene of his sufferings. Look to him with such a lively sense and feeling of his sorrows, till, like Paul, thou art crucified with Christ. While all nature is thrown into disorder, while the rocks are rent, and the dead arise, wilt thou continue unmoved? Wilt thou continue harder than the rocks, and more insensible than the ashes of the dead? No; while thou thus musest, holy affections will be kindled, and the heavenly fire will burn; from the altar which was erected on the hill of Calvary, a living ember will touch thy lips, and purify thy heart.

In the *second* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by giving his death that rank in our estimation, and that place in our affections, which its importance requires.

When we glory in any thing to an extraordinary degree, we prefer it to all others, we give it the chief place in our heart, and rest our happiness in a great measure upon it. And thus it becomes us to glory in the cross of Christ; thus it becomes us to prefer it to all things, to give it the highest place in our heart, and to rest our eternal happiness on it alone. The manifestation of the Son of God is, in all regards, the most wonderful of the divine

works, and to us in particular is the most important event that distinguishes the annals of time. His death upon the cross was the most splendid part of his mediatorial office; the most illustrious instance of his love to men, and the most meritorious act of his obedience to God. By his death, the wrath of God was averted from the world, and the atonement requisite for the sins of men was made. By his death, the glories of the Godhead shone out with new lustre, the majesty of the moral law was not only sustained, but rendered illustrious, and a dignity was reflected on virtue which it had never known before. To his death we are indebted for the pardon of our sins, for adoption into the family of Heaven, and for our hopes of a happy immortality in the future world. His death upon the cross quenched the fire of hell, and set open the gate of heaven for a repenting world to enter in.

In the cross of Christ, therefore, we do not glory aright, if we admire only the circle of virtue which shone out in his suffering state; if we admire only the patience with which he submitted to all the appointments of Providence, the fortitude with which he encountered all the dangers of life, the magnanimity which induced him to forgive his enemies, the

charity which prompted him to pray for those who had bound him to the accursed tree, and that noble principle of love to mankind, the spring of all his undertakings as our Redeemer: This merit we must do more than admire; upon it we must rest as the ground of our acceptance with God, and the foundation of our title to eternal life. The blessed above ascribe their salvation not to their own righteousness, but to the merits of their Redeemer: "Unto him that loved us," is the strain of their song; "unto him that loved us unto the death, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be praise, and honour, and blessing." "These are they," said the angel to the Apostle John, "who have come out of great tribulation; they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne."

Our virtues are insufficient to procure our acceptance with God, or merit a title to happiness in the life to come. Even man, in his state of innocence, could not pretend to have merit with his Creator. By the law of his nature he was bound to render obedience to that God from whom he received his being, and to whom he owed his preservation. The moral law was the law of his being, When he

had done his best, he did no more than was his duty. If man, then, in a state of innocence, could not claim the crown of heavenly glory, as the reward of personal merit, shall man in a state of guilt pretend to have merit with a holy God, with whom evil cannot dwell, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Supposing the day of judgment arrived, where is the man that durst face the tribunal of the Almighty, and demand one of the thrones of heaven upon the footing of personal righteousness? The most arrogant presumption durst not aspire so high. But, blessed be God, that though we are unworthy, yet worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing, and honour, and praise, because he hath redeemed us by his blood, and hath given us a right to sit down with him upon his throne. To fallen man, the cross is the tree of life; there grow the fruits which are for the healing of the nations; fruits which, if we take and eat, we shall live for ever.

In the *third* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by commemorating his death in the holy sacrament.

Those events in which a nation glories the most, those events which restored or secured

to them their liberties, from which they begin an era of happy time, are commemorated with a laudable spirit of joy. A day is set apart, that the memory of such glorious deeds may be transmitted down to posterity, and that the names of those who distinguished themselves on the occasion, as patriots or as heroes, may receive a just tribute of praise from all succeeding times. Agreeably to this, the Christian church hath in all ages set apart certain times to keep in remembrance this most important event, the death and passion of our Redeemer. It was the commandment of our Lord himself; it was his commandment, given in that night in which he was betrayed; it was his last commandment to his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." And surely the disciple who loves his Lord will be cautious how he disregards his dying charge. There are, indeed, persons in the world, who bear the Christian name, and who, notwithstanding, never join in this solemn ordinance. Although they were baptized into the faith of Jesus, and have never publicly renounced Christianity, yet, instead of glorying in the cross, they seem to be ashamed of it, and testify plainly to the world, that they pay no regard to the dying charge of their Lord, and that they would

blush to be seen at a communion-table. How such persons can reconcile their conduct to any sense of duty, to any idea of Christianity, is beyond my capacity to discover. Sure I am, if they have any conscience, if they have any reflection, if they have any feeling at all, it will interrupt their peace of mind in life, it will shut up the chief avenues to comfort in their last moments, and prevent that tranquillity and fullness of joy which is then the portion of the Christian, to think that they have lived in the wilful neglect and contempt of an express injunction of their Lord, and may have, in some degree, incurred the guilt of those whom the Apostle declares to have trodden under foot the Son of God, and to have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they might have been sanctified, an unholy thing.

You say you are unfit to approach the table of the Lord. Let me ask you, Are you fit to *die*? Do you think it more solemn, more awful, to witness a good confession at these tables, than to appear before the judgment-seat of God? Do you think, that they ought to be received to the society of the blessed above, who never joined themselves to the communion of the saints below? Do you think that Jesus will admit those to sit down with

him on his throne in heaven, who were ashamed to sit down with him at his table on earth? What is, then, I beseech you, in the holy sacrament, to banish any decent and good man from these tables? We sit down at the table of the Lord, to give thanks unto God for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world; to express our regard and gratitude to our Redeemer, who loved us unto the death; to unite ourselves to all the faithful and the good, as being members of the same body, and to bind ourselves by solemn vows to the practice of whatever is amiable, and excellent, and praise-worthy. And if there be any man so void of gratitude and love to God his Creator, and to Jesus Christ, his Redeemer, as to be averse to acknowledge the favours he has received; if there be any man so dead to the feelings of the heart, to benevolence and love, as to have no bowels of love for his brethren of mankind—if there be any man so lost to the sense of virtue, and to the beauty of holiness, as to see no charms, to feel no attractions, in those things which are lovely, and pure, and honest, and of good report; then, indeed, he is unfit to sit down at the table of the Lord, he has neither portion nor lot in this matter; he is also unfit to join with Christians in any

religious duty; nay, he is unfit to perform a decent part as a member of civil society.

I address these things to those who absent themselves from this ordinance, from a wilful disregard: to those who are restrained by their unhappy fears and scruples, I speak in a different language, and such persons I can assure, that they who, after serious, and diligent, and mature preparation, still think themselves unworthy, are not the least acceptable guests at the table of the Lord. Do you feel a grateful sense of the love of Jesus to mankind, particularly that amazing act of his love, in giving his life as a ransom for the world? Have you such a value for the covenant established by your Saviour's blood, that you are resolved to accept of it with gratitude, and adhere to it with all your soul? Have you such a regard to holiness and universal goodness, that you determine to lead decent, and pious, and exemplary lives? If you have these, come to express that gratitude, to accept that covenant, and to seal those vows at the foot of the cross. Jesus breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. The humility of the heart will not banish the Eternal Spirit from taking up his residence with you.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by living to those purposes and for those ends for which Jesus died.

We glory in the Reformation from Popery, when we maintain and defend that pure religion which was then established. We glory in the Revolution, when we support the rights and maintain the liberties which were secured to us at that memorable period : and, in like manner, we glory in the cross of Christ, when we fulfil the intention, and answer the purpose for which Jesus died. Jesus died, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In this view, Christians, your whole life is glorying in the cross of Christ. When you suppress the motions of irregular desire, when you conquer the excess of passion, and subdue the vices which war against the soul, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, crucified these your enemies, and died that you might be delivered out of their hands. When you check in yourselves the spirit of animosity, when your heart relents towards him against whom your wrath was kindled, when you forego resentment, forgive an injury, and hold out the ready hand of reconciliation

to your offending brother, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, displayed a most amazing instance of forgiveness, in praying for those who brought him to that accursed death. When your heart expands with benevolence to mankind ; when you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and rescue the oppressed ; when you feel the distresses of your unhappy brethren, and relieve them, or give a tear to the distresses you cannot relieve, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, exhibited a most illustrious instance of benevolence, in giving his life for the happiness of the world. When you yield to the sweet impulse of natural affection, when you indulge the tender sensibilities of the heart, when you cultivate the spirit of a generous friendship, and join in the endearing offices of social life, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, gave us a most amiable display of these virtues ; one of his last acts on earth was an act of natural affection and friendship ; from the cross he recommended his mother to the care of the friend whom he loved.

In short, whenever you make advances in the divine life, and add to your faith virtue, and to virtue patience, and temperance, and

brotherly kindness, and charity ; whenever you do a good deed, whenever you think a good thought, you are glorying in the cross of Christ; for he, upon the cross, perfected this character, and finished the pattern of universal goodness for the world to study, to imitate, and to admire.

SERMON XIX.

ON THE SALVATION OF MAN BEING ACCOMPLISHED.

JOHN XIX. 30.

—*It is finished.*—

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

THESE are the last words of Jesus;—the words which he uttered when his hour was come; when, in the presence of a great assembly, he breathed out his soul in agony upon the cross. It was ordered by the providence of God, that as Jesus by his death was the Saviour of the world, he should die publicly, when all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba were assembled at Jerusalem.

There is something grand and awful in assembled multitudes of men, especially when convened on any great occasion, such as to pass sentence of life and death. In that silence of the mind, that awful pause of thought, the human genius is agitated strongly; it la-

bours in expectation, and fills up the dreadful interval with emotions of terror and astonishment. When, therefore, at this period, all Judea was present to celebrate the paschal solemnity ; when the great council of the nation, the chief priests, the scribes and elders, convened in Sanhedrim, added dignity to the multitude ; when Pilate the governor of Judea, and Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, with their attending armies, displayed the grandeur of the Roman empire, and sustained the majesty of the masters of the world ; when all these were assembled at the time of the death and crucifixion of a Prophet of the Lord, How great would be the agitations of the multitude ! What astonishing ideas would strike the mind, when they heard the expiring Prophet cry out, “ It is finished ! ” When in a moment they saw that the face of nature was changed ; when they felt the earthquake which shook the nations ; when they were struck with the darkness which veiled the sun ; when they were surrounded with the inhabitants of the eternal world who arose from their graves,—would not they then think, indeed, that all was finished, that the last hour of nature was come, and that the world was departing with its Creator ?

Never, from the time that the idea of creation rose in the Divine Mind, did an hour revolve that laboured with such vast events. To this great point of view, as to the deciding hour in the annals of time, as to the crisis of the moral world, all the preceding ages looked forward, and all succeeding ages looked back. The grand question was now deciding, Whether happiness or misery should finally triumph in the universe of God? From this event the powers of hell dated the rise or fall of their dominion. The fate of the creation was now weighing in the scales. All eternity rested upon this hour.

Whilst we are now assembled to commemorate these great events, and to renew the memorials of thy death and passion, be present with us most blessed Jesus! May we behold thy face, not as it was then covered with anguish and tears, but smiling upon us with heavenly complacence! Fill our hearts with love to thee, and lead us joyfully up into thine holy altar.

“It is finished,” said our Lord, when he expired upon the cross. What was then finished? The following events. God had early manifested to the fathers his purpose of grace to redeem the world. He chose a pecu-

liar people from whom the Redeemer was to descend, and appointed a dispensation of religion to prepare the world for his appearance. By the death of Jesus this ancient dispensation was finished.

Jesus Christ, foretold by all the prophets, had now appeared unto Israel. As the Prophet of the world, he published a new religion which he adorned by his life, which he confirmed by his miracles, and which he had now sealed with his blood. By the death on the cross, his mission to the Jews, as the Author of a new religion, was finished.

From the beginning of the world, God had appointed sacrifices to make atonement for sin. These could not by any virtue of their own propitiate the Deity, or purify the soul from pollution. A more perfect sacrifice, therefore, was necessary in order to atone the divine wrath. By the death of Jesus, this atonement was finished. Jesus Christ, thus constituted the Prophet of the world, and the Priest who was to make atonement for the sins of men, was to be made perfect through suffering. By the appointment of Providence, he was to suffer before he entered into his glory. By his death on the cross, these sufferings were finished.

That is, the Old Testament dispensation was finished—the mission of Christ to Israel, as the Author of a new religion, was finished—the atonement requisite for the sins of the world was finished—and the sufferings of the Messiah were finished.

In the *first* place, then, the ancient dispensation, which had been erected, and the plan of Providence which had been carrying on to introduce the time of the Messiah, were now finished.

When our first parents had broken the covenant of innocence, had forfeited their title to immortality, and exposed themselves to the sanction of the violated law, the Judge descended to pronounce their sentence. But along with the terrors of the Judge, he mingled also the grace of the Saviour; and when he pronounced their doom, he comforted them with the hopes of mercy. He discovered to them his benevolent design of redeeming the world by a mediator who was to interpose in their behalf, and gave them the gracious promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Thus, no sooner had man fallen, than the Redeemer was promised who was to repair the ruins of his fall. In the fol-

lowing ages, the Providence of God seems to have been entirely occupied in preparing the world for this great event. If he manifests himself to the patriarchs, it is to shew them the day of the Messiah afar off; if he inspires the prophets, it is to foretel his appearance; if he chooses a peculiar people, it is to render them the depositaries of the promises concerning his coming; if he appoints sacrifices, ceremonies, and religious rites, it is to trace beforehand the history of the Messiah. Do you read of the blood of the paschal lamb, which, being sprinkled on the doors of the Israelites, secured them from the destroying angel? It was a figure of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who, as our pass-over, was sacrificed to deliver us from eternal death. Do you read of a rock, which, being smitten, furnished waters to a great people? That rock, says Paul, was a figure of Christ, from whom proceed fountains of living water springing up into everlasting life. Do you read of a brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, which cured the Israelites? It was a type of the Son of man who was lifted up on the cross for the salvation of the world. In short, the whole legal economy, the whole system of Le-

vitical worship, was intended to prefigure, and to introduce, a better dispensation.

The plan of Providence which had been carrying on to prepare the world for this great event, was not confined to the Jewish nation : it extended over the whole earth. This was the great end of all the designs of the Deity, and furnishes the key to all the divine dispensations. “ If empires rose or fell ; if war divided, or peace united the nations ; if learning civilized their manners, or philosophy enlarged their views, all was, by the secret decree of heaven, made to ripen the world for that *fulness of time* when Christ was to publish the whole counsel of God.” What a magnificent conception, my friends, does it give us of the divine government, when we behold the princes, the kings, and the masters of the world, entering one after another upon the stage of time, to prepare the way of the King of kings !

If, in the Gentile world, a plan was carrying on to prepare the nations for the coming of the Messiah, among the chosen people a dispensation was erected to typify and prefigure the great events of his life. The economy which was established, the sacrifices which were appointed, the ceremonies in their church,

and the events in their history, all concurred to this great end. Do you read of a continual burnt-offering? It was a type of him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself a sacrifice without spot unto God. Do you read of the paschal lamb? It was a type of that Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world. The law only paved the way to the gospel. Moses and the prophets were but the harbingers of the Messiah. This ancient dispensation was now come to a close: and when our Saviour on the cross cried out *It is finished*, “the law ceased, the gospel “commenced.”

In the *second* place, the mission of Christ to Israel, as the author of a new religion, was finished.

God had never left the nations without a witness of himself. In early ages of the world he sent forth his light and his truth. He manifested himself to the fathers, and taught them the knowledge of the true religion. From time to time righteous men were raised up, and a succession of prophets and of martyrs was carried on, whose lives and doctrines distinguish and adorn the several ages of the world. One nation was chosen above the rest, to whom the living oracles were committed.

The particular revelations which had been delivered in the patriarchal ages, the various rays from the Father of lights which had been scattered over the earth, were here collected, and shone out with new splendour. Nevertheless, though God was the Author of this dispensation, though he himself was the King of Jeshurun, and a lawgiver to Israel, the economy which he established among his own people, was not intended to be immutable, or make the comers thereunto perfect. It is one of the great laws by which this world is governed, that no perfection of any kind is attained of a sudden. There is a rise and a progress in the works of nature. This holds in all the productions of the natural, and in all the improvements of the moral world. This also seems to have regulated the divine conduct with respect to the dispensations of grace.

“ The light of religion was not poured up-
“ on the world all at once, and with its full
“ splendour ; the obscurity of the dawn went
“ before the brightness of the noon-day. The
“ will of God was at first made known by re-
“ velations, useful indeed, but dark and mys-
“ terious. To these succeeded others more
“ clear and perfect. In proportion as the situa-
“ tion of the world rendered it necessary, the

“ Almighty was pleased further to open and “ unfold his gracious scheme.” The light increased as it shone. Star after star arose to enlighten and bliss the earth, till the day-spring from on high appeared. As in the early period of our days the instructions which we receive look forward to manhood, and the various steps we take conduct us to future life ; so in this infancy of the church, a dispensation took place which was only intended to introduce a better. Every thing in the Jewish dispensation testified that it was not intended to last for ever. The presence of God circumscribed to one nation, the place of acceptable worship confined to Jerusalem, the numerous rites and burthensome ceremonies of the Mosaic law, the typical and shadowy nature of the whole dispensation, shewed that it was nothing more than a temporary institution, appointed to introduce a more perfect worship, and to prepare the world for a new dispensation, which was to comprehend every nation of the earth, and to extend through all the ages of the world.

Accordingly, Moses the Jewish legislator, after he had established their government, and formed their laws, tells them, that another prophet should arise among them, and

deliver a new revelation. "Thus saith the Lord, I will raise up a prophet to you from among your brethren; I will put my words in his mouth; him shall ye hear in all things." Accordingly, the Old Testament church never rested upon any revelation which was made to them, but always looked forward to the promised era when the great Prophet should arise, who was to fill Zion with judgment and righteousness.

As the Old Testament economy, in its best estate, was but a temporary institution, in the progress of time it was greatly corrupted. After the return from the Babylonish captivity, there was a strange degeneracy among the people of God. The spirit of prophecy ceased, and the intercourse between heaven and earth was shut up. The Jews had been at all times remarkably prone to superstition and idolatry. Neither the instructions of their lawgiver, nor the thunders of Sinai, nor the sword of the heathen, nor the chains of captivity, could cure them of this perverse spirit. The true prophets had always endeavoured to lead them from the observance of those precepts which were "not good, of those statutes by which a man could not live;" but in the decline of the Jewish nation, their public

teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, accommodated themselves to the prejudices of the people. They collected the various rites and traditions of antiquity, and formed them into a regular system of superstition. They explained away the sense and spirit of the Sacred Scriptures. They had recourse to what they called the oral law, never committed to writing, but delivered, as they pretended, to Moses, and from his time handed down by tradition from age to age. By this they subverted the moral law, and made the word of God of none effect by their traditions.

If the situation of the Jews called thus loudly for reformation, what might be expected in the Gentile world? If such was done in the green tree, what would be done in the dry? They were without God, and without hope in the world. Their religion consisted entirely of superstitious observances, and had no connection with virtue: their worship was a system of abominable rites; their temples were haunts of lewdness and impiety; their gods were monsters of cruelty, rage, and all the vile passions which disgrace humanity. The doctrine of the soul's immortality, which had been but obscurely revealed to the Jews, was only a conjecture among the heathens. Their wise

men saw the evil, but could not discover the remedy. They confessed their own ignorance, and with humble expectation looked for a prophet of the Lord, to make a revelation of the divine will to man.

Whilst thus the people wandered in gross darkness, whilst the cloud sat deep over the moral world, at last the groans of the nations reached the ears of mercy; the voice of nature mourning for her children, was heard in heaven. He who dwelleth there rose from his throne. The Almighty rose in mercy, and sent his own son to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. The Sun of Righteousness arising in our region, dispelled the darkness which involved the nations, revealed all the Heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. The great prophet discovered the mystery which had been kept hid from ages. He declared the whole counsel of God. He spoke as never man spake, and he lived as never man lived. His mission from God he proved, by performing miracles and works which God only could perform: to these he constantly appealed as a testimony from Heaven, and as the finger of God witnessing in his behalf. Accordingly, when the high priest

asked him, Art thou the Christ, the son of God? he answered nothing. Had his disciples been standing by, they might have replied, What need is there for the inquiry? You who have the key of knowledge, search the Scriptures, inquire at Moses and the prophets who foretold and described his coming. Inquire at John the Baptist whom you held to be a prophet, and who pointed him out to the people as the sent of God. Inquire at the companions and the witnesses of his life, if an impostor had ever so many works of innocence and sanctity. Inquire at the lost sheep of Israel whom he brought back to the path of life. Inquire at the multitude whom he fed with a few loaves. Inquire at the blind whom he restored to sight. Inquire at the dumb who now speak his praise. Inquire at the diseased whom he raised from the bed of affliction. Inquire at the dead whom he raised from their graves. Inquire at the seas and tempests which heard and obeyed the voice of their master. Inquire at the heavens, which thrice opened over his head, to publish to the world that he was the beloved of the Father. And if these suffice you not, inquire at hell itself, and receive the testimony of the devils whom he dispossessed, That he was "the holy One of God."

Having thus confirmed his doctrine by his miracles ; having adorned it by his life, it only remained that he should seal it with his blood. And when now he bowed the head upon the cross, his mission to Israel, as the Author of this new revelation, was finished.

In the *third* place, The atonement which was requisite for the sins of the world was finished.

As Almighty God created the world, he claims the right of taking it under the superintendency and direction of his providence. In order to attain the ends of his administration, he acts upon a fixed plan, and according to wise and righteous laws. If there were no fixed plan of providence, and no system of laws to govern the world, the order of society would soon be subverted, the happiness of the human race would be destroyed, and the earth be reduced to one vast scene of anarchy, confusion, and uproar. That these laws may have their full effect, they must be guarded with the terrors of a penal sanction, and when violated be put in execution in order to intimidate offenders, and prevent transgression in the time to come. The Judge of all the earth would not do right unless he executed his righteous laws, and punished those crimes which tended

to the subversion of order, and extinction of happiness in human society. If men, then, throwing off their allegiance to heaven, violate his righteous laws, and expose themselves to his wrath and vengeance, justice requires that they be punished for their sins, and the honour of the Godhead is pledged for the fulfilment of the threatening denounced against sin. But all of us have thus incurred the divine displeasure, and become obnoxious to the sanction of the moral law. Our first parents disobeyed the divine commandments, broke the covenant of innocence, and involved us, their posterity, in the ruins of their fall. We have added innumerable transgressions of our own to that original apostasy. We have neglected the good which it was in our power to perform, and committed the evil from which God commanded us to abstain. We have sinned against the clearest light, in opposition to the greatest goodness, and in the face of direct threatening, times and ways without number we have exposed ourselves to the wrath of God.

But it is one of the most obvious dictates of reason, that punishment must ever attend on wickedness—that the soul which sinneth ought to die. But if sin be thus severely punished, if sinners be dealt with according to

the maxims of rigorous and unrelenting justice, what shall become of the human race? Here lay the difficulty that stood in the way of our redemption. If, on the one hand, sin was forgiven without satisfaction, and the sinner taken into favour upon every new application for mercy, such an undistinguishing exercise of lenity, such a facility of forgiveness, would only serve to embolden offenders and multiply crimes. If, on the other hand, rigorous justice held the balance; if the thunderbolt was aimed at the head of every offender, the race of men must perish from the earth. Hence, the Divine Being is introduced in Scripture, as deliberating with himself, as being straitened how to reconcile the seemingly jarring attributes of mercy and justice, and how to make the happiness of men accord with the honour of his laws. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” Herein appears the wisdom of that plan concerted for our redemption, through the sacrifice of Christ, by which these seemingly jarring attributes are reconciled, in which mercy and truth meet together, righte-

ousness and peace kiss each other. Hence, in that eucharistic hymn with the angels, at the nativity of our Lord, sung to the shepherds, when they ascribed glory to God in the highest, they also proclaimed peace upon earth, and good will towards fallen man. By this atonement, all the perfections of the Deity were glorified. That immaculate purity which cannot look upon sin, and that astonishing love which could not behold the ruin of the sinner, were awfully displayed. The majesty of the divine government was sustained, the honour of the law was vindicated, justice, in its rigour, was satisfied, mercy, without measure and without restraint, flowed upon the children of men. The gate of the heavenly paradise was set open wide to a returning world, the angel with the flaming sword, who guarded the tree of life, was removed, and a voice heard from the throne of mercy, "Take, eat, and live for ever."

As this doctrine concerning the atonement and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is one of the fundamental articles of our holy faith, God, in the course of his providence, had prepared the world for its belief and reception. A sense of guilt lying upon the mind, and the fear of punishment from that Judge, who will render

to every man according to his works, drove the sinner to some expedient for atoning the wrath of an offended Deity. It is very extraordinary, that among all the people of the world, the method of making atonement for sin was invariably the same. All the nations of antiquity, that are to be found in the records of history, all the modern nations whom recent discoveries have brought within the sphere of our knowledge, however they may have differed in customs and manners, have universally and invariably agreed in making atonement for sin by offering sacrifices to the Deity. This fact is the more extraordinary, as such a method of propitiation is not founded on nature, is not the dictate of reason, nor the result of any feelings of the human frame. If we consult with reason, reason will tell us, that the Deity can never take any pleasure in the tortures or in the blood of innocent animals; reason will tell us that it is impossible that the blood of bulls or of goats, or the ashes of a heifer, can avail to satisfy the divine justice or purify the soul from sin. A practice, therefore, so universal, not founded on nature, nor deducible from reason, can be accounted for no otherwise, but by considering it as the remains of those ancient traditions delivered to the descendants

of Noah, and by them handed down to succeeding ages. Here we cannot but admire the wisdom and watchful care of Providence, that whilst many other traditions perished in the course of time, and are in the gulf of oblivion, this was kept entire all over the world, in order to prepare the nations for the reception of Christianity, which establishes the capital doctrine of an atonement for sin upon a sacrifice.

Not only were sacrifices in general use among the heathens ; but also, among the most celebrated nations of antiquity, illustrious personages had arisen, who, inspired with generous patriotism, had, in cases of danger and calamity, devoted themselves to certain death, to save their country. These self-devoted heroes, these martyrs to the good of mankind, were held in admiration by their countrymen, first in the song of praise, and highest in the temple of fame. After the publication of Christianity, it was no difficult task to transfer the praise and veneration which was paid to these temporal deliverers, to that Divine Lover of mankind, and Redeemer of our race, who offered himself up a sacrifice for our sins, and died for the happiness of the world. Hence the atonement requisite for the sins of the world was finished.

In the *fourth* place, The sufferings of the Messiah were now finished, and nought but glory was to follow.

It seemed expedient to Infinite Wisdom to set up the Son as head over the great family of God. It was in this capacity that he created the earth ; for it is one of the doctrines revealed to us in the New Testament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As he, therefore, was our immediate Creator, and as his intent in our creation was defeated by sin, there was an evident propriety, that he himself should interpose in our behalf. The fall of man was the loss of so many subjects to Christ their natural Lord, in virtue of his having created them. Redeeming them, was recovering them again, was re-establishing his power over his own works. In the epistle to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul runs a parallel between the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Creator, and the new relation he acquired in virtue of his redemption. In the first view, he styles him the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature ; for by him were all things created, and by him all things consist. In the second view, he calls him the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first-born from the

dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. “For it pleased the Father that
“in him should all fulness dwell, and having
“made peace by the blood of his cross, by
“him to reconcile all things to himself.”

The scheme of thought which runs through the passage, seems to be this ; that as we owed to Christ our first life, it was also expedient that we should owe to him our second ; that, as he was the head of the creation, and made all things, so when God thought fit to redeem the world, it pleased him that Christ should also be the head of this new work, the first-born from the dead himself, and the giver of life to every believer. This much we collect from the Apostle’s reasoning, and plainly discern, that the pre-eminence of Christ, as head of the church, is connected with his pre-eminence as the head of the creation, and his being set over the great family of God. Jesus Christ, thus constituted the Redeemer of mankind, and the Captain of our salvation, in the discharge of his office, was to be made perfect through sufferings.

In the present state of humanity, the character cannot be complete without the virtues of adversity : we are made for suffering, as well as for action ; there are many principles

in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, many qualities of the heart, which would be for ever latent, were they not called forth to action by danger and distress ; there is a hidden greatness in the mind of man, which affliction alone can bring to light. When we are bereft of all human help, when Heaven seems to forsake us, and the earth to fail beneath our feet, it is then that the soul asserts her native strength, summons all her virtue to her aid, and exhibits to heaven and earth an object worthy of their contemplation and regard. Afflictions thus supported by patience, thus surmounted by fortitude, gave the last finishing to the heroic and the virtuous character. Thus the vale of tears is the theatre of human glory ; that dark cloud presents the scene for all the beauties in the bow of virtue to appear. Moral grandeur, like the sun, is brighter in the day of the storm, and never is so truly sublime, as when struggling through the darkness of an eclipse.

SERMON XX.

JESUS CHRIST, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

JOHN xi. 25.

I am the Resurrection and the life.

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

“ I SAW in the right hand of him that sat on
“ the throne,” said the Prophet of the New
Testament,—“ I saw in the right hand of him
“ that sat on the throne, a book written with-
“ in and on the back side, sealed with seven
“ seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaim-
“ ing with a loud voice, Who is worthy to
“ open the book, and to loose the seals there-
“ of? And no man in heaven nor in earth,
“ neither under the earth, was able to open the
“ book, neither to look thereon. And I wept
“ much, because no man was found worthy

“ to open, and to read the book, neither to
“ look thereon. And one of the elders said
“ unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the
“ tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath pre-
“ vailed to open the book, and to loose the
“ seven seals thereof.”

In this mysterious manner, the Apostle, who ascended in the visions of God, and saw into past and future time, represents the restoration of mankind to life. When man had fallen from his state of innocence, and all flesh had corrupted their ways, Almighty God, with eyes that for ever overflow with love, looked down upon the earth. He beheld the world; not as he had beheld it at first, when the morning stars sang together, when all the sons of God shouted for joy, and when he himself pronounced that all was fair and good; that very world he now beheld involved in confusion and uproar; the original state of things marred; the order of nature destroyed; the laws of Heaven overturned; his once beautiful and happy creation defaced and laid in ruins. He beheld his rational offspring, whom he had adorned with his own image, whom he had appointed to immortality, fallen from their primitive innocence, debased with ignorance, depraved with guilt, subjected to vanity, and appointed to

dissolution. Following the footsteps of sin, which had thus laid waste his works, he beheld *Death* advancing with swift steps; extending his dominion over the nations, and shaking his dart in triumph over a subjected world. He saw, he pitied, and he saved.

Although offended with the guilty race, he would not cast them off for ever. His time of visitation was a time of love. In mercy to mankind he devised a scheme for our restoration and recovery. But man was not now, as in innocence, in a condition to treat with God by himself. Between sinful dust and ashes, and infinite purity, there could be no communication. A Mediator, therefore, was requisite to make peace between heaven and earth, and where was such a Mediator to be found?

Accordingly, at the declaration of the gracious purpose of God, for the future happiness of the world, when the book of life, sealed with its seven seals, was brought forth, a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof?" Who is worthy to mediate between an offended God and guilty man; to unfold the secret purpose of the Most High, and to give life to a world that is dead? There was silence in heaven, and silence in heaven

there might have been for ever ; but in that moment of mercy, the crisis of our fate, the Son of God interposed ; “ I am the resurrection and “ the life, by me shall the world live. I will for- “ sake these mansions of glory, and dwell with “ men. They who now wander in darkness, “ I will bring to light, and life, and immor- “ tality ; they are now under sentence of “ death ; that sentence shall be executed on “ me, and I will purchase for them life ever- “ lasting ; they have now gone astray into the “ paths of perdition, I will point out to them “ the way that leads to the heavens.”

In this manner did Jesus Christ become the resurrection and the life. As the Prophet of the world, he gave us the assurance of life and immortality ; as the Priest of the world, he purchased for us life and immortality ; and as the King of the world, he set before us the path that leads to life and immortality.

In the *first* place, then, as the Prophet of the world, he gave us assurance of life and immortality.

Curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, is one of the earliest and one of the strongest emotions of the human soul. No sooner does the mind arrive at maturity, but it proceeds

to examine the objects around it, and to extend its researches wider and wider over the whole circuit of creation. With peculiar earnestness man turns his attention to his own nature, and becomes the object of his own contemplation. But here clouds and darkness surround him. He perceives himself a stranger in a wide world, where the plan of nature is very imperfectly known, where the system of things is involved in much obscurity, and where the Author of the universe is a God who hideth himself. Life appears to him as an intermediate state; but he is ignorant of what was before it, and is as ignorant of what is to come after it. He observes symptoms of decay and marks of mortality on all the productions of nature, the human race not exempted from the general law. He sees his friends and companions, one after another, perpetually disappearing; he sees mankind, generation after generation, passing away; passing to that awful abyss to which every thing goes, and from which nothing returns. But whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlasting darkness? Or do they still act in another scene? We see the body incorporate with its kindred elements, and return to the dust from whence it

was taken. But what becomes of the soul? Does it, too, cease to exist? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguished? Is the celestial fire which glowed in the heart for ever quenched? Or beyond the horizon which terminates our present prospect, does a more beautiful and perfect scene present itself, where the tears shall be wiped from the eyes of the mourner, where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest?

If we consult our affections, we will be inclined to believe in a future state. Nature is loth to quit its hold. The heart still wishes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint, and indulges us with the pleasing hope of one day meeting again with the companions whom we dropt in life. The perfections of the Deity favour these wishes of nature. If God be infinitely wise and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to see the light and to depart for ever. Would a wise builder have erected such a noble fabric to last but for a moment? On the other hand, if we consult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation surround us. All the works of nature seem only made to be destroyed. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The

animal that mingles with the earth never rises to life again. Appearances also make against us. The mind seems to depend much upon the body. The temper of the one arises from the state of the other. When the external senses decay, the faculties of the soul are impaired. When the blood ceases to flow, the spirit evaporates, the last stroke of the pulse seems to put a final period to the whole man.

Between these fears and these wishes of nature, no conclusion can be drawn. After the maturest investigation, and deepest reasoning, all that we arrive at is uncertainty. We see the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not of any morning that awaits him. The ocean spreads before us, vast, and dark, and awful, but we know not if it will waft us to any shore. What a disconsolate situation is this to a serious inquiring mind? These thoughts would perplex us at all times; but if they affect us with anxiety in the gay and smiling scenes of life, how will they overwhelm us with horror, when our feet stumble on the dark mountains, and the shadows of the everlasting evening begin to close over our head? In that hour of terror and dismay, how shall the wretched man support himself, who knows not the hope of immor-

tality? Afflicted with the view of his past life, tormented with present pain, and hovering over an abyss from which we know not if we shall ever emerge, how must it embitter the last hour, and mingle despair with the pangs of dissolution, to think of our bidding adieu to the living world; to go perhaps for ever into the dominion of darkness, into the region of shadows, into the land of forgetfulness, where, for any thing we can tell, we shall be as though we had never been! To such persons, the end of life must be unsupportable. Their setting sun goes down in a cloud, and the long night closes over their head in its darkest and deepest shade.

But when the Sun of Righteousness arose in our region, it dispelled the shadows of the everlasting evening; revealed all the heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. Our Saviour did not propose his doctrines as controvertible opinions; he confirmed them by proofs and miracles. Did he teach the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body? As an infallible confirmation of these doctrines, he himself arose from the grave, and being the first born from the dead himself, he gives light to the world. The good man need not

now live in a state of anxiety about his future existence, or mourn for his deceased friends as those who have no hope; we know that our Redeemer liveth, we know that we shall in like manner revive.

There is a time appointed, when the year of the redeemed shall come; when the everlasting morning shall dawn; when the voice of the Son of God shall pierce the caverns of the tomb; shall be heard over the dominions of the dead; shall re-animate the ashes of all that ever lived upon the earth, and raise a glorious and immortal army from the bosom of corruption.

In the name, and by the authority of Him who was once dead, but is now alive, and lives for evermore, I am this day to give you the bread of life, and deliver into your hand the pledges of immortality. It is the voice which Jesus this day addresses to you from these tables, "I am the resurrection and the life. "He that believeth in me shall never die."

In the *second* place, Jesus Christ, as the Priest of the world, purchased for us life and immortality.

When man came from the hands of his Creator, he was innocent, and, therefore, happy

and immortal. For although, in the present degenerate state of human nature, the imperfect virtue of good men neither insures their happiness here, nor merits an everlasting reward hereafter, yet if we suppose them in a state of innocence or confirmed goodness, we can neither set bounds to their enjoyments nor their existence. The ideas of perfection and felicity are inseparable; wherever pure virtue is, it is in paradise; all good beings throughout the universe are happy. Righteousness is, by its own title, immortal. The spring of innocence, and the fountain of life, for ever mingle their streams.

Accordingly, as the world, when it was first created, contained in it no principles of decay, so man, its noblest inhabitant, harboured in its nature no seeds of dissolution. The world, if it had not been cursed, had moved on in its original beauty, fresh, in undecaying vigour, and fair with perpetual youth; and man, if he had never fallen, would only have exchanged an earthly paradise for a heavenly one. For, as we are told, God created not death, and there was no poison of destruction in the world which he made. Immortality was a part of his image, which he conferred upon our first parents. Amid the garden of

Eden a tree arose, the sacramental pledge of life, and sign of immortality to man. And if man had never fallen by tasting of its fruits, he would have lived for ever. But, by the fall, death entered into the world. On the day that man became a sinner he died. The man who was made after the image of God, died; the man who was created immortal, died; and there remained a lifeless form, a guilty and a mortal creature, doomed to earn his bread with the sweat of his brows, to drag out a threescore and ten years of wretchedness and pain, and then to return to the dust from which he was taken.

How art thou fallen from heaven, son of the morning! How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! The celestial spirits, appointed the guardians of Eden, knew our first parents no longer; they recollected no traces of original innocence in a form so fallen: They discerned none of the lineaments of heaven in a face so clouded with guilt. They drove out the man: Drove him out from the garden of Eden, where he had access to the tree of life; drove him out from the society of all those good beings who were at once happy and obedient; drove him out from the presence of the Lord, with which, in paradise, he had been often blessed.

Behold him now in his fallen state ! Behold, O man ! and mourn over this image. Fallen from the dignity of his nature, and in ruins ; the beauty of innocence defaced ; the splendour of heaven obscured ; cut off from the career of glory and immortality ; his name erased from the book of life, no more to claim alliance with the father of spirits, no more to rank among those happy sons of God, who present themselves before the Lord ; no more to behold His countenance in bliss, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore ! Such was the state into which man was brought by the fall ; the sentence of death passed upon him ; the gate of heaven shut against him ; the wrath of an offended God hung over his head. To persons in this state, what consolation would it bring, to hear of an immortality beyond the grave, if it was to be an immortality of misery and torment ? To hear of heaven, and be cast down to hell ; to be told of the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand, while they were doomed to drink the unmingled cup of his wrath !

But the Great Restorer of our race, the Redeemer of mankind, not only as a Prophet, discovered to us a future state, but also, as a Priest,

purchased for us eternal happiness in that future state. It was the guilt of our sins that shut the gate of heaven against us, that subjected us to the wrath of God and to misery in the world to come. But Jesus Christ, as our Surety and Redeemer, fulfilled that law which we had broken; endured that wrath which we had deserved; made an atonement for those sins which we had committed; and by the righteousness of his life, by the efficacy of his sufferings, by the merit of his death, he satisfied the justice of God; he blotted out the sins of the world; he abolished death; he purchased life; he quenched the fire of hell, and opened the heavens for the righteous to enter in. Thus, what the first Adam, the man of the earth, had lost, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, restored again. By the sacrifice of himself, which we are this day to commemorate, he ransomed us from destruction; by his death upon the cross, of which we are this day to renew the memorials, he purchased the life of the world.

Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. While thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil were insufficient, a price of higher

value was given; while the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, were unavailable, a sacrifice of greater efficacy was offered up. The fund of heaven was exhausted; the treasures of eternity were bestowed; the blood of the Son of God was shed upon the cross.—Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. Liberal to you is the divine benignity; free to you the blessing of life flows. But the anguish which thy Redeemer felt, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; the groans which he uttered; the tears which he shed; the fears which came upon him in the hour of darkness; his bloody sweat during his agony in the garden; the earnest prayer which he offered up, that the cup of wrath might pass from him for a time; his complaint of dereliction upon the cross, when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” These testify at what a price the blessing was bought. Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. When this awful event was transacting—when the great hour of sacrifice was solemnizing, astonishment seized the world. All nature laboured in expectation, when the eternal life of her children was procuring. An earthquake rent asunder the rocks,

and shook the earth from its foundations. The sun, beyond the course of nature, suffered eclipse in the heavens; unusual darkness, at noon, overspread the nations; the invisible world, through all its mansions, felt that tremendous hour. The dead arose from the grave. With astonishment the host of heaven looked down. Man alone, for whom these wonders were wrought, man alone was an unconcerned spectator of the event.—Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. Behold the victim led to the sacrifice, patient, uncomplaining, marking the way with his own blood. Who is it they drag like a murderer to Mount Calvary? Who is it they are stretching on a cross, and nailing to the accursed tree? Prince of life! Lord of glory! Saviour of men! Great High Priest of the world! we cannot call upon thee to come down from the cross, for thou art now purchasing eternal life for us!—Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. The sacrifice which was offered up, was accepted by God. Jesus, before he bowed upon the cross, cried out,—“It is finished.” As a full confirmation that the merit of his sacrifice was available to purchase everlasting life, he rose from the dead on the third day, and is now ascended up on high, to take possession of

those heavens he hath purchased for his people, and is now preparing a place for them in those mansions which are in his Father's house.

In the *third* place, as the King of the world, he sets before us the path that leads to life eternal.

Having, as a Prophet, opened up a future world to mortal view; having, as a Priest, purchased life eternal in that future world, as a King he marks out the way by which we may ascend to take possession of that eternal life which he hath purchased for us. The gate of heaven is set open by his blood; but they alone who walk in the path which he hath appointed shall enter in. You come to these tables, not only to receive instruction from Jesus as a Prophet, not only to profess your faith in him as a Priest, but also to recognise his authority as a Legislator, and to vow obedience to him as a King.

One of his first appearances on earth was in his legislative capacity. One of the first acts of his ministry was to publish a system of laws for regulating the life of his disciples. Moses is celebrated for having been faithful in his house, and for having ordered every

thing in his tabernacle, according to the pattern shewed him in the mount. No less faithful in his house was the Prophet like unto Moses, the Minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He hath given us the purest and most effective precepts, for the regulation of our life: He hath pointed out our duty in every instance with such clearness, that he that runneth may read. The King of that future world which he hath purchased by his death, hath made the path that leads to it, not only plain but luminous.

It shall come to pass in those days, saith the Prophet Isaiah, (describing the times of the Messiah,) that the “eyes of the blind shall
 “ be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be un-
 “ stopped; the lame shall leap as an hart, and
 “ the tongue of the dumb shall sing: For in
 “ the wilderness shall waters break out, and
 “ streams in the desert.—And a highway shall
 “ be there, and it shall be called the way of
 “ holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it;
 “ but the redeemed shall walk there, and way-
 “ faring men, though fools, shall not err there-
 “ in.” Such is the perfection of the Christian law; such the purity of those morals which Jesus delivered, such the beauty of the

Gospel as a rule of life, as to have gained the love and admiration of many who have disbelieved its doctrines. But he gave them a still higher lustre by his example. The perfection of the Christian law, the purity of those morals which Jesus delivered, the beauty of the Gospel, as a rule of life, appear nowhere to such advantage, as in the life of our Lord. There you contemplate holiness, not as a dead letter, but as a living form; substantial, present, speaking to the world.— He trode before you the path that leads to heaven. It is pointed out by his precepts; it is marked by his example; it is consecrated by his blood.

Would you learn what virtue is, would you be in love with virtue, would you practise virtue, contemplate the life of Jesus; study the life of Jesus, imitate the life of Jesus. He to whom the Jews preferred a robber and a murderer, was fairer in his life than the sons of men, and purer in his heart than the angels of God. That head which they crowned with thorns, was ever intent on benevolent deeds, and at that very moment of time meditated their good. Those feet which they bound to the cross, went about on errands of mercy. Those hands which they nailed to the accur-

sed tree, were lifted up in devotion to God, or stretched out in beneficence to men. Jesus, through his whole life, marked out the path which leads to the heavens. Walk in that path, Christians! You shall arrive at heaven; and be of that happy number, who are to inhabit the mansions prepared for you, by Him, who is “the resurrection and the life.”

FINIS.

