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SERMONS

AND

DISCOURSES.

BY

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“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” MATTH. vii. 11.

IN our purposed treatment of this verse we shall advert to some of the general doctrine that may be educed from it.

I. The first thing to be noticed is the designation of evil, given by our Saviour, to men of whom He nevertheless admits, that they profess a habit and are prompted by an affection, both of which are unquestionably good. It is surely a good thing for one to have a parental fondness towards his own offspring. We cannot dispute that there is much of loveliness, in the various guises and manifestations of this universal instinct of our nature. We feel as if it had a moral beauty, even when we observe it among the inferior animals—and, still more, when we rise to those more touching and graceful exhibitions of it, which occur every day in our own species—whether we read it in the delight of a mother's eye when she looks around on the health and happiness of her children; or, when disease has entered the household, we read it more unequivocally still in the agitations and alarms of a mother's tenderness. In the shade as well as in the sunshine of domestic history, does this affection give proof the most conclusive both of its reality and its force. And we are not sure if there be not even more of what may be called the picturesque of human virtue, in its darker passages,—as when the mother plies the work and the labours of an untired watchfulness over her infant's dying bed, or pours the flood of now unlocked sensibilities over her infant's early tomb. There never was a heart that could be less unmoved by such a representation,

than that of our pitying Saviour; and we may be very sure that He who wept at the grave of Lazarus would have given both His sympathy and His approval to this agony of afflicted nature. He would recognize it to be good, to be unquestionably good; and still we have to ask, what it was that He saw in those parents, who, in the instance at least which Himself has specified, felt and acted in the way that was good, what that was which could have led Him who knew what was in man, to denounce them in character as evil?

The devotedness of a parent to his children, equals, even in every-day life, that which History has recorded to us of the sublimest heroism. For them he makes the largest surrenders of ease and time and fortune. He will compass sea and land in quest of a provision for them—and, for their sakes, nerve himself against the buffeting of all the elements—at one time adventurously ploughing the ocean in their behalf; and, at another, living for years in the exile and estrangement of a foreign clime, with nought to soothe him in the midst of his fatigues but the imagery of his dear and far distant home. It is the strength of this family affection by which the great society of mankind is upholden, made up as it is of families. It is this which nourishes them in childhood, which counsels and cares for them in youth, and which even after the perversities or the losses of their manhood welcomes them back again to the roof of their nativity, and throws them as before on the yet unquelled and unextinguishable kindness

of the parents who gave them birth; and who, even in the winter frost of their now declining years, and perhaps the hardship of their declining circumstances, still find the love of offspring all alive and warm in their aged bosoms. It is in truth one of the strongest and most enduring of nature's propensities—as beautiful in its exhibition as it is useful in its exercises; and still the mystery is unresolved, what He, whose discerning eye saw it to be in all men and spoke of it as good, what that was which He saw universally along with it, and on which He could censure and stigmatize all men as evil.

For an answer to this question, we might draw aid and illustration still from the case of a family. We admit the whole truth and tenderness of the parental affection. It were in the face of all experience, did we deny either the reality or the strength of those instinctive regards, which flow downwards from a father's or a mother's heart, upon their own offspring—and we just bid you advert to the weight of gratitude which so rightfully lies on those children who are the objects of them. Surely if the spectacle of tenderness on the one side be so very pleasing, the spectacle of disobedience or neglect on the other is most offensively revolting. In proportion as the father lavishes of his ceaseless and untired generosity upon the son,—in that proportion do we look with moral antipathy to the disdain, or the defiance, or the reckless independence of the son upon the father. Even though he should do with his hand the bidding of this his natural superior, yet, if he bear in his heart either a cold indifference or a positive distaste to the person and society of his own parent, this were enough to convict him of a moral perversity the most monstrous and unnatural. We cannot refuse the undoubted good will which glows unextinguished, and perhaps unextinguishable, in the bosom of the one; and all that we ask of you is just to form a right estimate, when instead of being met from the other by reverence and by good will back again, it is only responded to with contempt, or with carelessness, or with the selfish unconcern of one who can ravenously seize upon the gifts, but without one movement either of grateful

or of detestable inclination towards the giver. On looking to this domestic relationship, it were a libel on humanity to affirm, that there is not among parents, much of that love and liberality to their children which are undoubtedly and most beautifully good. But if, on the other hand, if it shall be found of any of these children, that they can trample all this indulgence under feet, and heedless of the hand that sustains them, can forget the claims of a father's tenderness and turn unimpressed away from the earnestness of a father's voice, then, as surely as the first of these exhibitions was good, so the second of them is most odiously and most painfully evil.

Now we admit that the love of parents to offspring is nearly universal; and we venture not to affirm how often or how seldom it may be, that this ingratitude of offspring to parents is exemplified within the limits of an earthly household, or how often violence is done to this relationship in several families. But viewing creation as that spacious household which is presided over by a universal parent, and peopled by a universal family—looking to the relationship in which all the men of our earth stand to their Father who is in heaven, we affirm, that there is none exempted from the guilt of having done most outrageous violence to this relationship, no not one.—The charge which we distinctly prefer against every son and daughter of the species is their heedlessness of God; or, if they would but examine their own hearts and they will find it there, a cleaving and constant ungodliness.—The fondest and most unnatural mothers are alike in this—the one differing wholly from the other in relation to their own family; but, viewed as members of the universal family, each deformed by foulest ingratitude to the common parent of them all—not chargeable in common with the want of love to their own offspring; but in reference to Him of whom themselves are the offspring; universally chargeable with the most flagrant defects both of love and of loyalty—not evil it may be, but good, in regard to that instinctive affection which binds them to their own little ones; yet not good, but glaringly and undeniably evil, in regard to their distaste and disinclina-

tion for God. Look to them as at the head, each of her own household community, and they have at least one point or property of good parents. Look to them as members of that great community, whose habitation is the universe, and whose head is the creator of all—and they have all the delinquency in their spirits of evil children. Our Saviour saw the one thing they had and pronounced it to be good, even as when He looked to the young man in the gospel He loved him. But He further sees the one thing they lack, the great master-virtue of every creature both in heaven and on earth, and without which all other virtue is baseless and perishable; and so they who knew how to give good gifts unto their children, are nevertheless evil and accursed children themselves.

This language is not too strong for the guilt and the turpitude of that enormity wherewith humanity is chargeable. Yet the majority of our world are all unsuspecting of having ought so foul and so enormous about them. They can see and be impressed by it as a great moral delinquency, when a son bears either a scowl upon his countenance, or an antipathy in his bosom towards his earthly father; and they will even readily admit, that no constrained obedience by the hand, can atone for the disaffection of the heart in a state of hostility and revolt against the parent who gave him birth. And even should there be no positive hostility, yet should the heart be in a state of indifference only,—the indifference you will observe of a child to that parent, who tended him from infancy to manhood, and who now feels it the sorest agony of nature, that he should have brought up a family who simply do not care for him—this neglect merely, even though there should be no hatred, is enough of itself to fasten the imputation of a very foul deformity on him who is chargeable therewith. Yes! we are capable of feeling most vivid indignation, when an earthly parent is thus robbed of that moral property which belongs to him, in the love and the loyalty of his own offspring—and how then can you miss the far more emphatic application of a principle, the very same in kind, though far more intense in degree, to our Father who is in Heaven? What do you make, we ask,

of that great human family, who have cast off the allegiance of their hearts from Him and have turned every one of them to his own way? Do you call it nothing that this stray planet of ours should be burdened with a race sunk in deepest apathy toward God; and, if not lifting up the cry of positive rebellion, yet losing all sense of His kindness in universal regardlessness? What do you think of man that derived and dependent creature, walking through life so headlessly and so independently of the Creator who gave him birth—receiving from his hand the inspiration of every breath which he draws; but with no habitual aspiring of the soul to Him back again—curiously fashioned by the skill of that Master Architect who formed him; yet bearing it as proudly as if all his parts and all his faculties were his own—nourished from his cradle to his grave by the gifts of an all-sustaining Providence; and reckless all the while of the giver who bestows them—selfishly revelling in the midst of a thousand earthly gratifications; but without any rejoicing gratitude to Him who out of the treasury of His own fulness, hath poured them forth in such luxuriance upon our world—living every hour under the guardianship of a God whose eye watches him continually; and yet with his own eye almost as continually averted from his God—looking abroad on a glorious panorama with heaven's illuminated concave above his head, and around him a scenery of smiling landscapes; but without the recognition of that unseen Benefactor who pencilled it with all its beauties, and lighted it up with innumerable splendours—inhaling fresh delight through every organ of his sentient economy: yet all his senses steeped, as it were, in the utter oblivion of Him who furnished him with all his various capacities of sensation, and so adapted him to the theatre which he occupies, that the air and the water and the earth and all the elements of surrounding nature are the ministers of his enjoyment? You know how to denounce the ingratitude of a child to its earthly parents—but is there no term in your vocabulary of crime or of condemnation for ingratitude like this? And you know how to feel for the agony of the parent's wounded bosom—and is there no force

in the complaining voice of Him who saith to us from heaven, "Behold I have stretched forth my hand and no man regarded?" There is a moral lethargy that has laid hold of our species; and we feel not the evil of that which in the upper sanctuary is felt to be enormous—the guilt of creatures who have disowned their Creator, the deep criminality of a world that has departed from its God.

You will now perceive how Jesus Christ, while He admitted of mankind that they possessed one thing that was good, even the parental affection, yet He denounced them in the general as evil. He had recently come from the place where that evil was felt in all its enormity. He had just left heaven, where, on the one hand, He witnessed the strength and the warmth of that parental affection which radiated from the throne of God upon all His creatures—and He had now lighted upon earth, where He further witnessed the total heedlessness and ingratitude of creatures back again. Possessing as He did the intelligence and the sympathies of that celestial family where He had been, He could not pronounce otherwise than in our text on the men whom He visited. The love of parents to children He could not but approve—a virtue which graced the character even of God in heaven, and which still surviving the fall of our species in the shape of a constitutional instinct, operated strongly and universally among the families of earth. Yet just in proportion that He admired the affection of parents, would He abhor the disaffection of children—the very feeling which yourselves have when you look to the earthly relationship.—But He looked also to the heavenly relationship—and then He clearly and immediately saw, that, though the parental love of the one relationship had in the shape of an instinct remained unbroken in our world; yet the filial loyalty and gratitude of the other relationship had not survived the moral ruin of our species, but in the shape of a principle had totally disappeared. And so on the one hand when He witnessed among men this strong devotedness of spirit to their offspring, and on the other hand witnessed as strong a defection of spirit from their God—He both could admit that one thing which they retained

to be good, and yet, wanting as they did that great virtue which links the creature to his Creator, He denounced themselves as evil.

This ought to teach, in what terms we should speak of that undoubted doctrine, as true in the eye of sound philosophy as it is in the eye of sound faith—the depravity of our nature.—This depravity does not lie in the utter destitution of all that is amiable in feeling, or of all that is useful in the practical and urgent principles of our nature. It may be expressed by one word. It lies in ungodliness. This is the constituting essence of that great moral disease under which humanity labours—a disease however that prevents not humanity from giving forth many beautiful exhibitions, whether it glows at one time with sentiments of proudest heroism, or melts at another with the sensibilities of a most graceful tenderness. There might be beauty of character even as there is beauty of colour and form, where there is no religion. There might be a moral as well as a material loveliness, apart from any love of God in the heart, or from the moving efficacy of God's law upon the conduct. There is beauty in the blush of a rose, and there is beauty of a higher character in the blush that mantles the cheek of modesty—and yet there may be just as little of loyalty to God in the living as in the inanimate subject.—It is pleasing to the eye of taste when we behold the attachment of a mother to her young, even among the inferior animals. But the same attachment is still more exquisitely pleasing, because enhanced to us by all the home sympathies of our own felt and familiar nature, when we behold a mother of our species lavishing her endearments and her smiles upon an infant family—and still as before, might the rational be as destitute of any inclination towards God as the irrational creatures—and while we refuse to neither a most precious affection, we affirm of both that they are alike dead to the power or the principle of sacredness. And it is the same of many other propensities of our constitution. There might be the cordiality that delights in the virtues of good fellowship—there might be the compassion that urges to the relief of misery—there might be the delicacy that

would refrain from what is hurtful or offensive to a neighbour's feelings—there might be a high-minded integrity, and truth that would spurn away the temptations to unworthy artifice—in a word, there might be all those native moralities which uphold the economy of an earthly state, and all those native affections between man and man which shed a pleasure and a brightness along the way of his earthly pilgrimage—all this we say existing and in busy play among the members of a terrestrial community below, among whom at the same time the religious principle was utterly unfelt, and godliness, that morality which binds earth to heaven, was neither recognized nor regarded by them. This we deem the right way to propound the depravity of our nature—to affirm, as we are fully warranted by observation to do, that there exists in the bosom of unregenerate man no affection or no affinity to God, but not to refuse, that many are the graces and many are the virtues which might flourish in the bosom even of earth's unregenerate families. On the subject of man's daring and desperate wickedness, there is a certain sternness of asseveration not fitted to advance the cause in whose service it is employed—for, independently of its harshness, there is a want of experimental truth in it, which must revolt the judgment as well as the sensibilities of an intelligent audience. Be assured that sound faith is ever at one with sound experience—and, therefore, we at all times should mix the discriminations of experience with the zeal of orthodoxy.

Ere we leave this part of our argument, we have one observation more to offer. The reason why, in looking to the multitude of man's natural virtues, we lose sight of his ungodliness is, that, in point of fact, God wills our most busy and strenuous cultivation of them all. This gives rise to a confusion of sentiment, in the midst of which we are apt to miss altogether the truth of that fatal, that entire depravity, which scripture every where ascribes to us; and which, if we did but study her lessons aright, experience would confirm. There is spontaneous compassion in many a bosom; and God wills us to be compassionate. There is instinctive affection almost with all for their own children;

and God tells us to love our children. There is an inborn uprightness with some in virtue of which they would not lie, and would not steal; and God bids us to lie not and to steal not. And hence that perplexity of thought, which I am now trying to unravel. People delude themselves into the imagination of a certain godliness within them, because they do many things the matter of which is the very matter of God's own commandment. The difficulty is to make them conceive of two actions which, in respect of *materiel*, are altogether the same, that, in respect of *morale*, they may be wholly dissimilar, nay opposite. To refrain from theft in the spirit of high and honourable feeling, is not the same exhibition with that of refraining from theft in the spirit of obedience to the law of God. It is the same exhibition of conduct, but not of character; the same in respect of performance, but not in respect of principle. But thus it is that a man, because of a harmony in actions which are merely external, may confound the different affections from which they have sprung and which are internal; and, merely because of certain doings, which in the letter and outward description of them are so in any conformities to heaven's law, he may credit himself with the possession of godliness—when, in fact, and within the whole compass of his moral economy, there is no godliness to be found. In this way would we convince him of sin. We dispute not that he may have many good points, many desirable properties; but he wants altogether the property of a reigning and ascendant godliness. He may be in a state of high moral accomplishment; but, substantially and really, he is in a state of practical atheism.

We have left ourselves but little room for that which is nevertheless the main lesson of our text, a lesson of confidence in the liberality and good-will of our Father in heaven. To beget in our hearts this delightful assurance, He avails himself of imagery at once the most pathetic and the most persuasive. He announces Himself to us in the familiar character of a parent. He steps forward as it were from the deep and awful mystery of His unfathomable nature—and tells us that within its recesses, there are

the workings towards us of all a Father's tenderness. To beget a trust in those bosoms, where else there might well have been a dark and overwhelming terror. He insists upon His side the dearest and the kindest of all human recollections—and there is not a man, who, looking back upon the days of his cherished boyhood, feels reminded by our text of the guides and the guardians of his early home, but is told that there is a fondness which far surpasses theirs, and which now beckons and beams upon him from heaven. It is thus that the unseen God looks out upon the world from the shroud of His invisibility,—and, as if to relieve our imaginations from the fears and the jealousies of a tremendous unknown, He seizes on the most intelligible of all earthly relationships; and therewith represents Himself to our species not as a Master over his household, but as a Father at the head of his family. To dissipate the injurious suspicions of His own creatures, He is fain to divest Himself of all that is spectral or alarming—and how, it may well be thought, could this be done more successfully, than by thus likening Himself to those parents who smiled upon our infancy; and, with a friendship which never can misgive, kept by us and counselled us through all the difficulties of our ascent to manhood. The lofty pavilion of His residence on high is disarmed of all its terrors, when the glorious Being by whom it is occupied thus lets Himself down as it were among our earthly tabernacles; and tells us that the instinct which Himself has planted there, but feebly expresses the affection that is in His own breast to the family of mankind. It is true that in this same text, He characterizes mankind as evil—not however as a denunciation of wrath, but rather as a device or an argument by which to win His way more effectually to our confidence. The love of offspring is one beautiful fragment of our nature which has survived its overthrow. It still gleams and gladdens throughout the ruins of fallen humanity, and casts a remaining brightness over the habitations of its outcast species. And the argument is,—if, such be the strength of this principle in our nature, that it still keeps its ground even after the mighty havoc of so wide and wasteful a

disorder, how purely and how powerfully must it operate still in the unaltered heart of Him who formed us at the first after His own image—in that unviolated sanctuary which neither darkness nor disorder can possibly enter, even the sinless nature of the Godhead. There it still burns undiminished and undisturbed in all its original lustre—and by the “how much more” of our text, the forcible appeal is carried home to all the experience we ever had of love and liberality from our earthly parents who are evil. If our memory can tell that they, burdened with all the evil of their accursed nature, that even they have loved us—then, with Faith rejoicing in the unchanged and primeval goodness of our Father in Heaven, let us have the assurance in our hearts that He loves more truly, that He loves more tenderly, than they.

Nevertheless, and in the face of this touching demonstration, does the guilty nature of man keep by its sullen and distrustful jealousies. It feels all the consciousness of a turpitude within; and, conceiving rightly of God as a God of inviolable sacredness, it images a Being, who, from the height of His affronted majesty, looks down with the terrors of an offended countenance on the sinful world that is beneath Him. This is the strong, though secret apprehension which lurks in the bosom of all who know themselves to be transgressors. They are haunted by the dread and the disquietude of a yet unsettled controversy; and till they perceive how an adjustment can be made, and without disparagement to the high and lofty attributes of the Godhead, they cannot be at rest. It is vain to tell them of Heaven's parental love, and how far it outstrips the earthly affection of their own parents. Still there is that which disturbs and terrifies in the imagination of Heaven's high sacredness. It is even in vain to speak of its being a love unquenched by man's disobedience, as pictured forth in the Father who ran to meet his wandering prodigal and to welcome him back again. Still the sense of a dishonoured law and an incensed Lawgiver abides in the sinner's guilty bosom; and nothing can effectually appease his fears, but the revelation of that way by which the acceptance

of the rebel has been made to harmonize with the dignity of the offended sovereign.

This brings us to the sacrifice which has been made for the sins of the world—to the deace which was accomplished at Jerusalem—and by which the mighty, the mysterious problem was resolved, that was unfathomable to the wisdom of Nature, and that angels desired to look into. This resolves all difficulties; and now that the propitiation has been rendered, man is freely invited to rejoice in his God, and God rejoices over man as if man had never fallen. Sin is obliterated by the sacrifice that has been made for it; and now with a clear conscience because now on a consecrated way, might the guiltiest of our world draw nigh and make his requests known unto God. He is now on firm and high vantage ground for prayer; and in the face of Jesus Christ that veil which mantled the aspect of the Divinity is withdrawn. The voice of the intercessor is now added to the voice of the suppliant; and while the mercy of the Godhead is all awake to the sinner's imploring cry, the Truth

and the Holiness and the Justice, are all propitiated by the Saviour who died for him. This is the mediatorial ground on which the righteous God and His rebellious creatures can commune peaceably—and now that the incense of a sweet-smelling savour is between them, He can effuse all the love and liberality of a Father on His redeemed children, and bestow good things on all who ask Him. Forgiveness is yours if you will. The clean heart and the right spirit are yours if you will. Heaven with all its glories is open to receive you. And holiness, which is the dress of Heaven, is ready to fall, like Elijah's mantle, from the hand of Him who hath said—"Turn unto me and I will pour out my spirit upon you." Under the economy of the Gospel all the lets and hindrances, which obstructed these generous communications from the upper sanctuary, are now done away. And, kinder far than ever earthly father to his offspring, does the bountiful God who is in Heaven, rejoice in meeting all the wishes, and supplying all the wants of His spiritual family.

SERMON II.

The State of the Unconverted.

"At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."—EPHESIANS II. 12.

THE change from a wrong to a right state in religion is a far mightier transition in the habit of the soul, than is generally imagined. And it is the underrating of the magnitude of this transition which lies at the bottom of all that meagre and superficial Christianity where-with so many are satisfied, although it be altogether short of eternal life. Ere the soul can hold affinity or conversation with heaven, there is a certain development which it must be made to undergo, as great and at the same time as essential, as that by which the chrysalis is emancipated from its prison-house ere it can expatiate among the fields of light and of ether which are above it. We speak not of that resurrection which takes

place with man on the other side of death. We speak of that spiritual resurrection which takes place here, when the heart of man is made alive to the power of unseen things, and the crust of its earthliness is broken. Man cannot by his own strength achieve this revolution upon himself. He cannot so change the feelings and faculties of nature, as that, heretofore awake only to sense and to time, he shall henceforth be awake to the things of the Spirit, and breathe with kindred satisfaction in a spiritual atmosphere. There is a translation from the walk of sight to the walk of faith—there is a passing out of darkness into marvellous light—there is a release from the bondage of the world and its besetting

influences, to the glorious liberty of a willing subjection under Him who made and who upholds the world—which are represented in Scripture, not as the fruit of an amendment that lies within the compass of human power, but as the fruit of a regeneration, which it requires the forthgoing of a divine power to accomplish; and which is likened, or rather identified in the New Testament, with that supernatural energy whereby Christ was raised from the dead. So that the power which reanimates a body is not spoken of as more extraordinary or miraculous, than the power which renovates a spirit—nor is it deemed a more supernatural achievement to call up the one from its grave and usher it into the life of nature, than to call up the other from its state of death in trespasses and sins to that new moral existence which forms the true life of the soul, the beatitude and the essence of life everlasting.

In describing, as is often done, the marks of conversion, there is much that to a general hearer must be wholly unintelligible. It is mysticism to him, because it is beyond the range of his own felt and familiar experience. How can we speak to his sympathy or to his understanding, when we assign, with what ever clearness or accuracy, the characteristics of a state, into which he has not entered? But there are also characteristics belonging to the state of unregenerated nature, out of which he has not yet emerged; and by means of these we may hold out his own likeness to some convicted, some conscience-stricken hearer. The text presents us with several of those lineaments or traits of character, which enter into the portraiture of a man previous to his Christianity. At present, we shall only fasten upon one of these—even his being without God in the world. And should we manifest the truth of this description to the conscience of any, we may perhaps with the blessing of God, succeed in alarming them into a sense of their yet destitute and unprovided eternity.

Let us therefore endeavour to show, in the first place, how truly the natural state of man is represented, as being indeed without God in the world—In the second place, how this must ever continue to be the state of man, so long as

he continues to be without Christ—And, lastly, let us urge, as the Gospel warrants us to do, your acceptance of Christ, as being the only but the sure link of reunion with God; and on whom if you do lay hold, you will live no longer without, but you will live with God in the world.

Before we enter on the first head of discourse, let it be remarked, that when we speak of man being without God, we do not speak of man as outcast from the favour and friendship of God; but of God, or rather the thought of God, as outcast from the spirit of man. We mean by our being without God, that we are without an effectual or abiding sense of Him in our hearts—that we live without Him in the world—that we betake ourselves to our own way, unmindful of Him or of His way. In short we take the phrase not externally, and with reference to the deed of the Creator, as if God had cast us off; but internally, and with reference to the desire and spirit of the creature, as if we had cast Him off—casting Him off from our allegiance so as to live independently of Him, and to manifest by our whole habit and history in the world that we will not have God to reign over us.

I. Now to substantiate this charge, let us not detain ourselves with any lengthened argument on the case of those of our species who, whether many or few, are characterised by open and habitual profligacy. We do not need laboriously to search after the evidence of their being without loyalty to God—seeing that we have the overt-acts of their disloyalty so palpably before our eyes. The dishonesty, or the malice, or the licentiousness, or the profanation—these are so many visible ensigns of their rebellion against that monarch whose law they so directly and so daringly violate; and, with such signals of defiance to heaven planted along the line of their outward history, it were a superfluous task to probe and scrutinize among the arcana of their spirit, in quest of that ungodliness which broadly announces itself at the first glance, and in characters that cannot be mistaken. It is only then that the task becomes a hard one, when we

have to deal with the subtle ungodliness of those, who, free from the delinquencies of human life, are studiously observant of all its decencies—of that mighty host who stand in the middle place between crime and Christianity—being neither to be charged with the abominations of the one, nor yet at all to be credited with the sacredness of the other. They form the great mass of society; and are spread out as it were over that table-land in character, where they are not so sunken as to be numbered among the reprobates by the world, nor yet so elevated as to be numbered among the religious by Him who made the world. Still they are without God—as much without Him if they but knew it, as any of those who on the scale of the terrestrial morality are so immeasurably beneath them. Let the scale of that morality which is celestial be applied, and it will be found of them all, that they are at an equal distance and disruption from God. To draw a comparison from the material world—the summit of a mountain on the surface of our earth looks to human eyes as if magnificently elevated above its base; and yet in reference to the sun, though made somewhat nearer to it by the ascent, we are still within an insensible fraction of being as remotely distant from that glorious luminary, as those whom we have left behind us in the depths below. There is no ascent we can make among the terrestrial elevations of our world, which brings us sensibly nearer to any orb in these material heavens. And there is no ascent we can make among the elevations of a mere terrestrial morality, which brings us sensibly nearer to Him who rules supreme in the spiritual heavens, or indeed to any member of heaven's spiritual family. And just because it is a morality without godliness—just because it is possible to be so gifted and adorned therewith, as to look prodigiously elevated above our fellows; and yet, immeasurably beneath the standard of the sacred and the spiritual, to be without God in the world.

But we do not stand in need of illustration from other things to make good our charge—seeing that we can do so by a direct appeal to the conscience. Let any of you but reflect aright on the history of a single day—and you will ac-

knowledge how possible it is to live a life of innocence in regard to society, and yet in regard to God a life of complete irreligion. Vice is not a necessary ingredient of worldliness. Yours may be a habit of honourable business, or of studious and enamoured literature, or of domestic faithfulness and assiduity, or even of devoted philanthropy and patriotism—yet one and all of these, untainted with crime, nay signalized by the respect and gratitude of mankind, may still be but so many varieties of worldliness. Still while engaged in any of these ways, it is not with God that the spirit holds converse; but it is wholly with the derived and dependent things which proceed from God that the spirit is at play. Literature is better than licentiousness—domestic regularity is better than lawless dissipation—the business of the shop or of the market is better than the business of the gaming-table or of the highway. These modes of conduct admit of comparison; and to certain of them rather than to others the meed of superiority is rightfully awarded. This we cannot dispute; and this, for any argument of ours, it concerns us not to deny. All we affirm is, that it is possible, nay that it is frequent, nay that it is ordinary as falling in with the currency of nature—that each of these varieties, in the habit and history of man, may be seen exemplified in a state of disjunction from God. There is many a life spent in upright and prosperous merchandise, and where God is unheeded along the whole path of it. There is many a life spent among books and amid the charms of philosophy; and where the intellect of man, regaled with these, has yet never recognized the claims of the originating God to all the gratitude and all the glory of such dignified enjoyments. There is many a life spent in the busy succession of household tasks, or the sweets of domestic tenderness; and yet, in the bosom of these families on earth, there is no hourly, no habitual remembrance of Him who is the great Father of the human family. There is even many a life spent in the bustle and enterprise of schemes of usefulness, where the public good is honestly aspired after, and where apart from the pursuit of a name, the achievement of our species' or our country's welfare would be felt as

a real gratification; and yet, with this constitutional benevolence which so fits us for the citizenship of the world, there may be no citizenship in heaven—no interest and no part in its grand administrations—no converse with Him who sitteth upon heaven's throne—no building up of a provision either in behalf of ourselves or others for the good of eternity. In a word, each man acts according to his own proper and characteristic variety: and yet there may be nought of God in these varieties. Each man comes forth with his own spontaneous evolutions; and yet, endowed though he be with an intelligence and a will and the faculties of a moral nature, there may be as little of godliness in any of his movements, as there is in the movements of an automaton that is guided according to the springs and the workings of a machinery within. Both the physical and the moral mechanism have their place and performance on the earth below; and each may be alike removed from all contact or communication with the upper sanctuary. There may be even a moral loveliness in man separate from religion; but like that of fruit or of flowers, it is but the loveliness of earth. The man, thus decked with the graces and the accomplishments of natural virtue, may notwithstanding, only mind earthly things—and, under a thousand various hues and complexions of character from the more or less odious to the more or less amiable and engaging, there may sit one aspect of ungodliness on the face of an alienated world.

For the truth of this representation, we make our confident appeal to many a conscience. Is there none here present of whom it may be said, that heaven in their eye is a land of shadows; and that the thought of heaven's Sovereign is to them as unimpressive, as any mere shadowy imagination? God is wholly out of sight; and He is almost as wholly out of mind. They work, or they bargain, or they spend their successive hours, or they go about the varied business of their callings and their families—very much as they would have done, although in their hearts there had been no belief of God. It is not from Him that they take the guidance or direction of their life, in the main bulk and magnitude of its concerns. They move almost alto-

gether on their own spontaneous impulses, and scarcely fetch one impulse from the consideration of God's will or God's law. We state the matter plainly, and for the very purpose that you may take it home to your own recollections of what you daily and familiarly are—a self-moving and self-regulating creature, walking in the counsel of your own heart and after the sight of your own eyes, and without one thought all the while of the duteness or dependence which you owe to God. Now that He has made you, and endowed you with certain powers, and provided you with certain capacities of enjoyment, and placed you in a theatre richly crowded with objects upon which you can exercise the one and gratify the other—now, you are content to manage without God, to take as it were the whole interest and conduct of your existence into your own hands—alike reckless of the power that formed and of the providence that upholds you. This practically and really is the state of nature in reference to God. You can best tell whether in the description of it which we now give you recognize your own likeness—whether you are in that state which substantially and in effect is a state of atheism—in that tremendous condition from which if there be no resurrection here into another habit of the soul, you never can be preferred hereafter to the honours or the beautitudes of a glorious eternity—even the condition of living as you list, of living without God in the world.

And let it not hide this melancholy truth from your eyes—that you appropriate certain days and occasions to the special recognition of your Maker. We are aware of these formalities—and that it would even pain you if they were dispensed with. There is a certain desecration of your sabbaths, a certain interruption of your wonted attendance on sermons and sacraments, which would inflict the very same discomfort upon you that is felt by pagans and idolaters on the suspension of their solemn rites, their temple services. This after all afflicts you, not because an outrage upon vital godliness, but because an outrage upon custom and nature—and thus the pagodas of Hindostan, and the churches of Christendom, might give rise to a like

exhibition of character on the part of those who repair to them; and a like violence may be felt as done to the habits and the hereditary superstition of both, by any glaring inroad on their religious observances. But truly these separate and ceremonial acts of homage to the Divinity, argue nothing of a spirit at all assimilated to His spirit, or of a character at all assimilated to His character. These outward loyalties to God do not constitute the habit of living with God—any more than a thousand prostrations of the body could make up one principle in the heart. What we allege of your prayers and your ordinances is, that they are so many things which sit loose as it were on the tablet of human life, without entering as a pervading ingredient, or, if we may so speak, without making part either as woof or as warp of the tablet itself. We mean, they incorporate nothing that is vital or permanent with the character. Your morning and evening exercises, and your seventh-day devotions, look to us as so many embankments thrown at stated intervals across the current of your existence. They do not tinge or qualify that current. They only arrest it for a little, and then let it go, but with the very same quality as before—so that from its fountain head to its mouth, in spite of all the stops or deflections which it may have undergone, it retains its properties unaltered, from the place at which it issued to the place of its discharge among the waters of the ocean. And even so, we fear, with the spirits of our earthly and alienated race. In the progressive course of such a one, from the day of birth to the day of dissolution, he may have his periodical detentions at the house of God; but whence he is soon released, and let off again without one slight infusion of the savour of godliness. The tenor of his engagements with this world of sense, may be broken every week by the recurrence of sabbath; but, when this is overpast, his life just flows on as before without one tincture of a Sabbatical spirit, or the spirit of sacredness. He seems to have acted for a little season the part of a religionist; but he joined with the full heart and habit of worldliness in the services of the sanctuary, and retired from them as strong and unaltered in secularity as

ever. He may even love the frame-work of the service, and yet be unleavened by the essence of it. He comes out the same grovelling and terrestrial creature that he went in—with the full set and strenuousness of his heart upon the things which are beneath, and the complete withdrawal of his thoughts and affections from the things which are above. We are not sure if his thoughts be very much if at all with God, even on his most solemn occasions of retirement from the world. But what the text affirms of him is, that he is without God in the world—and certain it is, that when the man comes forth again from his sanctuary of devotion, when leaving the church or the closet he casts himself as before among the rounds of ordinary life, when bills and bargains and companies and either the business or the handicraft of his calling take their accustomed place in the history of his affairs—then heaven and its glories vanish with the speed of lightning from the eye of a mind now closed in upon by the objects of an earthly scene, and desolated by these of all its godliness.

II. We now proceed to show, in the next place, that the state of being without God is that in which man must ever continue, so long as he is without Christ.

Under this head, too, let it be remarked, that it is not to God having renounced us, but to us having renounced God, that we have been all along and still are recalling your attention. It is true, that, in virtue of our guilt, God has put us away from a place in heaven—but what we chiefly advert to throughout this discourse, is, that other and distinct effect of guilt, in virtue of which it is, that we have put God away from a place in our hearts. It is not to His having banished us from His presence, but it is to our having banished Him from our thoughts that we are now attending. It is quite true that the effect of sin on the jurisprudence of the sanctuary above, has been to separate man from the friendship of the Lawgiver; and that it is only the atonement by Christ which again restores him to acceptance and favour. But it is also true that the effect of sin on the habitual direction of the soul of man below, has been to separate God from the

regards and contemplations of the human spirit—and what we shortly propose under the second head is to show, that it is faith in the atonement of Christ, and this alone, which can restore God to the soul, as the object of its cordial and willing fellowship.

To perceive how this may be, let us ask you to remember how it is that you proceed with any object, be it animate or inanimate, the presence of which gives any sort of pain or annoyance to you. You would shut your eyes, or turn away your sight from a revolting object of disgust or deformity. You would, if possible, turn aside to escape an encounter on the street with the man whom you either hated or were afraid of. It is thus too that the mind is constantly, though perhaps unconsciously, on the defensive against the intrusion of such thoughts or images as are hurtful to its repose, or in any way disagreeable to it. If it could, it would rather shun the thought which is offensive, the contemplation which at all terrifies or disturbs it. Now this is the real secret of our spirit's habitual alienation from God. It is the sense of guilt which explains what otherwise would be a mystery in our constitution. While this continues to haunt us, we cannot view God otherwise than with jealousy and distrust—and, rather than have the disquietude of any such emotions, we would have God to be not in our view at all. We keep God habitually out of view, just that we may not be disturbed in our habitual enjoyment of the peace of nature. It is thus, if we may so express ourselves, that, hourly and minutely, we blink the thought of God. There is on the part of every mind a natural love of ease, and so, a secret yet strong recoil from every topic of contemplation which is fitted to disturb it. Now God apart from Christ is just such a contemplation. The very thought of Him, if He be at all apprehended as a God of sacredness and truth and inviolable majesty, is a thought of disquietude. The soul, if in any degree awake to a right sense of its own unworthiness, must be fearful of God—nor can it escape from the terrors of His offended dignity, but by lulling itself, among the opiates of sense and of carnality, into a profound oblivion both of His purity and

of His power. There can be no kind regard where there is no confidence; and how is confidence possible on the part of rebels, against whom the whole force and authority of a righteous sovereign are armed for their destruction? It is said of Adam that he hid himself from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. We also, when like to be obtruded on by the presence of God to our conscience or our thoughts, do, by a movement almost instinctive, flee to hide ourselves. We too have our gardens of vain security, our places of sweet and soothing forgetfulness, which serve, to ourselves at least, the temporary purpose of a hiding-place from God. If they do not hinder Him from seeing us, they at least hinder us from seeing Him; and this does in the mean time, for a respite from all those troublesome awakenings, which might else have haunted our spirits, and rifled away from them the rest and the enjoyments which we are so fain to prolong. It is a fond illusion; and the soul is not willing to break it up by any such frightful imagination as that of a terrific judge or august sovereign in heaven, with a face of rebuke and an uplifted arm of vengeance. No, it is glad to be embowered as it were in some grotto of concealment, so as to shut out the hateful, the appalling demonstration—and, in the heat and hurry of this world's business, or in the glee of its merry companionship, or in the mental engrossment whether of its pleasures or of its cares, it can at all times summon around itself enough of the imagery of this pleasing and peopled world, to screen from its view both the offended countenance of heaven above, and those dread characters of a coming misery which sit in perspective on the death and the eternity before it. It cannot by all its contrivances separate God from itself—but well is it able to separate itself, and, that by a wide and a constant interval, from the thought of God. It can replenish its inner chamber with a crowd of phantasies and hopes and wishes, all rushing in upon it from the world that is without, and leaving no room for the descent of any serious or abiding impression from the upper sanctuary. It is thus that, from the cradle to the grave, the soul is rocked as it were, amid the feelings and the

fluctuations of a busy world, into profound insensibility toward Him who made the world. And it wills to have it so. It wants to hold no converse with images of disquietude; and none more so than the image of incensed and inflexible Holiness—none more so than the image of a consuming fire, ready to be discharged from heaven on all who have done offence to heaven's high Lawgiver—none more so than God out of Christ, at the sight of whom all the daring and defiance of the stoutest-hearted sinner will at length melt away; and the thought of whom is meanwhile ejected from his bosom, as a hateful visitant whose office it was to frighten and to annoy.

Such is the secret but substantial connexion which obtains between our dread of God, and the habitual distance at which we stand from Him. We gladly shut the mind's eye against all that is painful—and, unless God stands forth in another aspect, we shall feel strongly and constantly disposed to stifle in embryo every thought that may arise within us of this tremendous because yet unappeased God. In a word, ere we shall willingly detain and habitually dwell upon the thought of God, He, from a painful, must become a pleasing object of contemplation. Now this can only be, by the terrors of His countenance being softened and done away. This can only be, if not by dismantling Him of His truth and holiness and justice—at least by those mighty attributes, inflexible as they are, being in some way disposed of, so as not to take the direction of vengeance against ourselves. This can only be, by the threats of judgment giving place to the assurances of friendship and the benignant offers of reconciliation. We cannot welcome to our hearts the thought of God, so long as the dread and the menace of a yet unsettled controversy are betwixt us. This question must be resolved; or guilty nature will be at a sullen and impracticable distance for ever—and, singly on its determination, there is suspended the alternative whether the children of nature shall be with or without God.

Now it is well to put it to the conscience of those who are without God, if they be not also without Christ. These two characteristics go inseparably to-

gether, and may be said indeed to be casually or efficiently connected. There is no fellowship with the Father, just because there is no fellowship with the Son. We appeal to those who, in the whole spirit and system of their lives, have been asunder from God, if they have not been equally asunder from Christ. This deserves to be well pondered by them—for it may suggest the all-important consideration, that, the estrangement of their souls from God in heaven, has been due to a like estrangement from that messenger who came charged with His calls and overtures to earth. Their habitual distance from the one, is resolvable into their habitual disinclination from the other. They are far from God, just because of their heedlessness to the voice of Him whose profest office is to bring them nigh. It is indeed a wondrous fact in their moral history, this perpetual exile of their spirits from Him who is the Father of spirits; but, as yet, they have missed the highway of communication to His august and inviolable sanctuary—even the way of a consecrated priesthood, of an ordained and accepted mediatorship. This relation of cause and consequence, between being with Christ and with God, may guide them to that mystic ladder, by which sinners may ascend to the abode of the Eternal. They still abide in the distance of nature from God—but this is just because they have never ventured, on the only stepping-stone, by which guilty nature can make its approaches to that Being of else unapproachable sacredness, from whom it is so deeply alienated. So long have they been without Christ, and just as long have they been without God. There is a connexion here worthy of being most seriously dwelt upon. Hitherto they have stood at a distance from the Father—but they have also stood at an equal distance from the Son; and the very reason why with God they have no fellowship, is, that in Christ they have no faith.

You will herein see the importance of their entertaining the gospel. It is called the message of reconciliation; but this message, when accepted, does more than reconcile—it regenerates. It is not only that the sinner's name is thereby expunged from the book of condemnation; the fears and the jealousies and the enmity

of nature to God are also expunged from the sinner's heart. There is a personal as well as a legal salvation accomplished through the intervention of Him, in whose blood we are invited to wash out our sins; and in the investiture of whose righteousness we are called upon to appear before the mercy-seat. That is a great judicial deliverance, by which the sentence of death is cancelled; and that is a great moral deliverance, by which the hatred and the terror and the sullen despondency of guilt are now done away. It is Christ crucified who hath accomplished the one. It is faith in Christ crucified which accomplishes the other—being that quickening touch which reanimates the coldness of man's alienated spirit, and recalls him to fellowship with God.

III. Let us now in a few sentences address this offered pardon of the gospel for the acceptance of you all. It is indeed a pardon held out to all who may choose to embrace and rely upon it—flung diffusively abroad as it were over the face of the whole earth; and there is not one individual of our guilty species, who is not welcome to place his steadfast and sure dependence thereupon. Let but this offer of kindness from God simply meet with the homage of confidence from man; and then there is opened up a channel of communication, through which there is nothing that shall intercept the flow of heaven's mercy—even upon those who in times past have most daringly trampled on heaven's law, and done most grievous offence to heaven's sacredness. It is the sure though the simple ligament, by which man is again united with the God from whom he had separated so widely. That ligament is Faith. God puts forth His offer of reconciliation; and man accepts of the offer, simply by the reliance which he puts upon its honesty. It is then that the reconciliation is entered upon. It is then that an act of agreement is struck between the parties, who are now the parties of a covenant where a faith on the one side that never falters, is sure to meet with a faithfulness on the other side that never fails.

This dispensation of mercy is compassed about with all the securities of a

covenant. Never was transaction between one Being and another more richly guaranteed. The very designation of a promise, as applied to the offered blessings of the gospel, carries the obligation of a contract along with it. It invests man to whom the promise is made with a claim; and it stakes the truth and justice of the promiser to the fulfilment of it. But when to this we add the firm securities, which have been established by the Mediator of the covenant—when we look to Him, as having borne all the debts of sin, and satisfied all the demands of righteousness—when we recollect, not merely that mercy has been promised, but that a ransom has been found; that the punishment which our Saviour did sustain, when He once offered Himself for the sins of men, cannot, even in justice, be executed over again; that the reward which he won, not for Himself but for others, cannot even in justice be withheld from them—then never, may we safely conclude, never was title-deed to any inheritance so impregnablely valid, as that title-deed which believers do possess to an inheritance of glory; and the framing of which constitutes the main skilfulness which so often in the New Testament is ascribed to the economy of the gospel. It is not mercy alone, but mercy in alliance with truth. It is not peace alone, but peace in conjunction with righteousness. It is not a simple act of forgiveness alone, but of forgiveness couched as it were in the honours of God's vindicated sacredness; and His one attribute of compassion irradiated by a lustre from all the other high attributes of a nature that is unchangeable. These are the leading peculiarities, which serve at once to characterise and to dignify the whole plan of our salvation; and, while they maintain the character of God unviolated, they rest the comfort and confidence of the sinner on the immutabilities of a covenant which never can be broken, of a word which can never pass away.

The calls of this free, but withal sure and well-ordered covenant, you may have hitherto resisted. Its character, as a message of gratuitous kindness to one and all of the human race, you have perhaps misunderstood. It is likely that some of you may never have adverted to the perfect freeness, wherewith its invitations

are made to circulate through the world. None of you are beyond the reach of its welcome and good-will; and could we point as specifically home to each as we now spread abroad among all the assurance of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and why not from yours?—then should you awaken to a sense of friendship with God, and, along with it, to the charm and power of a new moral existence. If hitherto your consciences can tell, that you have lived without God in the world; and that whereas He is represented as the Being with whom you have to do, you in fact in the busy engrossment of your manifold doings, have held Him in habitual disregard—then surely the gospel method of reunion and reconciliation with that mighty Being, from whom you have all life long been practically an outcast, is worthy of your most serious entertainment. O be at length prevailed upon to seek after it, and you shall find it worthy of all ac-

ception. A sceptre of mercy is held out to you there. There God is stretching forth His hands to you. He feels all the longings of a Father bereaved of his children. and He plies you with all the expostulations of a Father's tenderness. What pleasure has He in the death of any one of you? It is a pleasure He disclaims; and He protests of even the chief of sinners, that He would rather he should return to Him and live. He sends you bibles which circulate at large among your habitations; and from the pulpits of the land, there soundeth forth the declaration of a God that waiteth to be gracious. Many are the means, and many are the messengers whom He employs; and by the permanent institution of a christian ministry in the midst of you, does He, from generation to generation, perpetuate an embassy of peace to our world, by which to recall its successive wanderers to God.

SERMON III.

The Goodness and Severity of God.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.”—ROMANS xi. 22.

IN the prosecution of this discourse, we shall first endeavour to expose the partiality, and therefore the mischief, of two different views that might be taken of the Godhead—and secondly point your attention to the way in which these views are so united in our text, as to form a more full and a consistent representation of Him. We shall then conclude with a practical application of the whole argument.

I. One partial, and therefore mischievous view, of the Deity, is incidental to those who bear a single respect to His one attribute of goodness. They look to Him as a God of tenderness, and nothing else. In their description of Him, they have a relish for the imagery of domestic life—and, in the employment of which, they ascribe to Him the fondness rather than the authority of a Father. In the

Divinity of their imagination, there is not the slightest approach to severity and far less to sternness of character, the very least degree of which would cause them to recoil from the whole contemplation—that they might forget, among the kindred and every day topics of their common life, all that is repulsive or ungainly in the contemplation of sacredness. There is but one expression from Heaven's King which they will tolerate—and that is the expression of gentleness, and complaisance, and soft unvaried benignity. Ought that can ruffle or displease these is banished from their creed, or rather never found admittance there, because it was no sooner offered to their notice than all the antipathies both of inclination and taste were up in arms against it. The smile of an indulgent Deity is that wherewith they would constantly regale themselves, while the scowl of an indignant

Deity is that before which they would most carefully shut their eyes, rather than that it should give dread or disturbance to their bosoms. They would admit of no other aspect for religion than that of uniform placidness—and to decorate this bland and beautiful imagination the more, they would appeal to all that looks mild and merciful in the scenery of nature—a scenery which God Himself hath embellished, and on which therefore we might well conceive that he hath left the very impress of His own character. And whether, it may be thought, we look on soft and flowery landscapes, lighted up from heaven by sweetest sunshine—or towards that evening sky, behind the hues and inimitable touches of whose loveliness, one could almost dream that there floated isles of Paradise whereon the spirits of the blest were rejoicing—or, without poetic reverie at all, did we but confine our prospect to those realities by which earth is peopled; and take account of those unnumbered graces, which, in verdant meads, or waving foliage, or embosomed lake, or all the other varieties of rural freshness and fertility, lie strewn upon its surface—it may most readily be thought, that surely He at whose creative touch all this loveliness has arisen, must Himself be placid as the scene, or gentle as the zephyr that He causes to blow over it.

At present, we do not stop to observe, that, if the Divinity is to be interpreted by the aspects of nature, Nature has her hurricanes and her earthquakes and her thunder, as well as those kindlier exhibitions in which the disciples of a tasteful and sentimental piety most love to dwell. But we hold it of more importance to remark, that the illusion which is thus fostered, and by which God is exclusively regarded in the light of benevolence alone, is not confined to the sons and daughters of poetry. It is an illusion that might be recognised in humble life—and which we believe to be of extended operation, on the hearts and habits even of our most unlettered peasantry. There is a disposition amongst them too, to build upon the goodness, and to blink, if we may so express it, the severity of the divine character. They also ascribe a certain facility of temperament to Heaven's Sovereign—a sort of easy and good-

natured connivance, of which they practically avail themselves—a placability and promptitude to forgiveness upon which they count, and on which we may add that many of them do draw to an extent which is altogether indefinite; thereby effacing the line of demarcation between sin and sacredness, and, on the maxim that God is ever ready to pardon, holding it safe for them to transgress at all times, up to the strength or urgency of the actual temptation. Throughout all the classes of society, in fact, it is this beholding of the goodness without a beholding along with it of the severity of God, that lulls the human spirit into a fatal complacency with its own state and its own prospects. It is this which sustains the imagination of a certain vague and ill-defined compromise, between indulgence from heaven upon the one hand, and the frailties of our earthly nature upon the other—and, in virtue of which, man might take to himself the liberty of sinning just as much as he likes; and then of soothing his apprehensions of vengeance by the opiate of this forward tenderness on the part of God, just as much as he stands in need of it. Such is the fearful state of relaxation, in which this dislike for a religion of gloom, and this demand for a religion of cheerfulness and pleasure, are often found to land us in. It is this disposition to soften the menaces of the Lawgiver—it is this tendency to reduce, or rather to obliterate, the vindictiveness of His nature—it is this perpetual gloss that, by means of the argument of His goodness, is attempted to be thrown over the truth, and the holiness, and the justice, and the high Sovereign state which compose the severity or the awfulness of His character—it is this, in fact, which serves, in practice to break down the fences between obedience and sin; to nullify all moral government, and so to confound all the distinctions between one part of the moral territory and another; and, by tampering as it does with the authority of the divine jurisprudence, to overspread the face of our world with a deep and ruinous severity, at the very time, that, adrift from the restraints of heaven's law, each may be walking in the counsel of his own heart, and after the sight of his own eyes.

So much for the mischief that might

ensue by looking singly to the goodness of God, and apart from His severity. But there is also a mischief that will ensue, by our looking singly to the severity of God, and apart from His goodness. There are certain theologians who have thus arrayed Him; and that, not so much by the views which they have given forth of His inviolable sanctity—for none can state too strongly, or too absolutely, His determined recoil from the approaches of moral aid; but rather by the news which they have given forth of such a dread and despotic sovereignty, as to impress the conception of a fatalism that is inexcusable, a hopeless necessity against which all prayer and all performance of man are unavailing. Neither do we hold them to be chargeable with any positive error; or, in the course of their adventurous speculation on the decrees of God, and the bearing which they have on the final destinies of the elect and the reprobate, to have affirmed ought that was doctrinally or philosophically untrue. But there are truths which might be introduced unseasonably, and on the very occasion when they are most liable to be grievously misunderstood and misapplied. And we do think, that, in the act of holding converse with men, for the sake of gaining their compliance with the invitations of the gospel, the matter on hand is the perfect freedom and frankness and sincerity of these invitations—that then it is, when nought should be heard but the voice of welcome and of good-will, and nothing should be said which might countenance the imagination of an impracticable barrier between sinners and the mercy-seat. However difficult it may be to adjust the metaphysics of the question, there is one thing unquestionable, and that is, an amnesty from heaven offered without exception to all—a propitiation set forth for the sins of the world; and on which there is not one member of our world's population, who has not a warrant to cast the whole burden of his reliance—an embassy to our alienated species of which the record has come down to us, and by which God beseeches even the guiltiest of men to enter into reconciliation. And therefore we would, that the representation were often given of a message which might circulate around the globe, and a sceptre of for-

giveness held out in the sight of all its families—and we would not, that so much as one individual should be chilled into hopelessness by the dogmatism of a hard and unfeeling theology; or that, fancying some stern or repulsive interdict against himself, he should feel an arrest upon his footsteps, in his return to that God who waiteth to be gracious.

But, independently of all lofty speculation, and aside from the mysteries which attach to the counsels and determinations of a predestinating God, there is abroad on the spirits of men, a certain practical and prevalent impression of His severity, to which we believe that most of this world's irreligion is owing. For, however strange, it is nevertheless a frequent anomaly of human feeling—that they who at one time can take comfort in sin under such an impression of His goodness as will dispose Him to connive at it, have at all times such an overhanging sense of His severity upon them as never to attain a thorough confidence in His favour. In spite of every illusion, their conscience tells them that they are offenders; neither can they get rid of the suspicion, that they are not as they ought to be; and they are haunted by a secret jealousy of God, whom in spite of themselves they regard as looking with an eye of jealousy upon them; and, just as a man will gladly shut his eyes against the spectacle that pains him, so will they shrink from the contemplation that only serves to put dread and disturbance into their bosoms; and thus there is a habitual distance kept up between the spirits of all flesh and Him who is the Father of them. There is the feeling of an unsettled controversy betwixt you and God; and just as you would rather avoid than encounter the man with whom you are not fully at ease, so you have the same motive for shunning all intercourse between your own spirit and that of God's. The constant operation of this motive, will explain the constancy of your alienation from Him who made you. The world is your hiding-place from God. It charms you away from the thought of Him whom you are glad to forget—and the light of whose countenance would trouble you. Did it shine upon you in such characters of mercy as you would steadfastly trust and rejoice in, your heart

would ever be rising towards God, and with the very alacrity in which a man goeth forth to meet a friend. But, instead of this, you imagine a displeasure in His countenance; and you are not at ease in his presence; and, beholding the severity alone without the goodness, you feel it more tolerable for to live in the oblivion rather than in the remembrance of Deity; and thus in the midst of formal prayers, and of very fair and seemly performances, the inner man may be in a state of perpetual exile from Him who is the high and heavenly witness of all its thoughts and all its tendencies. This, in part, accounts for the sluggishness of nature—when called upon to stir itself up, that it may lay hold of God. There is a certain imagined frown upon His aspect which frightens it away—or lays a check on all its approximations to the upper sanctuary. Our distance from God is allied with our distrust in God; and there is a substantial though secret connection, in virtue of which it is, that the soul keeps habitually away from Him, just because the soul is habitually afraid of Him.

It may appear a mystery—yet, to the patient and profound discerner of our nature, we are persuaded that it will not appear a contradiction—should the same man both occasionally take comfort to himself in sin, under the thought of an indulgent goodness on the part of God; and yet habitually stand at a suspicious and mistrustful distance from Him, under the thought of His unrelenting severity. It is our very distance from God which sheds a dimness over His character and ways—over His wrath against disobedience, as well as over the gentler and kindlier attributes of His nature. Altogether, it is to man at best a shadowy contemplation; and so his imagination finds a certain pliancy in the materials that compose it. Whatever is dimly seen, can more readily and easily be disguised by the gloss, which, to serve a purpose, may at any time be thrown over it; and thus, to quell the remorse and terror of guilt, the severity of God may for the moment be put out of sight—even though this be the aspect in which we most habitually regard Him. And thus it is, that man takes his stand at the place of distance and obscurity, where, on the one hand, he might so fancy to himself a

goodness in God as might yield enough of toleration for sin; and, on the other hand, might save him all the disturbance that he else would feel, on too near an approach to His severity or His sacredness.

II. Nevertheless, there is both a goodness and a severity; and this brings us to the second head of discourse, under which we proposed to point your attention to the way, in which these two views of the Godhead were so united in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as to form a more full and consistent representation of Him.

First, then, there is a severity. There is a law that will not be trampled on. There is a Lawgiver that will not be insulted. There is a throne of high jurisprudence that is guarded and upheld by all the severities of truth and of firm empire; and there is a voice of authority that issues therefrom, by which we are told that heaven and earth shall pass away, ere any one of its words can pass away. In the economy of that moral government under which we sit, there is no compromise with sin. There is no letting down of the judgment against it. The face of God is unchangeably set against evil, and either the evil must be sanctified into that which is good, or be wholly swept away. There is no toleration with God for the impure or the unholy; and it were a violence to his nature, did iniquity pass without a punishment or without an expiation. There may, by some mysterious conveyance, an access be found for his goodness to the sinner; but towards the sin, there is nought in the heart of the Godhead, save the most unsparing and implacable warfare. With sin, he can descend to no weak or unworthy connivance; and, dwelling as he does in lofty and unapproachable sacredness, He cannot deal with the guilty, but in that way, by which His justice shall be vindicated, and His law be magnified and made honourable.

In this respect, there is a steadfastness of principle, which runs throughout the divine administration, and from which the august Being who presides over it, was never once known to recede or to falter. In the whole history of His ways, we cannot light upon a single instance of God's so falling back from the severity of His denunciations against

sin, as at all to soften the expression of His hatred and hostility towards it. Not at the fall—when the one transgression of our first parent, was followed up by a curse that has burdened the earth and all its families for many generations. Not at the flood, which rained down from heaven, to wash away a wickedness from the face of our globe, that Heaven could no longer tolerate. Not at the promulgation of the Law from Mount Sinai, when the loud and the lofty challenge for obedience was made in the hearing of the people; and the smoke, and the thunder, and the voice gave felt demonstration of an authority which it were death to violate. Not at the entrance of Israel upon their promised land, when God, to avouch the truth and the terror of His judgment, gave forth his edict utterly to exterminate the sinful nations that were before them; and so the old, and the middle aged, and even the little ones, were destroyed. Not in the subsequent dealing of many centuries with His own perverse and stiff-necked children, among whom he sent pestilence and famine, and captivity, as the ministers of His vengeance; and against whom all His prophecies of evil were followed up by the sure and tremendous fulfilment of them. And lastly, not at that terrible period when the Jewish economy was at length swept away; and even the tears of a compassionate Saviour did not avert the approaching overthrow, but who, while He wept over the doom which He would not recall, gave most impressive exhibition, that, along with the goodness, there was also a severity with God. In all this, there is admonition for us to whom the latter end of the world has come; and, as we witness through the periods of its past history, how awful have been the threats of Heaven against the impenitent, and how unfailing the execution of them—let us beware of any flattering unction upon our own souls; and be very sure, that, on all the ungodliness of the present generation, the denounced judgment and the denounced vengeance are coming—though that judgment should be held amid the elements of dissolving nations, and that vengeance to the ruin of a wretched and undone eternity.

The great delusion is, that we estimate

God by ourselves—His antipathy to sin, by our own slight and careless imagination of it—the strength of His displeasure against much evil, only by the languid and nearly extinct moral sensibilities of our own heart. We bring down Heaven to the standard of Earth; and measure the force of the recoil from sin in the upper sanctuary, by what we witness of this recoil, either in our own bosom, or in that of our fellow-sinners upon this lower world. Now if we measure God by ourselves, we shall have little fear indeed of vengeance or severity from His hands. For, save when there is gross and monstrous delinquency, we can bear very well both with our own transgressions and those of others—even although these transgressions should bespeak an utter alienation of the heart and life from God. We should never think, for example, of an acquaintance as the object of indignation—merely because he was a stranger to prayer and destitute of piety. For it so happens, that, while there be rare atrocities of character by the few, which awaken the horror and vivid indignation of the many—there is a habit of ungodliness nearly with all, and for which there is amongst them all the utmost mutual complacency and toleration. No man would ever think of vehemently denouncing another, just because he thought little of God; and the whole habits of his soul was that of estrangement from the things of Faith and of Eternity. He could view him with easy toleration notwithstanding; and the delusion is, that he is looked down upon with the same complacency from above, that he is looked upon by the men of his kindred and genial companionship here below. This is adverted to by the Psalmist; and from him we learn, that even what is so venial in our eyes as the mere forgetfulness of God, and for which there is such an entire sufferance here, that towards this there is the utmost severity there—“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes. Now, consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.”

Such is the alliance between our understanding and our heart, that man can

often succeed in believing to be true what he wishes to be true; and so there is a very wide and prevalent impression among men, that there is just the very disposition to tolerate our infirmities in Heaven, which we feel that we have need of, and have a demand for upon Earth. There is thus a very general security in the midst of ungodliness—no dread whatever of a coming wrath, and just because they have done nothing to incur the detestation of the world. The use of hell is conceived to be as a receptacle for the outcasts of society; and that, therefore, they have nothing to fear if they have not sunk to the crimes and the moral hardihood of outcasts. The Psalmist hath again said—“that the nations who forget God shall be turned into hell,”—and not only to you who are disgraced by profligacy; but even to you, who, busied with the occupations of this world, live in a state of total and practical unconcern about another world, would we address the language of our text, and ask you to behold the severity of God.

But along with this severity, there is a goodness that you are also called upon to behold; and if you view both aright, you will perceive that they do meet together in fullest harmony. It is this, in fact, which constitutes the leading peculiarity of the gospel dispensation—that the expression of the divine character which is given forth by the severity of God, is retained and still given forth in all its entireness in the display and exercise of His goodness. When He is severe, it is not because of His delight in the sufferings of His creatures, but because of His justice, and holiness, and truth. His delight is in the happiness of that sentient nature which He himself hath framed; and, except it be to the injury of these high moral attributes, He ever rejoices in scattering the fruits of His beneficence, over the wide extent of a grateful and rejoicing family. When He is vindictive, it is not because He derives a work of vengeance; but because the righteousness of His character, and the stability of a righteous government, demand it. Could He so manage, as that this lofty perfection, and the lofty interest which is connected therewith, should not suffer by it—could the sacredness of the Godhead, of which so direct

a manifestation is given in His work of vengeance, be carried forward in as full and convincing manifestation to a work of mercy—could the justice, and the holiness, and the truth, all of which are set forth so evidently on a deed of retribution; could a way be devised, by which there may be inscribed as legibly, and be made to shine forth in indivated lustre on a deed of amnesty—then, we may be assured, that He who hath no pleasure in the death of children, but who hath sworn by Himself that He would rather they should live and rejoice in His presence for ever—that He, after such a way had been opened up and cleared of all its impediments, would pour along it of His grace, and His goodness, and cause them freely to descend and spread over even to the uttermost limits of His sinful creation.

Now it is this, and this precisely, which distinguishes the evangelical mercy that is gratuitously held out for the acceptance of all, from that general mercy in which so many do confide, but by which none can possibly be saved. Were we asked, in briefest possible definition, to state what that is, which impresses on the mercy of the Gospel its essential and specifying characteristic—we should say of it, that it is a mercy in full and visible conjunction with righteousness. With the pardon which it deals out for sin, it makes most impressive demonstration of the evil of it; and magnifies and does honour to the Law, by the very way in which it cancels the guilt that has been incurred by its violation. All the exhibition that God would have given of His character, by the wreaking of his severity upon the rebellious, is still given, unmarred and unmitigated, when, under the peculiar economy of redemption, He lavishes upon them of His loving kindness and tender mercy. And such is the policy of its contrivance, that the mercy of the gospel meets with the truth of the law, and God can at once be a just God and a Saviour.

You know how, for this marvellous design, the economy of grace has been framed; but, knowing it though you do, there is not a believing soul that has experienced the power of this salvation, and felt its preciousness, who does not love

to be often told of it. That name, which is as ointment poured forth, will always bear to be repeated in the hearing of the faithful; nor does it ever pall upon the spirit of him who hath been visited with a sense of his sinfulness, and labours under the burden of it, though frequently the utterance is given, that unto him a Saviour has been born. On him did God lay the iniquities of us all. That sword of vengeance which should have been lifted up against us, He awakened in all its brightness against his fellow; and, in bowing himself down unto the sacrifice, Jesus Christ had to bear the weight of a world's atonement. The severity of God, because of sin, was not relaxed, but only transferred, from the head of the offenders, to the head of their substitute; and, in the depth of Christ's mysterious sufferings, has He made as full display of the rigours of His unviolable sanctity, as he would have done by the direct infliction of their doom on the millions for whom the Saviour died. The characters of truth, and justice, and holiness, instead of being effaced from this administration, stand as conspicuously blazoned forth, in the new economy of the Gospel, as in the old economy of the Law; and, with all the freeness and exuberance of its mercy, there is preserved the undegraded majesty of a government that cannot be dishonoured, of perfections that cannot be violated. It is true, that sinners are now permitted to draw nigh; but it must only be in the name of Him, who hath made full acquittal for Heaven's insulted authority; and, ample as is the pardon which they receive, it is without the compromise of Heaven's high sacredness—seeing that it is pardon, earned by a divine sacrifice, and sealed with the blood of an everlasting covenant. The Holy one of Israel now sitteth upon a throne of grace; but, approached as it can only be by the august and guarded ceremonial of a priesthood, and a consecrated mediatorship, not a sinner who draws nigh but must feel in his heart the homage, and render in his person and his services the fealty that is due to a throne of righteousness. He reads the inscription of peace between God and his own soul—but he reads it on that cross upon which the chastisement of his peace was borne. It is like

the man who eyes the fierceness of a bursting volcano from some place of security where its flames cannot possibly involve him—and so he whom the tempest of God's wrath hath passed by because now discharged upon another, can now securely rejoice himself in the goodness, while in the cries, and tears, and agonies of his Redeemer, he beholds the severity of God.

Now, if you refuse the mercy of God upon this footing, you will receive it upon no other. It is for Him the offended, and not for you the offending party, to dictate the terms of reconciliation. And He tells us that no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son—while all who enter into His presence by the open door of His Son's mediatorship shall be saved. In other words you will never meet with acceptance from God, on the ground of His general mercy—while on the ground of His gospel mercy, you will never miss it. He is most ready to pardon, but not so as to extenuate the malignity of sin; and only so as to stamp the expression of His uttermost hostility on that evil thing, whose guilt in you He is most willing to pass by. Should you, in the distaste and disinclination of your spirit to the cross of Christ, keep by your general confidence, and nauseate the evangelical confidence away from you—should you count only on God's goodness to the sinner, while you shut your eyes upon His severity against sin, as manifested in the death of His Son—then does it still remain, that His severity must be manifested in your own death and everlasting destruction. It is the grand peculiarity of the gospel scheme, that while by it God hath come forth in love and tenderness to our world, He hath at the same time made full reservation of His dignity; and, along with the freest overtures of peace to the rebellious, there is the fullest reparation for every outrage which they have inflicted upon His government. On this footing He welcomes you, but on no other. He will not pass over your transgressions of His law; but in such a way, as shall compel your recognition of the law's unviolable right to all your obedience. He will not lavish upon you of His attribute of mercy, but in such a way, as shall constrain your homage to all the other lofty and

unchangeable attributes of His nature. He will not let you off for your violation of his commandments, but in such a way, as shall stamp indelibly the lesson of the commandments' unviolable sanctity.—This is that way of exquisite skilfulness, by which the economy of grace is characterised; and whereby at once the deepest stigma is affixed upon sin, and the guilt of the sinner is wiped away. It is a way that God Himself has found out—but if you conform not thereto, though the sure, it is the only way of reconciliation; and as you will not consent to take His goodness in the shape that he offers it—nought remains but that with the unbelieving Jews of my text, you shall be overtaken by the severity of God.

But let us not leave off, without assuring you once more, that there is a path of escape from this catastrophe, and a path opened for you all. The flaming sword at the gate of Eden, turns every way to intercept your approach to the tree of life; and the gospel of Jesus Christ turns every way save one—but that one is a passage by which every creature who now hears us, is invited to make good his entrance into the Paradise of God. That severity of God, on which we have so much insisted, so far from lessening or casting a shade over His goodness, only heightens and enhances it the more. It had to struggle away for the manifestation of itself—amid the conflict of all the other perfections of Deity. The mercy of the gospel is mercy in its highest possible exhibition—for it is a mercy that had to scale the barrier of such difficulties, as to every other eye but the eye of infinite wisdom looked impracticable—it is a mercy that, ere it could reach the world, had to wait the undertaking of Him who went forth upon the embassy to seek and to save it—it is a mercy by which God, to spare those guilty who had affronted and despised him, spared not His well-beloved Son; but endured the spectacle of that deep and mysterious agony, by which the penalties of a broken law were absolved, and the mighty problem was resolved of God being just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. And now that the mercy of God hath found its sure establishment on the foundation of his vindicated honours; now that the high demands of His au-

thority and His truth have all been provided for; now that full demonstration has been given to men and to angels, of a sovereignty that could not be trampled on, of a jurisprudence that could not be violated; now that every let and hindrance is removed from the way of His darling attribute, is a voice heard from the mercy-seat,—the sound whereof reaches to the most distant places of our world, and the purport whereof is to recall to that Father's house from which they have departed, one and all of its alienated families.

III. We must now conclude with a short practical application. And first, such is the goodness of God, that it overpasses the guilt even of the most daring and stout-hearted offender amongst you. Let him even have grown grey, in iniquity, there is still held out to him the offer of that peace-speaking blood in which there resides the specific virtue of washing it utterly away. These words from the mouth of God Himself can yet be address to him, and to all who are in the body—"Come now, let us reason together—though your sins be as crimson they shall become as wool, though they be as scarlet, yet shall they be made whiter than the snow." There is none here present, whose transgressions are so foul and so enormous as to be beyond the reach of the Saviour's atonement. There is none so sunk in ungodliness, or who have drunk so deeply of the spirit of this world, that he may not, through Him who died the just for the unjust, be yet brought right and made alive unto God. There is none or whom the load of Heaven's displeasure hath so accumulated that he may not cast the whole of his burden on that foundation which is laid in Zion, and lightened of all his fears, may not rejoice in the presence of God as his reconciled Father. The very worst and most worthless among you are free to return unto Him—nay, have the word and the warrant of an express invitation; and, however far you have wandered in profligacy or shame from the sanctuary of His unpolluted holiness, still are you within the scope of his widely sounding call, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved."

But again, in very proportion to this goodness will be the severity of God on those who shall have rejected it. There is reconciliation to all who will—but, if ye will not, the heavier will be the vengeance that awaiteth you. The kindness of God is still unquenched, even by your multiplied provocations of His broken law—but quenched it most assuredly will be, if to this you add the tenfold provocation of His rejected gospel. The dispensation under which you sit is an alternative dispensation. The word which cometh out of the mouth of the Son of God will be likened to a two-edged sword. There is good-will for all who turn towards him. There is wrath, more intense and jealous and unappeasable wrath, for all who turn away. He is the savour of life unto life—or he is the savour of death unto death. He is a tried and precious stone, by leaning upon whom, you are upheld on the firm ground of acceptance with God; or He is a stone of stumbling on which you shall fall, or which falling upon you shall grind you to powder. “Kiss the Son then now, and while He is in the way, lest his wrath should begin to burn—when blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him.”

And finally—let us warn you all, that no one truly embraces Christ as their Saviour, who does not submit to Him as their Master and their Lord. No one has a true faith in His promises, who is not faithful in the observation of His precepts. No one has rightly taken refuge in Him from the punishment of a broken law, who still heedlessly and presumptuously gives himself up to the violation

of that law; for then shall he be judged worthy of a severer punishment—seeing that he has trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Your ordinances are an abomination, and the share that you take in solemnities and in sacraments will only serve to mark the deeper hypocrisy of your souls—if you rise not from the table of commemoration more devoted to the will of Him who is the great Master of the feast, and over the symbols of whose broken body, and whose shed blood, you propose to witness a good confession in the eyes of the world.* Draw near with a true heart, and He will draw near unto you. The very deliverance that He will give you from the fears of condemnation, will inspire alacrity and vigour in the way of new obedience. The exchange that you shall make of the spirit of bondage for the spirit of adoption, will be the translation of you into a new moral atmosphere—when you shall experience the difference that there is between the services which are prompted by affection and gratitude, and those mercenary services which are compelled from the unwilling by the rod of authority. You will be endowed with another taste than that which actuates the children of this world: and, as a fruit of the regeneration that springeth from a real belief in the Saviour, you will serve Him because you love Him, and do His will because you delight to do Him honour.

* Preached on the occasion of a Sacrament.

SERMON IV.

Salvation scarcely obtained even by the Righteous.

“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.”—
1 PETER. iv. 18.

THERE are men of no less than three distinct classes of character who have all a part in this brief but most impressive warning. First, the righteous, of whom it is said that they scarcely shall be saved. Secondly, the ungodly; and thirdly, sin-

ners; of whom it is asked, where shall they appear? The two last have one common resemblance; but withal, they have certain separate characteristics, which it may be well to notice on the present occasion.

I. It is unnecessary to dwell on the signification of the term righteous in the passage before us—or to insist at any great length on the distinction which obtains between the imputed and the personal righteousness of those who believe. The one is perfect; and from the very first there is in it no scarceness, no shortcoming. The second is frail and humble in its commencement, doubtful and various in its progress, and has to struggle its uncertain way through defeats, and difficulties, and discouragements, ere it reaches its full consummation. By the one, we are delivered from the guilt of sin. By the other, we are delivered from the power of sin. In virtue of the imputed righteousness, our names are blotted out from that book of condemnation which is kept in the judicatory above. In virtue of the personal righteousness, the pollution of sin is washed away from the heart—and there is a busy work of holiness going forward on each genuine and aspiring pilgrim below. It is a firm and immutable certainty, that if a man believe, he obtains a judicial righteousness in Christ. But it is just as firm a certainty, that if a man believe, he obtains a personal righteousness in his own character. The one is just as indissolubly linked with his salvation as the other—and, if because gifted with the former, he rejoices in hope, and has a peace in his heart which passeth all understanding; then, because gifted also with the latter, he plies with utmost diligence and labour all the activities of the christian service, alike instant in duty and watchfulness and prayer.

Now, it is obvious, both from the text and from the context, that it is by their personal characteristics that the righteous are contrasted with the ungodly and the sinner. The judgment which begins with the former and ends with the latter, is a judgment which takes cognizance of personal qualities alone. On that day we shall be reckoned with for our doings—and the respective awards of the judgment-seat will proceed on the distinction, on the personal distinction which there is between them who obey and them who obey not. So that, in looking forward to that judgment-seat, our great aim should be to perfect our obedience, and to be diligent, that we may be found of Christ

in peace without spot and blameless. It is thus, in fact, that we work out our salvation; not salvation from the punishment of sin, for this is effected by the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice—but salvation from the pollution and the power of sin, which is effected by our striving mightily according to the grace of God which worketh in us mightily. It is in the arduous prosecution of this work, that man presses onward to a mark for a prize, and feels how all his power and strength must be embarked in the undertaking, lest he should fall short of it; that, with much study and much strenuousness, he tries to bring himself nearer every day to an object which still lies in the distance before him; that, yet far beneath the summit of moral or spiritual perfection to which he is aspiring, he plies his toilsome ascent along the narrow and the rugged path by which he is led to it. And so, the images employed in scripture for the work of christianity, are expressive of most intense and sustained effort towards an attainment which after all may not be realised—a battle which requires complete armour, and the busy use of it, in order to secure the doubtful victory—a race which many run, but in which few will gain the prize—a narrow path, by which many shall seek to pass through the gate of life and not be able, and by which the few only who strive shall make good their entrance into the paradise of God. It is by dint of painful and assiduous striving that salvation is at length carried; and just as the courser may be said scarcely to have won, who, with the utmost of his power and fleetness hath made good his distance by a hair-breadth of space, or within a moment of time, so it is said of the righteous by the apostle in our text, that scarcely they are saved.

Now the question we have to put upon all this is, whether the righteous of our day, or those who deem themselves to be so, are really comporting themselves in a way answerable to such a representation? Are they running, so as that they may obtain? Are they fighting, so as that they may gain a hard-won victory? Are they striving, so as that they may force an entrance of great obstruction and difficulty? Where, we ask, are there any symptoms of a work and of

a warfare, or of that busy earnestness which a state of probation like ours would seem so imperiously to demand? There is a whole host of people, we are aware, who do stand forth and signalize themselves as the Religionists of the day. But amid all the pretence and profession by which they are distinguished, where is the practical exercise? Where the strenuous, the sustained effort that cometh out of desirous hearts and doing hands? How many or how few are there of these who are diligently plying at the real task-work of christianity?—who are making a business of their sanctification?—who are labouring for Heaven, as if pursued by the conviction that without labour they will never make it out, and that even after their utmost labour, they will but save their distance, and scarcely reach the goal which they are tending to? Surely, if they proceeded on this view of the matter, their appearance altogether would be that of men upon the stretch—of men, all whose faculties were pressed into a mighty service—of men in a state of constant and great urgency, on a way beset with many obstacles, and their progress through which required the forthputting of all their strength, and of all their busy expedients. Now we scarcely see this degree of intensity any where. Not certainly among all, if indeed among any, of those who are called the professing people. They have more the semblance of men who have been lulled to sleep by the sound of a pleasant song, than of men who have been roused into action by a spirit-stirring call. Their orthodoxy has acted rather as a sedative than a stimulant. It has cradled them into a state of repose rather than brought them out into a state of exertion. They are more like men under the power of an opiate, than of men who, awoke from lethargy, and now in the attitude of readiness for service, have their loins girded about and their lamps burning.

Christianity is grievously misunderstood, whenever it is imagined that all this activity and labour are not called for. They are sadly misled by their creeds and their systems, who fancy the death of Christ to be that terminating object, in which the believer has only to rest and do nothing. Instead of this, it is the

starting-post of a busy career, whence the Christian breaks forth with hope and alacrity on all the services of a new obedience. “Christ gave himself for us,” says the apostle, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” The faith of the gospel so enlarges the heart, as to make him by whom it is actuated, run in the way of the commandments. There is nought, surely, of indolence in this. The work which it is given a Christian to do, is not a work done so easily, that it may be lightly, or carelessly, or superficially gone about—but a work done with such exceeding difficulty, that they who do accomplish it, accomplish it but scarcely, and so it is but scarcely that they are saved.

To keep the heart with all diligence—to keep the heart in the love of God—to dwell with ever-recurring contemplation on those objects of faith by which gratitude and affectionate loyalty, and all the purposes of new obedience are upholden—to keep a strict and resolute guardianship over the inner man, amid the temptations by which it is both plied from without, and most insidiously operated upon from within—to watch over the infirmities of temper, the perpetual aberrations of selfishness and vanity—to follow after peace when surrounded by provocatives to war, to maintain charity in the midst of cruelest provocations—to be patient under calumny and injustice; and master that most difficult of all achievements, the love of enemies who have hurt or affronted or betrayed us—to bid away all the incitements of sensuality, so as both to have purity in the heart and temperance in the habits, in the presence of a thousand besetting solicitations: In addition to these labours of the unseen Spirit, to fill the whole history with the doings of a visible obedience—to labour in our closets, to labour in our families, to labour in the ordinances of religion, to labour in the attentions and the offices of social intercourse, to labour in the visitations of liberality and kindness, to labour yet with a spirit schooled out of all its worldliness in the business of our callings—these, these are the tests of Christianity here; and these, when done to the glory of God, and in the name of Jesus, will be the triumphs of Christianity hereafter.

These are the treasures laid up for us in Heaven—not as forming our title-deed to that glorious inheritance of the saints, but as forming our meanness for its exercises and its joys. All the possible acts and virtues of humanity put together, cannot build up a claim to Heaven; but they build up the indispensable character of Heaven. They compose not that imputed righteousness of Christ which is the meritorious plea; but they compose that personal righteousness of his disciples which is their essential preparation. And it is the magnitude of that preparation; it is the loftiness, the spirituality of that law, with the graces and perfections of which they are called upon to clothe themselves; it is the mighty range or extent of a commandment whereof the Psalmist says, that it is exceeding broad—these make the work and the labour of Christianity such that it scarcely can be done—these, as constituting the salvation of believers from sin unto righteousness, give emphatic truth to the saying, that the righteous scarcely can be saved.

Now the first class of believers who ought to feel the force of this representation, are they who have embraced the faith of the gospel. What an impressive warning to all such that it is but scarcely they shall be saved! You may win, but hardly, and as if within a hair-breadth. Now to make this out, are you working hardly? Does your seeking amount to any thing like striving? Are you at all like men putting forth your whole might for carrying some point of difficulty? When the fortress stands in a position that is nearly impregnable, we find that all the strength and all the tactics of besiegers are put forth in the business of storming it. Is the kingdom of Heaven, we ask, suffering this violence at your hands; and where are your high resolves, your busy expedients, your struggles and your onsets for taking it by force? Where are your ardent prayers for strength; and then, the stirring up or the putting forth of that strength which is in you for great and arduous performances? And, do you watch as well as pray? It is not the devotion of a little time in the morning, followed up by an utter relaxation of spirit through the day—It is not the observation of all the Sabbath punctualities followed up by a week of earthliness

—It is not the sacramental decency, or even the sacramental fervour, followed up by a year, throughout the general tenor of which, you breathe like other men the air of this world's business and this world's companionship—It is not thus that you acquit yourselves like servants, who, as if under the immediate eye of Heaven, are working and waiting for their Lord. Awaken, awaken, then all ye, who sit at ease in Zion, if ye would escape the fearfulness which shall overtake the hypocrite, the doom of those who say, Lord, Lord, while they do not the things which he says.

II. Now if such be the ordeal which even the righteous must undergo, what must become of the ungodly? If the former can scarcely pass the judgment in safety, how is it possible that in that judgment the latter can stand? It begins, it would appear, at the house of God, and there it so searches and scrutinizes, that it is but hardly and by a little way, that many, even of Christ's own disciples, shall be found on the right side of the line of demarcation. It ends with those who stand afar off from the precincts of holiness or of heaven, and among them it will be a consuming fire. If the saints, with all their prayers and pains and struggles upon earth, shall but have won their distance by a hair-breadth, and by their much strenuousness have forced, and scarcely forced their admittance within the door of the kingdom—ah! what will become of those sinners, the care of whose souls cost them no strenuousness, who live here as they list, and make this evanescent world their resting-place, without an effort or a wish beyond it. Surely, if among God's own people the sacred jealousy of His nature act as a refiner's fire, to separate the almost from the altogether Christian, it must go forth in one mighty and devouring tide of conflagration among the hosts of the rebellious.

Our purpose in distinguishing the ungodly and the sinners into two classes, is if possible to excite salutary alarm in the breasts of those, who imagine of themselves that they are not sinners—who at least imagine of themselves that they are not in danger, because in reputation and good will among men,

they are free from the disgrace of all gross and notorious delinquencies. They lie not. They steal not. They oppress not the poor; nor do they violate either the equities of business or the proprieties of good neighbourhood. It is a most frequent, nay a most natural delusion among such, that they are not great sinners—and for this best of all reasons that they are chargeable with no great sins. They will not admit the magnitude of their guilt—neither will they admit the magnitude of their danger, till some specific or definite transgression can be alleged against them. In the absence of these they feel a complacency in their present state, and are visited with no disturbance at least, in the contemplation of their future prospects. They stand alike exempted from remorse and terror. And it serves to foster this tranquillity of spirit more, if to the absence of all which they deem to be positively bad, they add the presence of much that is positively good in their character—if they be amiable in the relations of domestic and social life, if they be kind and companionable among their fellows, if they be erect and untainted in honour, if they be trusty in friendship, if they be devoted in patriotism.

These are the virtues which uphold, nay beautify the societies of the earth—but what we affirm of one and all of them is, that they do coexist with ungodliness. Along with the presence of these social moralities, there may be the absence or utter destitution of all the sacred moralities. That is a pleasing light which is struck out by the mere workings of instinct in the hearts and among the habitations of men. But it differs from that light which cometh down from the upper sanctuary. The one is no more like to the other than the tiny lustre of the glow-worm is like unto the firmament's meridian blaze. There may be nought of the celestial in this earth-born virtue; and it is a possible, nay a frequent, thing that men shall live and breathe in its atmosphere, yet live without God.

Now, it is for the sake of grouping these men into a company by themselves, that we view the ungodly of our text, as separate from the sinners of our text. They in truth form a distinct class of society—accomplished, and perhaps bril-

liantly accomplished in the moralities of earth, yet without one thought or one visitation in their spirits of any practical earnestness about the heaven that lies beyond it—free of all those sins which would be termed delinquencies in the world, yet most surely as free of all devotedness in their hearts to Him who made the world—surrounded by the regards of kindness and the obeisances of respect in their neighbourhood below, yet living in a perpetual exile of the affections from Him who is above, at once the Father and the Judge of the human family—lulled into complacency by the thought of the many duties and the many decencies whereof they acquit themselves, yet hastening onward to that day of account, when tried by the question, "What have you done unto God?" they shall be left without a speech and without an argument. Surely, if they who have cared and striven and sought after God all their days, yet after all are but scarcely saved—well may it be asked, what shall become of those who have never cared? If with the one there be such difficulty of salvation, what are we to conclude of the other, but that with them there is the certainty of damnation? If it be with so much ado that the righteous pass through the ordeal of their coming judgment, how is it possible that the ungodly can stand?

We are not charging you with aught which the world would call monstrous. We charge you only with the negatives of character. You have no practical, no perpetual sense of God. We are not speaking of your vices. We speak only of your defects. You are deficient from searedness. It is not by your profligacies, but simply by your negations that we describe you. You have no godliness, or you are ungodly. Your consciences can tell, whether such be a just representation of yourselves. It can make palpable the difference between the habit of your souls, and that of those whose eye, and the aspiration of whose heart, are ever towards the upper sanctuary—whose delight is in communion with God, and whose chief dread it is to offend Him—who bear upon their spirits at all times a reverential impression of His sacredness; and who strive, with all their vigour and all their vigilance, to uphold

that frame of the affections, which most befits the expectant of heaven, and best prepares for its holy services. You can best say if it be thus with you; and whether you now realise those longings and those labourings of the life of faith, by which all the feelings of the inner man, and all the doings of the outer man, are consecrated to the business of a high calling. Even they who are the most strenuous and the most devoted in this business of piety—even they but scarcely shall be saved; and what, we repeat, can become of those, who, from their cradles to their graves, do but grovel in the dust of that earth which they tread upon, and live without God in the world?

Think not then, that you might sleep on in safety because you have had no crimes. That judgment which shall at length awaken you, will fall in weightiest vengeance upon your head, if it but find you in a state of negation and nakedness. You fancy, that you have done nothing against God. But it is enough that you have lived without God. You are not conscious of such disobedience as any distinct or specific act of rebellion. But enough, that you have not yielded obedience to His reign. It will be vain to allege that you never were a rebel against Him, if He can allege that He never had the rule over you. They are your own wills that have ruled you. It is by the waywardness of your own affections that you have walked. It may not have been on a way of profligacy or on a way of scandalous profaneness; but still it was your own way, and not His way. You have carried it all your lives long, independently of God. Perhaps without any gross violation of the decencies of life, but then you have a taste for decency. Perhaps without any glaring infraction of the integrities of business; but then, you have a native principle of integrity. Perhaps with an habitual homage to the voice of society, and even an occasional homage to the voice of your own conscience; but reckless all the while to the voice of God, and relatively to Him, in as deep a slumber of unconsciousness as if He were a nonentity or a phantom. Now, you refuse to hear the voice of His rightful authority; and so afterwards you shall be made to hear

the thunders of His righteous condemnation.

III. So much for the subtle delusion of those who are ungodly, but feel not themselves to be sinners—and just because, whatever may be the hidden delinquencies of their spirit, there are no specific delinquencies of outward conduct with the matter of which they are chargeable. He who ventures upon the latter kind of disobedience, belongs to a distinct genus of character from that of mere ungodliness. And hence the distinction we would make between the ungodly and the sinner. The one simply cares not for God. The other, more resolute, lifts against Him an open defiance. The one, led by his own will, can perhaps only be charged with the distance of his affections from the person or character of God. The other, in formal and active resistance to the Divine will, may be charged with the despite done by his actions to the authority of God. The one is only disaffected. The other is more, he is disobedient: and while the former is but upon the neutral ground of indifference to God, the latter has planted his daring footstep within the distinct and the declared landmark of a forbidden territory. Such is the difference between him who is ungodly, and him who is a transgressor. The one is destitute of the feeling of loyalty. The other, more stoutly rebellious, hath broken the laws. He hath more outraged Heaven's high sovereignty. He hath more braved, and bid defiance to the authority of God.

It is the more visible nature of his delinquency which lays him opener to the conviction of sin, than the man of decent morality, yet without rooted ungodliness; and thus also would we explain the declaration of Christ, that publicans and sinners enter the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees. They are more easily conscience-stricken, just because their sins are more conspicuous. Their fraud, or their falsehood, or their drunkenness, or their impurity, or their sabbath profanations, or their blasphemies, or their acts of oppression and violence; these are more glaring insignia of revolt against the government of Heaven, than is the

latent, the lurking ungodliness of a worldly moralist—even though it should leaven his whole heart, and thoroughly impregnate every deed of his history. Both will be reckoned with on the great day of manifestation—the one by the secret things of his heart, which shall then be revealed; the other by the deeds done in his body, which shall then be judged. But the inward secrets may not be palpable now while the outward deeds are abundantly so. The apostle makes a distinction between those sins which are open before-hand, and those which follow after. It is a distinction realized by the ungodly and the sinner of our text. The rebellion of the former has its firm though unseen hold in the recesses of his bosom. The rebellion of the latter is written in such characters upon his forehead as may be seen and read of all men.

It is thus, that while often difficult to awaken conviction in the hearts of the mere ungodly—the heart of the sinner may be reached by reading to him in the deeds of his history his own character; and by reading to him, in the character of these deeds, the tremendous destiny which awaits him. It is thus that we would try to lay an arrest on the career of the transgressor. We would appeal to his own consciousness of his own doings. We would remind him of the sabbaths that he has violated, or of the execrations that he has poured forth, or of the impurities and excesses that he has indulged in, or of the dishonesties in business that he has committed, or of the relative duties that he has broken, or of the calumnies, whether heedless or malignant, wherewith he has soiled a neighbour's reputation. We need not speak

to him of the ungodliness that is in his heart, when things like these have broken out upon his history—the overt-acts of rebellion—the expressions of a distinct and declared warfare against Heaven's throne. And O, if he but knew the inviolable sacredness of Him who sitteth thereon—of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and before the rebuke of whose countenance all the derision and defiance of the hardest in wickedness must at length melt away—surely he would judge it better to recall himself in time, than to appear with all the aggravations of his uncancelled guilt before the judgment-seat. The voice of welcome and of good-will still calls upon him from his mercy-seat; and that God, the book of whose remembrance is laden with the record of his misdoings, is still willing that they shall all be blotted out in the blood of the great atonement: and if he will only break off his sins by righteousness and turn him to Christ who is mighty to save, the way of renovation is yet open; and the great Lawgiver, whom he has so often offended, beckons him to draw nigh and taste of His graciousness. Such is the offer now: but let both the sinner and the ungodly recollect, that this season of opportunity will soon pass away. The invitations of God's tenderness will give place, and that speedily, to the terrors of a vengeance which will burn all the more fiercely because of a slighted gospel, and a rejected Saviour. Be alive then to the urgency of the present call, to the power and the encouragement of the present invitation. Kiss the Son while He is in the way—lest his wrath should begin to burn—when blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him.

SERMON V.

On the Spirit's striving with Man.

“And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”—GEN. vi. 3.

WHEN man is prevailed on to follow the call of the Gospel, he does it on the impulse of certain considerations. Interest, for example, may have some share

in moving him to this step; but this it could not have, unless he saw his interest to be involved in it—or, in other words, unless he believed in the unseen matters

of a judgment and an eternity. Duty may have some share in moving him; but this it could not have, unless he was visited with a relenting sense of his obligation to that God, whose will he had so often forgotten, and whose requirements he had so often trampled on—or, in other words, unless the conscience were made more tender, and the heart of stone were made more soft and susceptible than it ever had been, up to the decisive moment of his embarking his every desire and his every purpose, on that path of obedience which leads to the Jerusalem above. Now, it is to be remarked, that all the considerations both of duty and of interest might be presented to a multitude of people in the same language, with the same impressiveness of tone and of vehement affection on the part of the speaker, and with all the same external advantages on the part of the hearer; and yet, in point of fact, there is not a more familiar exhibition of human nature, than that the movement of the very same engine should carry along with it a prevailing influence on certain individuals of this multitude, while, with certain others, the influence felt at the time and acted on for the time, is at length lost and overborne amongst the concerns of the world, and the urgency of its manifold temptations.

Now, there must be a cause for this difference; and it is not enough, to assign as the cause the mere variety of original character and constitution among those, who are within the reach of a hearing. There can be no doubt that this has an effect; but still the effect is not such as may not be completely overruled, by a cause that is paramount to all the previous varieties of character whatever, and a cause that can get the better of all the resistance which the hardest and the worldiest of minds may offer to the power of that truth which is brought to bear upon it. There are repeated instances, in the history of the church, of the unlikeliest and most stubborn of men, surrendering themselves to the power of a gospel argument, which has fallen on the conscience of one who had apparently a more impressible constitution, without fruit and without efficacy. And to suspend you no longer on this topic, we give it you as one of the clearest announce-

ments of Scripture—that while, in the administration of Heaven's kingdom upon earth, the bible, and the minister, and the various ordinances of religion, are set agoing as so many visible instruments for turning man from the power of Satan unto God—it is that spirit which bloweth where He listeth, who gives to these instruments all their success, and all their energy. And, without stopping at present to resolve all the interesting questions which follow in the train of this most important doctrine, we feel, that we are only uttering the words of God's own authoritative revelation, when we say, that, wherever an impression is kindled in a human bosom on the side of what is right, or penitent, or pious, there, through the medium of some secondary cause or other, the Spirit of God has been at work. And in every movement of conscience, in every pang of self-reproach, in every visitation of a compunctious tenderness, in every conception of a better purpose, in every longing of the soul after a conformity to the law of heaven, in every upward aspiring of the heart under all the darkness and all the passion by which it is encompassed, do we recognize a manifestation of the Spirit's influence, a trace of His unseen but most undoubted agency, a struggle in that contest which is now going on between the powers of heaven and of hell for the dominion of this world; and upon the issue of which contest in the soul of each individual it will depend, whether he remain in captivity to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; or renewed in his mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, he be rescued from that universal wreck which has come upon the species, and be exalted into a monument of that Redeemer's triumphs, who has undertaken the work of our deliverance, and, for that greatness of strength which He put forth in the execution of it, has obtained for His reward, that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Now it may require some attention from you, to perceive the precise kind of responsibility, which this view of the matter lays on one and on all of us. Were a charge committed to me by some rightful superior in an unknown tongue, I incur no fault towards him, though I

fail to acquaint myself of the articles of this charge. But conceive an interpreter to step in between me and him, and to translate the whole of his instructions into my vernacular language; and then should I persist in my neglect, I land myself in all the guilt of disobedience. Or, what brings it still nearer to the topic on hand, conceive me to be labouring under such a deafness, that I cannot possibly hear the feeble voice of my master, as he delivers his commission to me; but that I am able to understand it by the more powerful enunciation of a third person, who acts as an assistant in this business of communication betwixt us. Or, what perhaps is a still more precise approximation, conceive me to be ignorant of the authority and blind to the claims of him who is laying his commands upon me; but that another explains the matter so as to make me sensible of his moral and legitimate right to the whole of my obedience. Then you can be at no loss to feel, how, whatever palliations might be devised for my want of subordination to the will of my superior, had there been no intermediate link of interpretation, or of exposition, or of audible conveyance betwixt us—yet, with such a link, every such palliation is done away; and the more faithfully and laboriously and patiently the office of an interpreter has been discharged, the more does it go to aggravate the blame of him, who, with all these advantages, still refuses the rightful call of his rightful superior, and turns in contempt and disobedience away from him.

Now it would suspend our immediate object, did we attempt at present what we think can be done by the united force of reason and Scripture, to pour the light of a thorough explicitness into all the subtleties of this interesting argument. We will not therefore say at present, in how far man, because labouring as he does under a moral blindness of perception, and sunk in all the stupidity of a constitutional alienation from God, is, on that account, to be held less guilty of rebellion against Him by his life of prone and habitual disobedience. But, sure we are, that it would take away from the whole force of the apology, were some secret and invisible power to open at times the eye of his mind to the high titles and au-

thority of the Godhead; and he with his eyes so open, to put his daring footstep on that forbidden ground which is fenced about by the prohibitions of the Divine law. Or, were this power to touch his heart by some sense of dutiful obligation to his Maker; and he, stifling the whole of its urgency, were to forbear an entrance upon the way of the commandments. Or were this power to lay before him, in clear and resistless manifestation, the spectacle of an inviting God, plying His wandering prodigal with all the tenderness of entreaty, and assuring him on the pledge of His own Son given up to the death for us, that if he turn in repentance to the God he has strayed from, all will be forgiven and all will be forgotten; and he, unmoved out of his obstinacy by the whole weight of this fatherly exhortation, were to refuse the proffered kindness, and unmindful of the call from heaven, were to walk in the counsel of his own heart and in the sight of his own eyes. Now there is such a power at work with us all. We see Him not, but we have the experience of His agency in the effect it has on our hearts and consciences. This is the only way in which His interference may have been at all sensible to you—even by a movement of conscience, when it pointed to you the path of duty, or charged on you the guilt of your manifold deviations. All of you must have the remembrance of such movements. There is not one of you, who has not felt in your past history, a visitation of this kind on your ever busy and ever thinking spirits. And there is not one of you who has been in the habit of resisting these visitations, who does not feel, how, in the progress of this resistance, the moral sense gets more languid in its admonitions; and the monitor within emits a gentler voice; and the impression of the present guilt and the future danger is ever decaying into a fainter and a feebler influence; and that horror at sin, which was fresh and powerful at the outset of life, is subsiding into a hardened insensibility; and, for the tenderness of youthful conscience, and youthful apprehension, there is now perhaps the front of an audacious rebellion—an iron remorselessness of soul which can now sin for itself without a sigh, and behold the sin of others without

one movement of concern or of sympathy. Now if you look no farther than to the phenomenon of conscience within you, you will look on this as the natural progress of its hardening; and on this progress, an argument may be founded for immediate repentance. But the Bible teaches us to look farther. It connects every phenomenon both of matter and of mind, with the invisible power which gives birth to it. It refers every moral movement towards God in the heart of man, to the visitation of God's Spirit, acting the part of an enlightener or adviser or persuasive monitor, who plies His suggestions and His arguments with the men of a perverse and obstinate generation. And thus it is that we are called to grieve not the Spirit, to quench not the Spirit, to provoke not the Spirit to abandon us to our own wilfulness, to make not the Spirit angry by our contempt for His warnings and our resistance to the voice of His authority. It is alarming indeed, to be told of the natural progress of the conscience, in becoming harder and more insensible by every act of resistance to its dictates. But it forms a distinct and a powerful addition to the argument, when we think of these dictates being set forth by the Spirit of God, who is a willing and a knowing and a living and a personal agent; that we by our resistance tire His patience, and tempt Him to leave us to ourselves, and bring hardness down upon our hearts in the way of a judgment; if that to-day we hear not His voice He may not come to-morrow, or if He do come may knock more deafly than ever at the door of our hearts, and emit a fainter and a feebler whispering; that if now we mind not the things which belong to our peace, He will become less loud and less frequent in His admonitions, He will gradually die away from us into a final departure, He will let us alone, and leave us to the perverseness of our own ways and the infatuation of our own counsels.

The first argument for immediate repentance turns upon the fact, that the soul, by every fresh act of resistance against the admonitions of conscience, gathers the metal of a stouter and a harder resistance in all time coming. The second argument turns upon the fact that the conscience itself is every day be-

coming less powerful, and less frequent, and less urgent in its admonitions; and if you connect these admonitions with the living and the personal agent, who, by whispering to the human mind through the organ of conscience, is the real though unseen author of all its suggestions—you bring every individual amongst us into the same relation with the Spirit of God, that subsists between him who lies under certain duties and obligations, and him who fulfils the office of his friendly and advising superior. The Spirit takes upon Himself the office of persuading us to all that is most righteous towards God, and of course to all that is most beneficial to ourselves. In the discharge of this office, there is the exercise of much kindness and patience and tender benevolence. If we act faithfully and zealously on the advice of this day, He will treat us as hopeful subjects for the advice of another day. He will persevere in His services, and reiterate His admonitions; and to us who have made a right use of the teaching we have received, more will be given. And this harmonizes with all that we experience of the visible effect of this invisible influence. He who betakes himself most scrupulously to the following of his conscience, is every day receiving from it the light of clearer and more abundant intimations. The monitor within becomes every day, by reason of use, more judicious and enlightened; and more able to indicate the path of duty, and to lead us a clear and a confident way through all the embarrassments of a darkening casuistry; and, in return, as it were, for our faithful application of its more elementary lessons, does it deal them out in larger and surer and more abundant manifestations. The conscientious performance of what we do know, is rewarded by a more satisfying revelation of what we do not know. And thus it is, that we so often behold the progress of a true believer, to be from the fearful scrupulosities of a yet unsettled and unconfirmed babe in Christ, to that firm purpose, that intrepid decision, that bold and immediate energy of conduct, which bespeak the full assurance of a mind that knoweth the right from the wrong, and promptly betakes itself to the line of its own just and righteous determination.

If any man keep my sayings to him will I manifest myself. If any man serve me, he shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. These and such as these are most interesting passages. They unfold the connexion which the Author of the Gospel has established, between advancing obedience and advancing spiritual discernment. Follow out the dictates that have already been clearly put forth to you; and this will be followed up by a more copious supply of instruction than you have ever yet received. Walk after the present leadings of your conscience, or rather of the Spirit to whom conscience is the organ or channel of conveyance; and He will lead you still farther: And thus it is, that you grow from the first rudiments of the Christian practice, to the strength and the stature of manhood; and are carried forward from the tottering feebleness of one who is in the infancy of his acquirements, till you are made to stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

Now mark the opposite result of that conduct, by which we turn a deaf ear to the voice that is within us. We not only disobey the voice, but we stifle it. In the whole of this business we have to do with one who is pleased with our attention to Him, and rewards it by the growing clearness and frequency of His intimations. But should we withhold our attention, He in time will withhold His intimations. My Spirit will not always strive with the children of men. It is thus it will be found in the great day of account that He is clear of the blood of all the families upon earth. It will be found that over the whole face of an alienated world, deep as its spirit of slumber may be about the things of God, it will be found that He has done enough to awaken it. It will be found, that, with the mighty instruments of the law written in the heart and the law written in the record of heaven's messengers, He has made His ample round through all the tribes of this world's accountable population, and has knocked at the door of every conscience; and there is not a man who will have Him to blame for the undoing of his eternity. He has given to each some distinct suggestions or other, which he himself felt to be invested with all the authority of a right-

ful command; and which, had he followed, the spirit of God would still have kept by him and plied him with his further communications. But he did not follow it, clear as it was even to his own sense of right and wrong; and therefore it is, that on that great and decisive day, his condemnation will have a clear principle to rest upon. He will be tried by the light that was put within his reach, and which was withdrawn from him only because he had not the uprightness and the morality to walk in it; and therefore it is that in him is fulfilled the saying, that he who hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. And thus it is, that every act of known and wilful disobedience, throws a darkening cloud over the path of duty; and smothers the admonitions of the inward voice; and makes the Spirit of God less frequent in His visitations; and hastens to the soul that awful consummation of being let alone, or of being finally abandoned to its own desperate impenitency. And therefore do we urge you to follow out every one step and purpose of repentance that conscience is now laying upon you; and that not merely because we anticipate in future a harder resistance to its dictates, but we anticipate the progressive feebleness of a decaying and perhaps of an expiring conscience. Or, in other words, we know that He who suggests to it all its admonitions, and arms its voice with all the energy that belongs to it, may at length be driven by your perverse and ungracious treatment of Him to abandon His office altogether, and to leave the chamber of that mind where sin reigns uncontrolled and fills the recesses of the inner man with its dark and unhallowed imagery,—leave it with all its rebellious affections unrebuked by His presence and unbled by any of His future visitations.

This is not an aerial speculation. What we have now asserted may be seen by us all, fixed and exemplified on many a living subject. There are men to be met with at all times, crossing our daily path, and sitting down with us in the social party, and entering into talk with us in the room of public resort, and into negotiation with us at the market-place—who are just in that very state of abandonment which we have now been

describing. You may not have been in the habit of looking upon them, as men of whom you could say, that the Spirit of God had given them over. But this is only because you have not adverted to the fact—that it is this Spirit who is the real, though secret and unnoticed author, of every movement of principle; of every suggestion of conscience; of every check of self-reproach; of every arresting call, by which the mind is directed to seriousness, and is led to bethink itself of God, and is visited by a sense of the present guilt and the coming judgment, and is in any way brought under the power of a religious consideration. We are sure, you must allow, that there is not a more familiar exhibition amongst your fellow-men, than of one who is built up in an ease and in a security, to which the monitor within offers no disturbance whatever—of one who does, and is in the deliberate habit of doing, what is clearly and undeniably wrong; but whose conscience has ceased to ply him with her remonstrances, and to tell him that it is so—of one, who, in the pursuits of voluptuousness, suffers not one thought of the law of heaven, to stop him in that unhallowed career on which he has embarked himself—of, one, who, in the prosecution of gain, can do things without one check of remorse, which other men could not do, without their inner man bringing the whole armour of principle and of compunction and a struggling sense of duty into war against it. You must, in your walk of experience, have met with such men—whose conscience is asleep, or whose conscience has lost its power of admonition; or whose conscience, at least, has given up her wonted task, of presenting her admonitions to the notice of the infatuated profligate, or of the corrupt and devoted worldling. And if you just connect this fact, offered to you by your own experience, with the undoubted truth—that this said conscience is neither more nor less than the organ, through which the Spirit of God sends His impressive whispers into the soul; and plies it with the awful lessons, of man being answerable to his God, and of God's wrath being revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of man—Then the right inference to make concerning him who hears no such whispers,

is, that the Spirit of God is no longer at work with him. He no longer offers to move him out of the fatal tranquillity which has got hold of him. And that soul, which is enjoying itself for a few years—which feels so much at ease, because leaning on a foundation of repose that never varies—which goes on to sin without one disquieting scruple; and to keep by its distance from God, without one terrifying thought of His unescapable eye, and His no less unescapable judgment—Why such a soul, surrounded as it may be with all the securities of unconcern, and of worldly pleasure, and of prosperous circumstances, and of health, which bids fair for a long vista and a brilliant perspective on this side of eternity—such a soul, with all its enviable tranquillities, and all its keen enjoyment of time and of its vanities, is neither more nor less than ripening for its doom, in the deceitful calm of a deep and undisturbed infatuation. And, however much the easy man may be the object of complacency to himself and of convivial delight to his acquaintances who are like him—on him lies the awful sentence of being let alone; of being given up by the Spirit of God; of being turned from as one of those hopeless subjects, on whom all the past suggestions of conscience and of principle have been thrown away: of being left to the deep spirit of slumber, in which he may persist to the hour of death, and from which he may never, never be awakened, till the sound of the last trumpet shall summon him from the grave—and the awful infliction of his now heedless, and thoughtless, and remorseless guilt, shall frown upon him in fell characters of truth and of severity from the judgment-seat.

But, it may be said, does not this treatment of him by the Spirit of God look hard and unrelenting? Would it not be kind to keep by him, and to remonstrate with him, and to send another and another suggestion through the conscience of this poor child of infatuation? Yes, but ere we indulge in these reflections, let us think what the Spirit of God has already done for him. We appeal to his own remembrance, if any such be here, whether the Spirit of God have not already done all this? We call him to look back on his youthful days, and bid him recol-

lect, if there never was a time in the whole history of his life, when conscience awoke upon him, when, ere he entered that career of guilt on which he is now so fully embarked, if the internal monitor, true to her office, did not struggle the point with him; and he, suffering himself to be overborne by temptations, would none of her reproof, and turned away from all her admonitions? We ask him to tell us upon his own honest remembrance of the past, if, even after he had been led astray among the dark paths of this world's deceit and this world's profligacy, conscience still did not keep for months and for years by her post, and ever and anon plied him with her visitations? We ask him, if she did not fill her mouth with arguments, and make use of every plea to recal her thankless disciple, from the profanations and the depravities into which he was wandering? Was there never a time when she pressed him with her suggestions; and he, shutting the hasty door against them all, took shelter in the surrounding example, and quelled his every agitation amid the boisterous merriment of his still hardier acquaintances?

Yes, if he will only look back, he will find that it was long and very long, ere conscience gave way to his repeated insults, and was at length compelled to quit him under the power of his manifold and provoking contempt for her. And ere she could resign her task, did she borrow suggestions from every quarter, and try her every expedient, and waited her every moment, and bethink herself of a variety of affecting considerations. She would at one time fetch an argument from heaven; and tell him of the God who sitteth on the throne, and of the law that proceedeth out of His mouth, and of the all-seeing eye that is in every place beholding the evil and the good. At another, she would fetch her argument from earth, and, to subdue him into tenderness would she set before him the picture of a venerable father; and of the mansions of piety, where he spent his early days, and would have shrunk in horror from the thought of his present delinquencies; and of the prayers which his unsuspecting parents are still putting forth for him; and of the thankless return he has made them for all their

anxieties; and how, dismantled of all his youthful innocence, and with all purity fled from his practice and all tenderness from his heart, he was widening every day his distance from that God, at whose word he had been taught to tremble, and whose sabbaths he had been taught to remember and to keep them holy. But why need we talk of his conscience, when in fact it was the pure and the Holy Spirit of God, who prompted her every admonition, and gave its emphasis to every lifting of her voice. This Spirit kept by him; and gave him the fairest and most frequent trials; and, grieved though He was by the bitterest provocations did not for long abandon him; and went along with him to those haunts of iniquity, where pure as He was, He had to bear with all the impurities and all the execrations which are acted in these scenes of wickedness, and even then did He attempt to reclaim him to seriousness: But all, all was stifled; and after a patience exercised to the uttermost—after the discouragement of many refusals—after being quenched and resisted in many thousand ways—then and not till then did the Holy Spirit of God, against whom he is now venting forth his murmurs of discontent, abandon him to his own infatuation.

And even still, if there be any individual of the description we allude to within the reach of our hearing, and whose conscience has been at all touched, or his feelings at all arrested, by the instrumentality of our feeble voice—then there has been another agent between him and us, than the mere sound by which the words of truth are conveyed to his hearing. The Spirit of God has lent His presence to the sound. And after the long and dreary absence of those years which have been spent at a distance from all that was serious in principle, and all that was pure and righteous in conduct, has He now come back upon him; and made another reappearance; and given him another sight of His rebuking countenance; and is making another trial to find a way into his bosom: and forgetful of every provocation, and of every wrong that He has gotten from his hands, is He telling him that here is another opportunity; and lifting His friendly countenance, that, if possible, He

may still restrain him from the fate of a desperado in rebellious iniquity against God. He is pointing to him, on the one hand, the terrors of that sentence which is awaiting him, if he will turn him away from the reproof that He is now laying upon His conscience; and, on the other, He is trying to lure him to his safety, by holding forth to the eye of his mind the arms of an inviting lawgiver, who, even in this late hour of his dark and deceitful day, still says, That if he will only return to Him and make his peace with Him through the blood of an everlasting covenant, and be willing to live no longer to himself but to the new law of Him who has taken upon Him the burden of his iniquities—that He is willing to forgive all and to forget all. If any thing will touch the heart of him who has driven at a long career of hard and obstinate impenitency, this should. And if it do not, who does not see that God has wiped His hands of him? Who does not see, that He who sitteth on the throne, and has plied him through life with so many warnings of proclaimed danger and so many messages of insulted tenderness, has acquitted Himself of all harsh and unrighteous severity? Who does not see, that the blood lieth on the head of him who has thus abandoned himself; and that it is by his own repeated sins against the imploring and beseeching and expostulating Spirit, that this Spirit tempted and exercised to the uttermost, has taken its final flight, and put on its inflexible purpose of never returning to this vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.

Now the appeal we have made to the hoary and the habitual and the hackneyed offender is applicable to you all. If there have come near the hearts of any one of you this day, a single impulse towards the repentance that is unto salvation, it is the Spirit of God who brought the impulse home to your conviction; and you inflict upon Him a wound and a provocation, if you let it be smothered among the levities or the profanenesses or the cold and blasting secularities of this alienated world. You have made this one other attempt in the work of striving with you fruitless; and you are tempting Him to desist from striving altogether. O what a fearful importance

it gives to every suggestion of right or of wrong by which you are visited! Encourage the suggestion and follow it; and you encourage the Spirit of God to persevere with you, in the exercise of all His offices. Stifle the suggestion, and resist it, and suffer it to be quenched and forgotten amid the tumults of a noisy, headlong, and worldly career; and you set up a contest from which God declares, that His Spirit will at length retire. His patience has a limit beyond which it will not pass. And by this one and that other act of resistance, to the call of Turn and repent and live—by this wretched postponement one day after another in which you have persisted so long—by this deceitful carrying forward of the purpose, to some distant period of your anticipated history—by this delusive miscalculation upon the eleventh hour—you are every day bringing nearer to you that awful consummation, when it might be said of you, what our Saviour said with tears over the devoted city of Jerusalem, “Hadst thou known in thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are forever hid from thine eyes.”

May the Spirit of God press home this interesting argument resistlessly upon you; and by the working of that power of His, by which He is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, may all your feelings and all your purposes be overborne. May the call of immediate repentance force its way through the withstanding barriers of every heart, that is now trenched in the depths of alienation. In the striving of this day, may He make a conquest over you. And working in you faith with power—and making through this faith your souls a fit habitation for Himself—and stirring up within you the immediate resolution of giving up all that you know to be sinful in your conduct—and plying you with suggestions, which, listened to and obeyed, may open an inviting access into your heart for all His communications—May He thus obtain within you a firm and inviolable lodgment—That brought under the dominion of His purifying and sanctifying and perfecting influences, it may be seen of you, that you are indeed born again by the word of God, brought home to your consciences with power by

the Spirit of God ; and have embarked all your energies and all your desires upon that new track of obedience, which carries forward to the glories of immortality, every new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VI.

On the Nature of the Sin unto Death.

“There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”—1 JOHN v. 16.

IF we assume that the sin unto death is the same with the sin against the Holy Ghost—then, from what has been said in a previous discourse, it will follow that we regard those people to be on a wrong track of inquiry, who, with a view to ascertain whether they have committed this sin, look back to their by-gone history ; and rummage the depositories of their past remembrance ; and try to find, among all the deeds they have ever committed, that one deed of particular enormity, to which the forgiveness of the gospel will not and cannot be extended. There is, in truth, no such deed within the reach of human performance. The blood of Christ can wash away the guilt of all the sins of all the individuals in the assemblage before us ; and, in the hearing of every one of you, do we make this free and open announcement of the gospel remedy, in all the power and preciousness which belong to it. It is a matter of rare occurrence, but it does occur, that the imagination of this sin fills the heart of some melancholy patients with the agitations of despair ; and spreads a dark and mournful complexion over the secret history of him who is the victim of it ; and keeps the comfort of the gospel far away from him ; and fixes in his mind the obstinate delusion, that there is a something about him, which renders him an exception to those wide and universal calls, which are made to circulate at large among all the other sons and daughters of the species. Now this is a misapprehension. The offer is still unto all, and upon all who believe ; and he is not excluded from the offer. And there is not a single iniquity of his past life that so excludes him. And if he will only come to Christ in His appointed way ;

and do honour to the power of His sacrifice, by resting on it ; and show respect to His authority, by putting forth all the energy that is in him to act up to its requirements ; and evidence his humble submission to the doctrine of the Spirit, by praying for Him in faith ; and give proof of the general honesty which runs through all his principles on the subject of the Christian religion, by his diligent use of every revealed expedient, in the way of reading and acting and devoutly observing the appointed ordinances—then do we say to him what we say to you all—that you have taken such a step, and entered upon such a career, and committed yourself to such an infallible guidance, as in spite of all the manifold deformities of your past life, and under all that guilt of rebelliousness which now lies upon you, will translate you into acceptance with the God whom you have so deeply offended ; and carry you forward by the ascending march of a progressive and ever-advancing sanctification, to all the glories and all the perfections of a blissful eternity.

But though this retrospective examination of the past is not the way of ascertaining whether you have committed the unpardonable sin, there is a way, not perhaps of ascertaining, but of gathering much both of probability and of most valuable and important information respecting it. The question we put to you is, not what you have done through the life that is past, but what do you feel at present ? How is the call we have now sounded in your ears, telling upon your purposes ? How is this wondrously free invitation of the gospel entertained by you at this moment ? Tell us, if the proclamation of an open path to return

to the God from whom you were alienated, is at all disposing you to bestir yourselves and moving you towards Him? Let us know, if it be your intention now, to abandon every one of the things which you know to be the will of Christ that you should abandon; or, in other words, to turn ye from all your iniquities. Let us know, if you wish to submit your hearts to the power and the vitality of His spiritual law. Let us know if you wish for acceptance on the simple footing of His righteousness; and if you wish for holiness through the operation of that Spirit, which is alone able to revolutionize your inner man, and bring it into an entire and an altogether devoted conformity to the will of a heart-searching God. Tell us whether the earnest aspiration and the honest intention towards all this be in you; or tell if the urgency of these invitations be now falling without power and without fruit upon your unstimulated consciences. Then know, that, if, in the struggle of your opposing purposes and your conflicting inclinations, the world shall prevail—we will not say, if you have yet so grieved the Holy Spirit of God, as to determine Him to leave you for ever: But you have at least heightened the provocation, and brought it nearer to the point of His final abandonment. We cannot say of any of you, that you have come this length already. But we can say of all who retire from us this day, without an effective purpose of immediate repentance—that, by this single act of resistance, you have brought yourselves nearer to it. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not a point of mysterious speculation. It is a point of practical importance. It is a point of plain and impressive application to every ordinary conscience. And what a fearful importance does it confer on every call to turn unto God—what a mighty reinforcement to every argument that can be addressed to you for turning immediately—that by every resistance to every single impulse that is made upon you, you are working up the sin against the Holy Ghost nearer and nearer to that point of aggravation, at which He takes His final departure away from you; that you are making farther approaches to a state of desperate impenitency; that you are getting forward to such a pitch of hardened

opposition, as constitutes the sin unto death—a sin for which no intercession will avail; no prayer of weeping relative will be lifted with efficacy to heaven; no earthly expedient will ever woo that Spirit back again, whom your manifold provocations and your oft repeated contempt have determined to let you for ever alone.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is not some obscure and useless doctrine, which occupies its hidden corner in the field of revelation; and forms a legitimate topic of speculation only to those, who have attained some rare and monstrous distinction by a daring feat of impiety. It carries a lesson along with it which applies to you all at this very moment. If there be some old among you, upon the obduracy of whose hackneyed consciences, the call we have now lifted in your hearing makes no practical impression—then, look not for the sin against the Holy Ghost in any guilty act by which some passage of your former history is deformed. It consists in that repeated act, by which you have turned the every call of the gospel away from you; and the evidence of it does not lie in any thing that memory can furnish you with out of the materials of the history that is past. The evidence of it lies in the present condition of your soul, as to its moral and religious sensibility; and if that sensibility is so far deranged, as to beget in you at this moment no impulse towards your turning unto God, in that way of appointed mediatorship that is made known to us in the New Testament—this is a fell and an alarming symptom as to you, and well have you reason to suspect and to anticipate and to tremble. Again, if there be some old among you, who, after a sleep so long and so profound that it bore a resemblance to the irrecoverable sleep of death, are now visited with a movement and a desire and a concern after these things; and feel a readiness in you to be all that Christ would have you to be; and are looking earnestly towards the way of His salvation; and long to be established upon it—then we have no power of divination into the way or the mind of the unsearchable Spirit. All that we can do is to put a fair interpretation upon the facts that are before us. And the fact of an

arrested conscience even on the eleventh hour of an indolent and a rebellious day, speaks for itself, and tells you that He has not yet left you. And we feel not that we are exceeding our warrant by a single inch, when we try to cheer you on by the language of encouragement; and call upon you not to quench the Spirit—not to let this movement in your heart pass unproductive away from you—not to make of it but one transitory glimpse, previous to an everlasting departure.—But do follow out the impulse that you have gotten; and drink in all the comfort that the free grace of the gospel is fitted to inspire; and aspire after all the strictness of walk and conversation, which becomes the profession of it; and let not the imploring cry for the clean heart and the right spirit cease to ascend to the throne of God through the channel of His Son, till the answer come down upon you in all its fulness, and your repentance be perfected.

But let the youngest also among you, (and by addressing ourselves both to old and young we comprehend all who now hear us), learn what a fearful thing it is to tamper with conscience—to stifle any of its movements—to suppress the dictates of your inward monitor on any temptation whatever—or to suffer the small still voice within you to be deafened and overborne, by the maddening outcry of those lawless, those deriding, those profligate scorners with whom you may have unhappily associated. By so doing you commit an offence against the light of conscience. You commit an offence against that present agent, who makes the light to shine upon it. And one such offence facilitates the way to another.—And you enter on a career of defiance to principle. And the matter aggravates. And the sin accumulates upon you till it arrives at that fatal point in the history of every man who walks the whole of the broad way which leadeth to destruction—even to that point where the Holy Ghost abandons him for ever; and that just because the sin against the Holy Ghost, is now wrought up to that degree of enormity, which provokes Him to take His final and irrecoverable leave of you.—Every slighted call brings you nearer to this point. Every neglected warning brings you nearer to it. Every sermon

however much it may be talked of, and liked, and acquiesced in by the understanding, if it tell not on the practical powers, brings you nearer to it. The history of this very day may bring you nearer it. And therefore it is, that we never can consent to repentance on any other terms than repentance now. We never can listen without alarm to all the misapplied phraseology about the eleventh hour. We never can speak to you in any other language, than “to-day while it is called to-day.” We never can lay before you the gift of an offered Saviour, but we must speak of “now as your accepted time, and now as the day of your salvation.” And we have but one object, and all our explanation has been thrown away on him who retires from us this evening; and who, if hitherto a stranger to the power and significance of these things, does not, from this time forward, begin and carry on that good work of turning unto the Lord, which shall terminate in the secure and everlasting enjoyment of His presence in paradise.

Now, to turn all this to the practical account of regulating our intercessions in behalf of others—suppose, in the first instance, that I possessed in a perfect degree, a gift that we know to have been miraculously conferred in the first age of Christianity—the discerning of spirits.—Suppose me endowed with the faculty of looking to another man; and taking as accurate a note of the movements of his heart, as if I could perceive through a window the secrecy of all its operations. Give me the power, in particular, of estimating all the degrees of his actual resistance to the voice of conscience; and furnish me at the same time with the knowledge at what point of resistance it is, that the Holy Spirit gives up the man with whom he has been striving to the infatuation of his own perverse and determined wilfulness—and then would I know at what instant of time it was that he had committed the sin unto death.—Then I would know how long he remained the hopeful subject of my intercessions; and then would I know the time of his arrival at that point in the history of impenitence, when the inspired Apostle of our text withdraws his positive sanction from my prayers. It is to be observed, that he does not speak upon

this subject with the tone and in the terms of decision. He does not peremptorily forbid prayer. He speaks in the manner of a man who had received no positive commission upon the subject. He leaves it on the footing of a point of doubtfulness, whether a man should pray or not for an acquaintance in these circumstances. He announces himself to his readers, very much in the same way in which Paul announced himself, when he ventured to speak in his own person, and not with the authority of an inspired messenger. "I speak as a man." I give you my own judgment, says Paul, in a matter, in which God has not thought fit to favour me with any revelation. In the verse before us, John does not even venture to give us his own judgment. He goes no further than to express his opinion of the inefficacy, and therefore his doubtfulness as to the propriety of intercession, when it was made in behalf of one who had sinned the sin unto death. But he at least supposes that some of those whom he addressed, had the means of knowing when a professing Christian committed this sin. Suppose them then to have this knowledge.—Suppose, that, in virtue of the miraculous gift of discerning spirits, they were made sure of the irrecoverable state of some member of their society. Then they could not pray for his recovery in faith. They could not, along with such a prayer, present that offering to God which is essential to its acceptance. They could not, in this instance comply with the injunction of the Saviour, who tells His disciples, that whatever they ask in prayer, let them believe that they are to receive it, and they shall receive it. They could not believe that they were to obtain by the power of their supplications, the recovery of the soul of him, whom they knew that the Holy Spirit had irrecoverably abandoned. They could not therefore do, what, in the verses immediately preceding the text, they were told would give an unfailling success to all their petitions—they could not ask for this thing, knowing at the same time that it was agreeable to the will of God; and therefore knowing that they should have the petitions that they desired of Him. And in these circumstances does John, by expressing his doubtfulness whether such a

prayer was right, withdraw at least the sanction of a positive authority, from any intercessions delivered for an object so hopeless and so unattainable.

This, then, is the practical result that would come out of the circumstances of the first Christians. Those of whom they did not know, that they had committed the sin unto death, they would make the subjects of their intercession before God; and as to those of whom they did know that they had been guilty of this sin, they would feel, from the want of faith in the possibility of the object, and from the discouragement they received at the mouth of an apostle, that they could not pray for them with any efficacy. Now just conceive them to have no certain way of knowing at all, whether any had committed this sin or not—what effect should this have on the practice of intercession? Why, it would bring the whole human race within the circle of their prayers. It would enable them to fulfil the injunction of "pray for all men," without laying any such modification on this precept as is pointed out by the apostle in the text. Those whom they thought hopefully and well of, they could of course pray for with a higher degree of confidence before God, than those of whom they were ignorant or doubtful. But still there was no positive knowledge of their case being irrecoverable, that ought at all to restrain them from such petitions, as, "Lord, if it be thy will, do thou work faith with power in the heart of this particular acquaintance"—"Lord, if it be possible, that the obstinate enmity to the truth which festers in the heart of another, can be made to yield to the influences of thy Divine Spirit, do thou cause it to pass away from him"—"Lord, do thou recal my unhappy relative from those depths of alienation in which he is sunk, and raise him from his death in trespasses and sins to the new obedience of a spiritual resurrection." Yes, and though his depravities should accumulate upon him by every hour of his earthly existence; though the hardness of an impenitent heart should be ever gathering into a temper of still more settled obstinacy than before; though habit should be compassing him round, within the enclosure of a tighter and more inextricable bondage; nay, though in the

secret counsels of heaven his die should be cast, and months or seasons may have rolled, since the Spirit made His last attempt upon him, and then died away into a final and irremediable separation—yet so long as this counsel is a secret to you—so long as in your mind this question has a slight uncertainty to rest upon it—then you are not released from the duty that lies upon you; and acting, as it is your humble and becoming part to do, on the revealed things which belong to you and to your children—you are at your post when you pray for the man of whose fate you are in the dark, though his fate may have long been fixed and determined on.

Now this exhibits to us the kind of intercourse which goes on very extensively between earth and heaven—the intercourse, if we may use the expression, of praying at a venture. It is a kind of intercourse warranted by scriptural example. Did not our Saviour pray, that, if possible, the cup might pass from Him?—and He had to drink it to the very dregs. Did not Peter tell Simon Magus to pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him? And, in the Old Testament, have we not examples of this uncertainty, as to the result both of praying and of doing? Does not God call on the people to prove Him—to put Him to the trial by their prayers? And does not the expression repeatedly occur, “Let us return unto the Lord”—at one time in the way of supplication, at another in the way of obedience?—And it is stated as the effect of it, that it may be the Lord will be gracious.

What then should be the practice of the present day? We have no doubt that there are many who have put the final seal upon their own condemnation. But the question is, are there any upon whom that seal is legible to us? Is there a single individual of our acquaintance, upon whose forehead we can read the inscription, that he is undone? Is there a mark set upon him, by which we can learn, that he has rendered himself a fugitive and a vagabond from the mercy of God? Is there any such index, that at all offers itself to the eye of our senses; and if there be none, then, is there any one of us, who can so weigh the secrets

of the heart, and so penetrate into the counsels of God, as to determine of one single human being who walks abroad on the scene of life and population around us, that he is an outcast from prayer? In those days of miracle, when the discerning of spirits was given to apostles and to primitive teachers, there may have been individuals, in behalf of whom the duty of prayer ought to be suspended—who had not only thrown themselves irrecoverably out from the mercies of God, but who, certainly known to be so, had arrested that voice of supplication, which went to ascend for them from their fellow-men. In those days of wide and visible distinction between the church and the world, when the very profession of Christianity proved a certain degree of sincerity and earnestness—when, by the very act of being admitted into the society of disciples, it was made evident, that there was a certain liking for their doctrine; and a certain sympathy in their feelings, and in their faith; and a certain participation in the hopes of the gospel; and a certain tasting of the word of life; and a certain habit of living by the powers of a coming world—In those days, when men by their very profession proved that they were so far partakers of the Holy Ghost—that to throw him off, after all their experience of the power and preciousness of His teaching—that to throw Him off, after all the fellowship they had with Him, and all the favours of light, and direction and joy they had gotten from His hand—argued a degree of resistance more hardened and more irrecoverable, than even to hold out against His first and His earliest instigations—In such days, and with such a visible landmark before them, as the withdrawal of an apostate from their communion, we know not but that even ordinary and unendowed Christians may have been able to judge of some of them, that they had so fallen away, and so crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and so put Him to an open shame—that they had committed the sin unto death, and were beyond the reach of human prayer, because it was impossible to renew again unto repentance.* But tell us, if you have attained this certainty of

See Heb. vi. 4-6.

any one man you can point your finger to? Can you say of any one desperado in wickedness, that there goes an outcast from mercy, and that it is vain to pray for him? Or, rather, is it not true of us all, that such is our ignorance of the human heart; and so deep is that veil with which the God of wisdom has chosen to shroud the doctrine of individual destiny—that there is not a man within the range of the acquaintance of any of us, of whom it is not our becoming duty to pray in his behalf, lest peradventure God may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth?

Now mark how the very principle which runs through the subject of praying for others at a venture, applies in the whole extent of it to the subject of preaching to others at a venture. He who is put in charge of the gospel, knows not to whom it shall be the savour of life unto life, and to whom it shall be the savour of death unto death. He is at his post, and in the exercise of his duty, when he proclaims it in the hearing of all, as that free and unconditional offer of mercy which is at the taking of all.

He knows not where the offer is to light; nor from whose individual bosom it is to chase away his heavy alienation from the God whom he has offended; nor what is the heart that shall be softened by it out of all the obstinacy of its former impenitence; nor in what quarter of the crowd that is before him, that man is to be found, whose conscience shall surrender itself to the power and urgency of the preacher's voice; nor into whose conviction the winged messenger shall find its entrance, because the power and demonstration of the Spirit have lent to it all its efficacy. Why, he is like a man drawing a bow at a venture; and he knows not whether the arrow is to speed its uncertain way. But of one thing he is certain—that if the argument, by which he is trying now to storm the fortress of human corruption, shall fall fruitless on the soul of any individual amongst you, that soul is strengthening the bulwarks of its future resistance against him; and the weapons of his spiritual warfare are becoming every day more languid and more ineffectual for their purpose; and the Holy Ghost, grieved by this fresh act of contempt and

disobedience, is nearer than ever to the step of a final abandonment. And thus it is that a doctrine, which, if it only ministered exercise to the understanding, we never should have touched upon—a doctrine, which, if it only serve to regale the curiosity of the speculative, is to him of no more use than any one of the lofty abstractions of philosophy—a doctrine which may be talked about, and controverted, and commented on in a thousand different ways, while no salutary alarm is felt, and no energetic purpose is formed, upon the undoubted truth, that every day of procrastination is nearing you to that point of time at which the Spirit shall cease to strive with you—Thus it is that the doctrine of the sin against the Holy Ghost may be turned to the attainment of a practical end. It should so tell, in fact, on the hearts and the consciences of all men as to help on the business of their immediate repentance; and it leaves every one without the shelter of a single pretext, for delaying to turn to God in His appointed way, and, fleeing from all sin, to flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel.

These explanations may serve perhaps to do away a difficulty, which, to the eye of a superficial observer, hangs over a remarkable passage in the history of our Saviour. On His approach to the city of Jerusalem, it is said of Him, that when He came near and beheld the city, He wept over it—saying, "If thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." It looks a mystery, that our Saviour should weep for that, which He had power to ward off from the object of his tenderness—that He who created these worlds, and who is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, should abandon Himself to the helplessness of despair, when He contemplated the approaching fate of that city, which, after all the wrongs He had sustained from it, and all the perverseness and provocations He had gotten from its hands, He still longed after and sighed over in all the bitterness of grief, at the prospect of its coming visitation. Why, it may be thought, could not He have fulfilled the every desire of His sympathizing heart, by interposing the might and sovereignty which belonged

to Him? Could not He have arrested the progress of the victorious armies? Could not He have been for a wall of defence around His beloved city; and whence that dark and mysterious necessity, to which even the power of Him, to whom all power was committed both in heaven and earth, was constrained to give way—insomuch that the Being, in whom was vested an omnipotence over the whole domain of Nature and of Providence, felt that He had nothing for it but to sit Him down and weep over the doom that He saw to be irrevocable? It is true that the inhabitants of this devoted city were the children of darkness. It is true that they still put the calls and the offers of the New Testament away from them. It is true that their yet unpenetrated hearts were shielded round by an obstinacy which had withstood every previous application. But could not He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in their hearts with such a power and a splendour of conviction, as would have been utterly irresistible? Could not He who is able to subdue all things unto Himself, have subdued His countrymen out of that obstinacy, which had hitherto stood immovable to all the influence that was brought to bear upon it? Could not that influence have been augmented? Could it not have been wrought up to such a degree of efficacy, as would have overmatched the whole force and tenacity of their opposing prejudices—and had this been done, the people would have been converted; and the threatened vengeance been withdrawn; and the Saviour would have seen in His countrymen of the travail of His soul, and been satisfied; and the mysterious phenomenon of the greatest and the powerfulest of all beings weeping over a calamity, to avert which He had both the power and the inclination, would not have been presented: and how then does all this accord with what we know, or what we can guess, of the character of God's administration?

Now this brings us to the limit between those secret things which belong to God, and those things which are revealed and which belong to us and to our children. It were well for us that we gave up all our guesses, and made no attempt to be wise above that which is

written. And it were well for us that we remained satisfied with what God is pleased that we should know, or with being wise up to that which is written. If the question related merely to the power of God, we are apt to think that there is no limit whatever to what He simply can do. We are apt to think, for example, that God could, if He had chosen, have lifted, by a simple act of remission, all the penal consequences of sin away from us; and have treated us as creatures, who stood absolved from the guilt of all our transgressions; and have introduced us in this state into heaven; and made each of us live in a state of enjoyment there throughout all eternity.

But God has other attributes than those of mere power. And in virtue of them, He has chosen to conduct the administration of His government on certain great and unchangeable principles. And He has told us, and nothing remains for us but to take the information just as it is given, He has told us, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and no forgiveness without faith in that propitiation which is through the death of Jesus. And thus had the Son of God to bear the burden of all the vengeance that we should have borne; and to take upon His shoulders the whole weight of the world's atonement; and to pour out His soul for us in tears and agonies and cries. And had there been no other attributes in the character of the Godhead, but the simple energy of His omnipotence and the longings of His compassion, all these pains and sorrows of suffering innocence might have been spared; and, without so heavy a sacrifice the barrier which defended the gate of Paradise might have been opened to a guilty world. But the truth and justice of God demanded an expiation; and we show the docility which belongs to us, when we give our unreserved acquiescence to the recorded fact; and like little children in humility, as we are in understanding, it is our part to take the statement as the statement is offered to us. In the same manner, when His Jewish enemies were proceeding to put our Saviour to the trial; and were mustering up their witnesses against Him; and were concerting all those measures which led to His execution—He could have inter-

posed, and defeated all their policy, and overthrown all the might of that fearful combination that was leagued to destroy Him: And had there been nothing but power in the case, and a simple desire to ward off from the Son of God all the disgrace and humiliation and misery He was about to endure—how readily would twelve legions of angels have palsied the every arm, and sent consternation into the every heart of His persecutors! But here lay the necessity, and a necessity too, which, according to our Saviour's own account of the matter, constituted an invincible barrier in the way of His deliverance—This cannot be, says He, "for how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The truth of God behoved to be accomplished. The prophecies of God must obtain their vindication. And dire as the spectacle was, to see perfect innocence so cruelly borne down, it was all forced to give way before a great and unchangeable principle in the Divine administration. Now apply this to the matter before us. Take into account only the power of the Saviour to deliver the city of Jerusalem, and the strength of His kind and affectionate desires towards it; and you might think that there lay before Him a plain and practicable way for the fulfilment of the object. But there was another principle of the Divine administration which overruled the whole of this matter; and, without attempting to dive into the reasons of the counsel of God, or to inquire why He has adopted such a principle—enough for us the bare announcement of the fact that it is so. He has found out, and He has published a way of salvation; and a message of peace is made to circulate round the world; and all who will are made welcome to partake of it; and the Spirit, urging every one to whom the word of salvation is sent to turn unto Christ from their iniquities, plies them with as much argument, and holds out to them as much light, and affects the conscience of one and all of us with as much power—as ought to constrain us to the measure of accepting the Saviour, and relinquishing for Him the idol of every besetting sin and of every seducing vanity. But if we will not be constrained, it is the mode of His procedure with every human soul, gradually to cease from His work of

contesting with them. And He will not always strive. And to him who hath the property of yielding to His first influences, more will be given. And to him who hath not, there will even be taken away from him such influences as he may have already had. And thus it is that the way of the Spirit with the conscience of man, harmonizes with all that we feel and all that we experience of the workings of this conscience. If often stifled and repressed, it will at length cease to meddle with us. And enough for every practical purpose that we know this to be the fact. Enough that it is made known to us as a principle of God's administration, though we know not the reason why it should be so. Enough to alarm us into an immediate compliance with the voice of our inward monitor, that, should we resist it any longer, the time may come, when even Omnipotence itself will not interpose to save us. Enough to compel our instantaneous respect for all its suggestions, that, should we keep unmoved and unawed by them, even the God of love, who wills the happiness of all His children, may find that the wisdom and the purity and the justice of His government require of Him our final and everlasting abandonment. And O how we should tremble to presume on the goodness of God—when we see the impressive attitude of Him, who, though the kindest and gentlest and best of beings, looked to the great mass of His countrymen, and foresaw the wretchedness that was in reserve for them; and, instead of offering to put forth the might of His resistless energy for their deliverance, did nothing but give way to the tenderness of His nature, and weep for a distress which He would not remedy.

They had got beyond that irrecoverable point we have so much insisted on. They had tried the Spirit of God to the uttermost, and He had ceased to strive with them. At that time of their day, when, had they minded the things which belong to their peace, they would have done it with effect—they put away from them His every admonition, and His every argument; and now there lay upon them the stern and unrelenting doom, that they were for ever hid from their eyes. Let us once more make the

application. The goodness of God lies in the freeness of that offer wherewith He urges you now. And He backs this offer by the call of repentance now. And He tells you, that, to carry forward and to perfect this repentance, He is willing to minister help to all your infirmities now. And on this your day, He calls you to mind these things and to proceed upon these things now. But should this goodness not lead you to repentance—then it is not a goodness that you have any warrant to calculate upon, at any future stage of your history. And the time may come when all these things shall be hid from your eyes. The goodness of God is perfect, as all His other attributes are; but then it is a goodness exercised in that one way of perfect wisdom which He has thought fit to reveal to us. It is a goodness which harmonizes, in all its displays, with such maxims and such principles in the way of God's administration, as God has thought fit to make known to us. It is a goodness that will not survive all the resistance and all the provocation that we

may choose to inflict upon it. It is a goodness, in virtue of which, every one of us now may turn to the God whom we have offended; and be assured of His abundant forgiveness; and be admitted into all the privileges of his reconciled children; and, rejoicing in the blood that cleanseth from all sin, stand with all the securities of conscious acceptance before Him; and be established in that way of new obedience, for which He is both able and willing most abundantly to strengthen us. All this now, all this to day while it is called to day, should you harden not your hearts. All this on that critical and interesting now, which is called the accepted time and the day of salvation. But O forget not, that the same Saviour, who sounded just such calls in the ears of his countrymen, and would have gathered them together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, ere a few years more had rolled over the city of Jerusalem, wept when he beheld it, and thought of the stern and unalterable necessity of its approaching desolation.

SERMON VII.

The Christianity of the Sabbath.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

THERE are some who are disposed to assign to the Sabbath the same rank with the positive and ceremonial observances of Judaism; and who think that the authority of its obligations has ceased, with the rigours and the burdens of that grosser economy which has now gone by; and who make the spirituality of our own more enlightened dispensation the argument on which they would found the relaxation, if not the utter neglect, of this ordinance; and, in all this, they feel themselves to be very much confirmed by the silence of the New Testament, which never recognises the institution

but for the purpose of reducing the austerities which had of old been thrown around it. And, therefore, would they assimilate the keeping of this day to the performing of any of those rites that have no place in Christianity; and bear to it no more regard than they would to any of those Hebrew festivals, which, since the destruction of the temple, and the coming in of another system of worship, has fallen into total and irrecoverable desuetude.

For the permanency of the Sabbath, however, we might argue its place in the decalogue, where it stands enshrined

among the moralities of a rectitude that is immutable and everlasting; and we might argue the traditional homage and observancy in which it has been held since the days of the Apostles; and we might argue the undoubted and experimental fact, that where this day is best kept, there all the other graces of Christianity are in most healthful exercise and preservation. But we rather waive, for the present, all these considerations; and would rest the perpetuity of the Sabbath law on this affirmation, that, while a day of unmeaning drudgery to the formalist, it is, to every real Christian, a day of holy and heavenly delight,—that he loves the law, and so has it graven on the tablet of his heart, with a power of sovereignty upon his actions, which it never had when it was only engraven on a tablet of stone, or on the tablet of an outward revelation,—that, wherever there is a true principle of religion, the consecration of the Sabbath is felt, not as a bondage, but is felt to be the very beatitude of the soul,—and that, therefore, the keeping of it, instead of being to be viewed as a slavish exaction on the time and services of the outer man, is the direct and genuine fruit of a spiritual impulse on the best affections of the inner man.

Christianity does not dispense with service on the part of its disciples. It only animates this service with another principle, substituting what itself calls the newness of the spirit for the oldness of the letter. Now, the question is, Can such a substitution be made to pass upon the services of the Sabbath?—for, if not, the genius of Christianity would appear to demand, that we should be rid of the Sabbath altogether, which ought not to be retained, unless it can be brought into accordancy with the style and character of the new religion. But if, on the other hand, the Sabbath is really capable of being translated from the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit—there may be no need, under the economy of the Gospel, for the Sabbath being discarded—it were quite enough, that it should be accommodated to our more enlightened dispensation. There is a Judaical style of Sabbath observancy, and this ought to give place to the genius of our better economy. But there may, also, be a Christian style of Sabbath

observancy; in which case, we have not to abolish this institution, but only to transfuse into its services the same spirit which the Gospel transfuses into all other services. Let the Sabbath be altogether done away, as out of keeping with Christianity, if only signalised from all other days by the bodily exercise which profiteth little; and if it admit not of being so signalized by that godliness which is profitable unto all things. It were a most unseemly appendage to the discipleship of the gospel, could it not be delivered from the aspect of a morose and unbending Pharisee; and be softened and transformed into the aspect of a free, and joyful, and affectionate worshipper of the God of love. We are willing to rest, upon this condition, the claims of Sabbath to the homage and observation of Christians; and, should it not be possible to make the condition good, we are willing that the Sabbath should pass away with the feasts and the holidays of a ritual that is now superannuated.

Certain it is, that the Sabbath day may be made to wear an aspect of great gloom and great ungainliness, with each hour having its own irksome punctuality attached to it; and when the weary formalist, labouring to acquit himself in full tale and measure of all his manifold observations, is either sorely fatigued in the work of filling up the unvaried routine, or is sorely oppressed in conscience, should there be the slightest encroachment either on its regularity, or on its entireness. We may follow him through his Sabbath history, and mark how, in the spirit of bondage, this drivelling slave plies at an unceasing task, to which, all the while, there is a secret dissatisfaction in his own bosom, and with which he lays an intolerable penance on his whole family. He is clothed in the habiliments of seriousness, and holds out the aspect of it; but never was aspect more unpromising or more unlovely. And, in this very character of severity, it is possible for him to move through all the stages of Sabbath observancy—first, to eke out his morning hour of solitary devotion; and then to assemble his household to the psalms, and the readings, and the prayers, which are all set forth in due and regular celebration; and then, with stern parental authority, to muster, in full

attendance for church, all the children and domestics who belong to him; and then, in his compressed and crowded pew, to hold out, in complete array, the demureness of spirit that sits upon his own countenance, and the demureness of constraint that sits on the general face of his family; and then to follow up the public services of the day by an evening, the reigning expression of which shall be, that of strict, unbending austerity—when the exercises of patience, and the exercises of memory, and a confinement that must not be broken from, even for the tempting air and beauty of a garden, and the manifold other interdicts that are laid on the vivacity of childhood, may truly turn every Sabbath as it comes round into a periodical season of suffering and dejection: And thus, instead of being a preparation of love and joy for a heaven of its own likeness, may all these proprieties be discharged, for no other purpose, than that of pacifying the jealousies of a God of vengeance, and working out a burdensome acquittal from the exactions of this hard and unrelenting task-master.

Now, it must be quite evident, that such a Sabbath is characterized throughout by the oldness of the letter. The fear, and the disquietude, and even that sense of the meritoriousness of works, which all issue from the spirit of legality, may easily be witnessed in its various services. And nothing can be more palpable than the want of heart and of good will in its whole style of observation. It is an affair, not of love, but of labour—not the homage of spontaneous affection, but a mere thing of handiwork, and of bodily exercise. The very soreness and scrupulosity of the man's conscience, on the accidental misgiving of any of his arrangements, are at utter antipodes with the liberty of one of the children of God. There is no one character of a free celestial spirit that exists beneath this grim form and parade of godliness. It is like the attempt to make a purchase of heaven by the pains and the privations of a rigorous devoteeship; and little are many of our sturdy professors aware, how much the operose drudgery of their Sabbath is at variance with their own orthodoxy,—how often it is prosecuted with the view to establish a righteousness of

their own,—and how there may mingle with these laborious sanctities, both of public worship and of private and family exercise, the very spirit in which either Papist or Pharisee thinks that he will carry heaven on the strength of his manifold observations.

But after all the sabbath was made for man; and the worthlessness of such a sabbath as the one we have now attempted to pourtray, is no argument against an institution which must be capable of a most important subserviency to the great cause of moral and religious improvement. Though often kept according to the oldness of the letter—that is no reason why it may not also be kept according to the newness of the spirit; and if so, then is it fully entitled to a place of high authority among all the other services of an enlightened Christianity. And accordingly the very services which are rendered by one man in the spirit of a couching servility as drivelling and pharisaical, may, when rendered by another, be the genuine emanation of a heart that is altogether free and fearless and affectionate towards God. To the eye of the world, there may be a strong visible resemblance both in the kind and in the succession of these exercises—while to the eye of God, and in respect of essential character, they differ as widely as light does from darkness. It makes the utmost possible dissimilarity between one human soul and another, whether the sabbath be like a fast that affects the soul, or like a feast that yields to it its best loved entertainment. In the one case, it is certainly possible to be most sternly resolved on the drudgery of all its services—even as it is possible for a man of the world, on the mere strength of an obstinate determination, to stand out for hours together the hallowed air of a conventicle of piety however hateful it may be to him. But it argues a man of a distinct moral species altogether, and to be endowed as it were with such organs of moral respiration as the other does not possess, who can breathe in that air with delight, and feels it to be the very element by which he loves most to be surrounded. So that the wretched sabbath history, which we have already offered to your notice, is quite another thing, from a history which bears to it a very

strong external resemblance; but is impregnated by wholly another spirit, and is sustained throughout all the stages of it by another principle.—The history not of a sabbath drudge, but of a sabbath amateur, who rises with alacrity to the delight of the hallowed services that are before him—who spends too his own hour of morning communion with his God, and from the prayer-opened gate of heaven catches upon his soul a portion of heaven's gladness—who gathers too his family around the household altar, and there diffuses the love and the sacred joy which have already descended upon his own bosom—who walks along with them to the house of prayer; and, in proportion as he fills them with his own spirit, so does he make the yoke of confinement easy and its burden light unto them—who plies them with their evening exercise, but does it with a father's tenderness, and studies how their task shall become their enjoyment—who could, but for example's sake, walk fearlessly abroad and recognise in the beauties of nature the hand that has graced and adorned it; but that still a truer charm awaits him in the solitude of his own chamber, where he can hold converse with the piety of other days, with some worthy of a former generation who being dead still speaketh, with God himself in the book of His testimony, or with God in prayer whom he blesses for such happy moments of peace and of preciousness. And so he concludes a day, not in which his spirit has been thwarted, but in which his spirit has been regaled—a day of sunshine to the recurrence of which he looks onward with cheerfulness—a day of respite from this world's cares—a day of rejoicing participation in the praises and spiritual beatitudes of the future world.

Now if you have no taste for such a sabbath as this, you have no taste for heaven. If these services be a weariness to your heart, then the services of the blest in eternity were also a weariness to your heart. You are still of the earth and earthly; and when this world is burnt up, and the whole universe is thrown into two great departments—of a sabbath and sainted territory on the one hand, where the redeemed and the un-fallen alike rejoice in the prayers and

praises of the Eternal; and a doleful region of blasphemy on the other, where be those accursed outcasts who bear no love to God and have no delight in the exercises of godliness.—Then recollect, that, beside the one and the other of these dominions, there is not one spot of ground like this temporary and intermediate earth that you will have to stand upon.—And, distasteful as you are of sacredness here, and with no other alternative there than sacredness for ever or suffering for ever, what other doom is left for us to pronounce upon you, who so love the occupations of this week-day world, and so droop and languish under the weary routine of sabbath prayers and sabbath services, than that when the world is dissolved and no place is found within the limits of creation but one abode for the celestial and another for the damned—then will this your dislike to the fourth commandment be indeed the fellest indication of your unmeetness for a seat of glory, of your being a vessel of wrath and fitted for destruction.

You will perceive then a very striking peculiarity in this sabbath law—that, perhaps of all others, it is best fitted to exemplify the distinction between the oldness of the letter and the newness of the spirit; and is at the same time so abundantly capable of being kept in the latter style of observation, as most abundantly entitles it to its old place in the decalogue even under the pure and enlightened economy of the gospel. In one way of it, it may be nothing better than an elaborate ceremonial, a lifeless body of religiousness without the breath of its warm and animating spirit, and whereby the starch and unbending formalist of our day can still exhibit the very gait and character of grossest Judaism. In the other way of it, it may have all the refinement and rationality of a service that is altogether celestial; and be the efflorescence of a heart that is touched with fire and feeling from the upper sanctuary; and be the truest symptom that can possibly be given of a spiritual taste and a spiritual affection; and with all its outward resemblance to the sabbath of a formalist, stand as much apart from it in essential character as the devotion of a seraph from the drivelling of a slave; and, so far from savouring of that earthly

Jerusalem where Pharisees of old heaped their laborious offerings on the altar of legality, may the Sabbath of a Christian be the very nearest specimen that occurs in our world of that Jerusalem above where all is freedom and confidence and good will. And distaste, we repeat it, for the services of such a sabbath as this, is just distaste for the services of eternity. The very commandment, which, when kept in the spirit of a fearful scrupulosity, argues you to be still in beggary and bondage, is the commandment that, when kept in the willingness of a spontaneous heart, argues you to have the exalted taste and liberty of one of God's children: And it is indeed a striking singularity of this observance, that though when punctually rendered against the grain, it is but the drudgery of a worthless superstition—yet when pleasantly rendered and because with the grain, it becomes kindred in quality with all that is most pure and ethereal in sacredness; and the best evidence that can be given of the regenerating touch, whereby earth-born man is assimilated to an angel, and becomes a new creature in Christ our Lord.

We have now only to say in conclusion of this part of our argument, that something more ought to be gained by it, than the mere specific object of evincing the Sabbath to be in full harmony with the spirit and character of the Gospel. We should like, if, in the course of these observations, any thing may have been said that is fitted to arrest the conscience of hearers. We think that the Sabbath may be turned into a very palpable and powerful instrument for the discovery of your real spiritual condition. You will know surely whether its peculiar services are felt by you to be a pleasure or an annoyance—whether there be dulness or delight in its psalmody—whether the longing of the soul be towards its retirements, or towards a relief from them—whether the morning be most rejoiced in, because it ushers in a day of sacredness, or the evening because it terminates the irksome round, and brings you again to the margin of that element in which you most love to expatiate. You will be able to tell whether you are most at home in your closets or in your counting-houses? You have spent many Sabbaths in

the world; and you may at least say from the recollection of them, whether your taste is for communion with God, and how far the spirit that is in you congenializes with the feelings and the exercises of piety. We are not aware of a better test, or of one that can be turned to readier use and application; and we therefore urge it upon you, to come to a conclusion upon the question—whether your heart be more set upon the things of the world among which you move and are busily conversant through the six days of the week; or on those things that are above, and to which the duties and opportunities of the seventh day give you the power of a nearer and more affecting approximation—whether you like it best, to be immersed in the business and the pleasure and companionship of a scene that is speedily to pass away; or to stand as it were at the gate and on the confines of that inheritance which is in heaven, and there catch a glimpse of its coming glories, and be refreshed by a sample and a foretaste of its coming blessedness? Tell us which is the drift of your prevailing inclinations? Whether be they towards the secularities of commercial or festive or fashionable life, or be they towards the serenities of faith and prayer and spiritual contemplation? We ask you not to lie overwhelmed in utter hopelessness, if heretofore it is too plain that you have been a child of the present world—without the taste for sacredness, and with scarcely an aspiration after it. But we do ask you to mark by the intelligible appeal that we have now made to you, how wide the transition is from the atmosphere of nature's every-day pursuits and every-day propensities, to the atmosphere of all that grace and goodness in which if you cannot breathe with comfort here, you will never breathe in heaven hereafter. We bid you reflect what a vast and untrodden distance you have still to walk, ere you reach a meetness for the joys and a taste for the sanctities of the upper paradise. We crave your attention to the vast immeasurable space by which humanity has receded from the ground which it once occupied, and become as an alien and an outcast in a far country from the great family of holiness; and we would put you the question, whether to the truth

of Scripture there is not an echo in your own experience—when you read how total the revolution of character must be—how a something tantamount to a new birth and a new creation must take effect upon the soul, ere you shall become an heir of the everlasting kingdom, or have entered on that course of grace which leads to a consummation of full and finished glory?

But how shall this transition be effected? How shall the soul be made to gather upon it a taste and a temper so opposite to that of its first nature? How shall it be made to relish as its best loved enjoyment, that which it has hitherto felt to be irksome and unsavoury? Wonderful change in the habit of the affections you will allow, if he who at one time nauseated the air of the public or private sanctuary, shall now breathe therein with delight, as in the element that is best suited to him—and the Sabbath from a service of weariness shall become a service of willingness. This would imply a change equivalent to that by which the old man is transformed into the new creature—and it will be seen that our present topic though in regard to the matter of it it be but one solitary and specific observation, yet when viewed in its proper bearing it rises into a question of general and paramount importance—for the question how shall I learn to love the Sabbath is commensurate to the question how shall I be so renewed in the spirit of my mind, as that I who have been heretofore carnal, and whose affections were only kindred with the objects of sense, and of intellect, shall now become spiritual, and have a kindred pleasure in the objects and the contemplations of sacredness?

It may serve to throw some light on the real difficulties of this transition, when we reflect on what that is which we can do, and what that is which we cannot do in reference to Sabbath observation. We can task ourselves with the manifold varieties of bodily exercise. We can forcibly withdraw our presence from the fields, and constrain our presence either to church or to our closets. We can by dint of mere strenuousness endure a Sabbath confinement however irksome, and breathe a sabbatic atmosphere however dull; but to turn the irk-

some into the agreeable, and what is dull in the Sabbath of the Lord to feel it a delight and honourable—in attempting this, with only the resources and the energies of Nature at command, man feels himself at the limit of his helplessness. He can no more change the taste of his heart from the creature to the Creator, than he can change his organic taste for the kinds of food that are set before him. He may force himself to that which is nauseous to his animal palate, but he cannot divest it of its nauseousness; nor can he bid his spiritual palate to relish the hallowedness of Sabbath, however much he may compel himself to the drudgery of its manifold observations. The anatomy of his moral frame would need to be reconstructed, ere such a revolution of taste could be made to take effect upon it; and this he can no more do, than he can newmodel the anatomy of his morbid frame: And thus it is, that while quite a possible thing to keep the Sabbath in the style of a most sour and unbending formalist—it is no more possible for man to keep it in the style of a free and joyful and affectionate worshipper, than it is for a man at his own bidding to make all things new, or for man to be the author of his own regeneration.

It all resolves itself into the distinction between the spirit of love and the spirit of legality. Could you exchange the one spirit for the other, then would you turn Sabbath from a day of constraint into a day of cheerfulness. You never will get the better of your distaste for the religiousness of Sabbath—while you look upon God in the light of a jealous taskmaster, and yourselves in the light of bondmen who have an allotted task to perform, and by rendering all the items of which you eke out the fulfilment of a stimulated contract. It is this accursed spirit of legality which turns Sabbath service and every other service, into a heartless thing of distaste disquietude and most unproductive anxiety; and never will this day be kept aright, till, out of the new-born desires of an evangelized heart, it be kept, not as a fast to afflict the soul, but as a feast to regale it—not as a service of desert for which you obtain the friendship of God, but as a service of grateful commemoration in return for the friendship that has been already prof-

ferred, and already been accepted of. You will not know what it is to have a religious, and, at the same time a free Sabbath, till you have embraced the offers of a free Gospel; and then all will be light, and liberty, and enlargement; and the cold obstructions of legality will give way from the labouring bosom; and the opportunity of meeting with God as your undoubted friend will be prized and courted—when the opportunity of meeting with him as your rigid and unrelenting exactor would be looked to with feelings of timidity and distrust and heavy alienation. It is the Gospel which refines and elevates the whole style of our obedience. It is the Gospel which turns it from the extorted drudgery of a crouching fearful superstitious slave, into the ready services of attachment. And as it is saying much, on the one hand, for the doctrines of grace and atonement and righteousness by faith, that it is the acceptance of these which forms the stepping-stone from service in the oldness of the letter to service in the newness of spirit—so it is saying much on the other hand for Sabbath, and for its title to rank among the institutions of Christianity; that, instead of a mere positive and ceremonial observance, which ought to be expunged from our more enlightened economy, there is not one other precept of the decalogue that admits of being more evangelized, or of having a brighter and more beautiful radiance of celestial grace and celestial glory thrown over it. The services of Sabbath upon earth, form the very nearest approximation that can be made to the current and every-day services in Heaven. He who does not love them loves not God. He who droops in weariness under the exercises of Sabbath, has nought before him but a dismal prospect of eternity. There is none admitted to Heaven, to whom Heaven were a dull and melancholy imprisonment; and there will be no midway territory like our present earth, between the Heaven of the redeemed and the hell of the rebellious. It forms indeed an emphatic argument to flee from the coming wrath, and to flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel—that it is not only on this ground where forgiveness and a free acceptance are awarded; but on this ground, and on

it alone, can we learn to love that law which we aforesaid hated, and to rejoice in those observations that we aforesaid resisted and trampled upon. And if you indeed long for such a revolution in your taste and in your desires, as that Sabbath shall cease to be an oppression, and become to you a day of hallowed and honourable enjoyment—never cease to fix your regards on Christ crucified, till, through Him, all your legal apprehensions have given way, and you can rejoice in God as indeed your faithful friend, as indeed your reconciled Father.

And this seems to be the right place for adverting to a very common aphorism that is constantly on the lips of worldly men—at one time in the form of reproach against the seriousness of decided Christians, and at another of vindication for their own levity; and that is, that religion was never meant for gloom but for enjoyment—that Christianity is always in her best style, when in the style of cheerfulness—that, in her strict, and precise, and puritanical aspect, she is the scourge and the terror of our species—and that it is only by the relaxation of this aspect, that she is put into accordancy with the real spirit and character of Him who has dressed nature in smiles: and who, God of love as He is, can have no sweeter incense to ascend to Him from our world than the happiness of a grateful and rejoicing family. And thus it is, that they would seek for countenance to their own vain and giddy gratifications—in pleasures and amusements, not where God is recognised, but in the midst of which God is utterly forgotten; to that merriment of the heart which is inspired, not by any cheering and at the same time accurate thoughts of their heavenly Father, but to that merriment which has its foundation in the thoughtlessness of merest unconcern and vacancy. The maxim is a true one, but they utterly misconceive its application. Religion is indeed the minister, not of gloom, but of enjoyment; but of enjoyment only to them whose hearts have been so touched as to be attuned to the spirit and the feelings of sacredness. The genuine style of Christianity is that of cheerfulness; but the way in which it breathes cheerfulness into the soul, is, not by altering its own character for the purpose of accommodating itself to the

tastes of the unconverted, but by altering the tastes of the unconverted, through the renewing process which they are made to undergo, to its own uncompromising and invariable character. The maxim is just; but not the slightest authority does it give to the glee, and the gaiety, and the joyous companionship, of Sabbath profanation. To rejoice in God is a habit of the soul, not merely different, but diametrically opposite to the habit of him who rejoices *without* God; and all the zest and vivacity of whose pleasures, any visitation of seriousness would instantly put to flight. The maxim most assuredly is just, and bears with emphatic condemnation on the weary and ever-doing formalist—who toils at his Sabbath duties, with a hand most punctual to their fulfilment, and a spirit fretted and galled as if by the felt burden of so many painful and ponderous austerities. The maxim that Christianity is a free and indulgent religion condemns this Sabbath drudge, but it does not acquit the Sabbath despiser; and then only does it find its satisfying application, when the first light of Sabbath morn summons the affectionate disciple to those kindred exercises of piety in which his heart is most fitted to rejoice who goes not sadly but spontaneously to that which, animated as he is with the breath of another spirit, he feels not as a painful task, but as a precious opportunity—and like the Christians of old can eat his meat with gladness and singleness of heart, not because like those who take shelter in the maxim that religion is averse to melancholy, his delight is in sense or in unsanctified appetite; but because his delight is in converse with God.

Were heaven a mere paradise of music—then, to attain the capacity of enjoying it, one would need to be a lover of harmony. It is conceivable that a musical festival, held at short periodic intervals, were the fittest preparation for obtaining and fostering the musical taste, and so for being happy in such an immortality as this. Those who had delight in the beauty of airs and the sweet concord of voices, would welcome the recurrence of every coming festival as they would a joyful entertainment; and, whether in the ecstatic pleasure felt dur-

ing the currency of the performance or in the grateful emotions that were left behind it, would they bear an obvious countenance of satisfaction; and as, they sent forth the beamings of a regaled and recreated spirit, might they impress the conviction upon many, that those men who are the most strenuously bent on their education for Heaven are at the same time the happiest upon earth.—Others again, without any taste for music whatever, may give any unwearied attendance to the festival; and determinedly support the whole irksomeness of its uncongenial confinement; and, utterly against the drift of their own native tendencies, sit out the oppressive hours of a heat and a noise that are well nigh insupportable; and all this too on the imagination, that heaven was to be conferred upon them, as the payment of wages for all the painfulness and self-denial of this unvaried regularity. But alas! when they get to the heaven of our present supposition, music will be the only reward that shall meet them there. That music which so sickened and fatigued them in time, will be all the entertainment they have to look for through eternity: And who does not see by such an illustration as this, that the Sabbath formalist will miss the happiness of both worlds—unhappy here because drivelling all his days at a work that is utterly uncongenial to his spirit; and unhappy there, because, even should he enter within heaven's gate and it be shut upon him, he finds himself in the midst of that very work, which, though a delicious treat to others, was always to him a reluctant task, and the feeling of which still will turn the paradise in which he dwells into a dull and everlasting imprisonment—Now, though it be the happy and not the reluctant disciple of music who can rejoice in the musical heaven, that is not to say that he who is only happy in other things will ever reach it—that he who prefers the liberty and fresh air of the general world to the lessons of the recurring festival, will, because happy in his own style here, be in fit preparation for the happiness of another style hereafter. And neither does it follow, ye gay and unreflecting men of the world, because like unto the best and highest of Christians in being cheerful, you will ever sit

down with them as the partakers of a cheerful eternity. Your happiness is of sense, and theirs is of spirit; and the paradise for which they are training by the exercises of the weekly Sabbath festival, instead of a mere paradise of music, is a paradise of sacredness. And think not ye men, in all whose joys and pursuits there is the secularity of a world that soon fadeth away—think not of as-

simulating the reckless hilarity of your bosoms, to the heaven-born joy that glows in the bosom of a spiritual Christian.—Or despisers as ye are of that Sabbath which to him is the source of hallowed and heavenly delight, that ever you, with your present habit, will realise any other condition than that of being left without pleasure and without a portion through eternity.

SERMON VIII.

The Advantages of a fixed Sabbath.

“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”—GAL. iv. 10.

THERE are two distinct grounds, on which works in religion are appraised at a low or rather worthless valuation in the Bible, and either rejected or denounced accordingly. The first is when they are offered as the price of our justification in the sight of God; as an equivalent upon which the Lawgiver is challenged for the honour and the regard that are due to righteousness; as an acquittal on our side of that bargain where the obedience of the creature forms one part, and the good will of the Creator forms the other part of the stipulation that is betwixt them. A work may be entitled in certain respects to the designation of good; but when this good work assumes the character of purchase-money for eternal life, and in so doing assumes that the thing which is rendered by man is in the reckoning of the divine law, satisfactory value for the thing that is given to him by God in return for it—then does the Bible utterly hold at nought, the most laborious, and, perhaps, when looked to in another view, the most holy and estimable of all human performances. This is a point upon which the gospel, earnest to enlighten man as to the worth of his acceptance with God, and as to the worthlessness in regard to merit of his own proper pretensions to it, will descend to no compromise whatever with the vanity or the deceitful imaginations of our fallen species. Acceptance with God is most

liberally held forth on the footing of a present to the sinner; but it is most firmly and tenaciously kept back on the footing of a purchase by the sinner. Still, however, it was bought for us; or rather after it had been forfeited, it was redeemed for us, and at a ransom too, altogether commensurate to its value. There was a price given for it; but that price is neither in whole nor in part the contribution of the sinner himself. He is welcome, if he will, to God's favour. Nay, he is welcome to this favour by being put into possession, if he will, of a positive right to it; but then he must understand that it is not a right conceded to him, because of any claim of merit whatever in his own performances. He must learn more justly to estimate the value of this right to the favour of a God of holiness; and that it cannot be rated according to the righteousness of man, but according to the righteousness of Christ's atonement and holy services. To cheapen the right of man to Heaven's reward down to the standard of man's obedience, were to degrade to the same standard the righteousness of God. And thus to sustain the dignity of God's character, does the gospel disown, and repudiate man's works, when accompanied with the plea for divine favour, as their just and adequate remuneration.

But there is still another ground on which works are computed at a low valuation in the Bible—and that is, when,

either in themselves they are devoid of true moral excellence, or serve not in their tendencies to refine and to strengthen the principles of our moral nature. If the work in question carry in it no indication either of love to God, or of love to man,—if there be in it no character of spiritual worth, or spiritual rectitude,—if, on tracing it to its first impulse from a principle within the heart, it betoken no becoming grace, or no duteous and incumbent morality, which should have its residence there,—if it neither flow from some good affection of the heart, nor be of any reflex efficacy in making the heart better,—in a word, if disjoined from the virtue of the inner man, it be a mere muscular or mechanical action, which affords an exercise, and gives weariness to the body,—if it be merely some operose task, or some irksome confinement, laid upon the person, which, after it had been resolutely gone through, or resolutely endured, terminates in itself, and leaves no increase, either of godliness or of humanity, behind it,—if, instead of appertaining to any thing of mind that is devout, or upright, or generous, it be a work that can be done by a mere putting forth of the animal powers, and which, after its performance leaves its laborious agent as little ennobled, in his spirit, above the animal as before—Then, on this ground, also, does the Bible hold it to be of as utter insignificance as the Saviour held the fasts, and the ablutions, and the whole fatiguing and fruitless ceremonial of the drivelling Pharisee. The former works were offensive, because, like many of the works of Popery, they assume a merit in the sight of a highly exalted God. The latter works are offensive, because, like many of the works of Popery—as its penances, and its offerings, and its telling of rosaries—they have a meanness in the sight of every truly enlightened man. And as, to sustain the dignity of God, the Gospel holds out a countenance of rebuke towards those works of presumption on which we would found the claim of our legal righteousness for reward from the Lawgiver—so, for the sake of stamping a true dignity upon man, does the Gospel also hold out a countenance of rebuke towards those works of superstition

which serve not to exalt or to purify the soul; and which varied or multiplied in every possible way, can never shed upon him who performs them either the grace or the lustre of a true personal righteousness.

But let a good work be delivered of both these ingredients—let there be neither an arrogated merit nor an inherent meanness in it—let the sinner who performs it inflict no offence on the unspotted righteousness of God, by offering it in price for that which nought can purchase for the guilty but an unsullied obedience and a perfect expiation; and, at the same time, let it be such a good work as serves, not to degrade, but to dignify, the performer, and as both marks and matures the real worth and growing excellence of his character—let it be free of all pretension to the reward which has been forfeited by man, and which a Divine Mediator alone can redeem to him; and, at the same time, let it, in its own substance, be free of all pettiness and abject timidity—And we say of works like unto this, that, so far from the Gospel lifting a voice of hostility or casting a look of discountenance towards them, the very aim of the Gospel is to raise and to multiply them over the face of a new moral creation. The ultimate design which the Gospel has upon man, is not to redeem his person, but to renovate his character—not to lift off from him the weight of condemnation, that, under the deliverance, he may merely sit at ease; but that, thereby, he may be free to enter on a course of activity, along which he is ever approximating to the worth and holiness of the Godhead. For this, in fact, as the great and terminating object, was the whole peculiar economy of the Gospel raised. For this did Christ die, that the men of nature and of the world might become men of God, and be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He, by His propitiation, hath made us partakers of the Divine approbation, but just that we might become partakers of the Divine nature. The justification, which He hath bought for us, is only the door of admittance upon the career of glory and virtue to which He hath called us. In the works which we do, let the merit of Christ be fully recognized, and the example of

Christ, free as it is from debasing superstition, and bright as it is in all the graces of essential rectitude, be fully regarded; and the declared purpose of the Gospel is, upon the basis of such a humility, to build up every believer according to the similitude of this godlike pattern. It is not to damp his enthusiasm in the cause of good works, but to make him zealous of them. And, after rooting out the weeds, both of legal presumption and of worthless formality, from the soil of our nature—is it the office of the Gospel to turn it into a well-watered garden, over which the eye of Heaven might rejoice in the reflection of its own likeness; and even the best and holiest of all be regaled by its sweet-smelling odours, and look down with complacency on its fair and pleasant fruits of righteousness.

Nothing can be more obvious in the epistle to the Galatians, than the express disinclination and dread of the Apostle towards certain works; but then these were works tainted with the alloy of both the obnoxious ingredients—as when a justifying merit was assigned to the rite of circumcision—and then, what did its performance avail to the great object either of purifying or of elevating the moral character? But with all his reprobation of such works, and after it might have been imagined by some that he had extinguished works altogether, mark how, ere he finishes his argument, they are made to re-appear upon the Christian, and to replenish both his heart and his history with the richest variety of excellence. It is, indeed, interesting to notice how the transition is secured in the Gospel from the humble to the holy,—how, if the creature will only renounce the worth of his own services, and seek unto God with the righteousness of Christ as the only price and the only plea he can offer for acceptance, how, from this abyss of felt and acknowledged nothingness, God will cause him to arise,—how, if he will only stand denuded of all that virtue which he deemed noble enough for the rewards of eternity, a virtue shall be inspired into his bosom, and made to effloresce upon his life, that really will ennoble him. And thus it is, that while in those compends of Christianity which Paul left behind him, both the decencies of nature and the drudgeries of supersti-

tion are, in respect of their sufficiency with God, supplanted and set aside by the faith of the Gospel; yet he never fails to represent that faith as emanating an obedience of a higher order, that is free from both the vitiating admixtures—alike dignified in its character, and unpretending in its claims.

In the text too, there is a certain scrupulous observation referred to by the apostle, which his converts adhered to as a duty, but which he charges them with as if it were a delinquency. They observed days and months and times and years, annexing a religious importance to the stated acts and exercises of stated periods; and we have no doubt, labouring under distress of conscience, at any misgiving from the prescribed and wonted regularity. It is likely enough, that both of those ingredients which go to vilify a work, and to render it null and worthless, entered into this outward formality of the Galatians—that it gave them a feeling of security as to their meritorious acceptance with God, which nought but the Redeemer's merits ought to inspire; and that it further degraded the character of man, by reducing morality to the level of mechanism, and substituting for the obedience of a rightly strung and rightly actuated heart, an obedience like that of a galley slave who plies at his unvaried oar and moves in the one and unvaried circuit that is assigned to him. Man was not made for this. He was not even made for the Sabbath; and neither surely was he made to go through the seasons of his existence, like the figures upon an orrery. He was not made to square the movements of his person with the lines or the convolutions of a diagram—nor was it ever intended of this creature, endowed as he is with the noble capacities of thought and sentiment and spontaneous affection, that time should lay her arrest on the free-born energies of his nature, or subjugate him to the dull routine of her cycles and her epicycles. This may do for a piece of unconscious materialism, or it may do for a beast of burden; and the cruel taskmaster man has made it to do for the yoked and harnessed negro, who, day after day, toils on that beaten path-way of labour, to which a stern and unchanging necessity has compelled him. But

shall the spirit of him who knows the truth, and whom the truth has made free, be laid under the bondage and the beggary of such grovelling services? There was something more than jealousy for the prerogatives of Christ's righteousness, which inspired the apostle's antipathy to the whole work and labour of the Galatians. We think that there was also a generous and high-toned ambition, that while to Christ should be awarded all the glory to which he was entitled, on man should be imprinted all the grace and dignity of which he was capable—that he should be rescued from the degradation of those poor and meagre and creeping servilities, which were stealing their entrance into the churches; and that for such paltry and pitiful rudiments, there should be substituted the light of a higher morality, the love and the liberty of the children of God.

But then will not this expunge the Sabbath from the observation of Christians—that day which comes as invariably round to us as a lunation in the heavens—that day the keeping of which compels us to move in the dull uniformity of a circle; and which, instead of leaving him to the free aspirations of a heart that knows no control but that of high and heaven-born principle, would still reduce the man to an automaton? And does not Paul in the parallel epistle of Colossians, turn his argument to this very application? "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbath days." Does not he here set them utterly at large from all the prescriptions of the ritualist; and fearlessly commit them to the guidance of such principles, as are drawn from a loftier morality, and are addressed to the nobler feelings and the higher faculties of our species? Does not he call upon us to abandon altogether the walk of ceremonial observation for the walk of spiritual exercises; and is not the Sabbath levelled, and laid under the same interdict, with all the other drudgeries of the Pharisee or the formalist? Were it not accordant then with the character, nay, even with the demands of the gospel that this institution should be henceforth swept away; and will not enough

be left in its room, if the regenerated spirit when broken loose from its imprisonment, shall, in the genius of our better economy, expatiate without obstruction on the more ethereal field of its own fellowship with the upper sanctuary, and of its own secret but seraphic contemplations?

Now though it be true that man was not made for the Sabbath, yet let it never be forgotten that the Sabbath was made for man. Man was not made to move in a precise orbit of times and seasons; yet times and seasons may be arranged, so as to subserve his use, and be the ministers of good both to his natural and moral economy. Were the keeping the Sabbath a mere servitude of the body which left the heart no better than before, it would be a frivolous ceremonial and ought to be exploded. But if it be true that he who sanctifies the Sabbath sanctifies his own soul, then does the Sabbath assume a spiritual importance, because an expedient of spiritual cultivation. The suspension on this day of the labour or business of the world—its scrupulous retirement from the converse or the festivities of common intercourse—its solemn congregations and its evening solitudes—These singly and in themselves, may not be esteemed as moralities; and yet be entitled to a high pre-eminence among them, from the impulse they give to that living fountain of piety, out of which the various moralities of life ever come forth in purest and most plenteous emanation. It is not that the virtue of man consists in these things, but that these things are devices of best and surest efficacy for upholding the virtue of man. Were it not for this subserviency, the Sabbath might well be swept away; but because of this subserviency, it not only takes its place among the other obligations of Christianity, but is entitled to that reverence which is due if not to the parent at least to the foster-mother of them all. If the Sabbath of any one of the primitive churches obtained not this homage from the apostle, it must have been because a Sabbath of ceremonial drudgery and not of spiritual exercise. And you have only to compute the worth and the celestial character of all those graces, which have sheltered and fed and reared to maturity in

the bosom of this institution, that you may own the high bearing and dignity which belong to it.

If it be true of man, that he can attain a loftier communion with his God, at those hours when the din and urgency of the world are away from him; and that a season of reading, and contemplation, and prayer acts as a restorative to the embers of his decaying sacredness; and that the voice of a minister, when prompted by the Spirit from on high, and aided by the sympathies of all who are around him, can often send the elevation of heaven into his soul; and that it is on those evenings of deep and lengthened tranquillity which the footstep of intruding companionship does not violate, when the nurture and admonition of the Lord can descend more abundantly on the hearts of his children, and when the calm and the unction of a holy influence may be most felt in his dwelling-place—then Sabbath, which, from one end to the other of it, teems with these very opportunities, instead of ranking with the holidays of idle superstition, will be dear as piety itself to every enlightened Christian; and to it, in the most emphatic sense of the term, will he award the obeisance of a divine and spiritual festival.

And on this principle too, may the Sabbath be rescued from that contempt which the text, in denouncing the observation of days and of times, would appear to cast on it. It is true, that it is a periodic festival, and that man was not made for periods. But this does not hinder that periods may be made for man. We have already affirmed, that Sabbath work is good for man to be engaged in, because it is a work of sacredness; and the remaining question is simply this, Whether will man do more of that work, if left every day of his life to the waywardness of his own desultory inclinations, or if a certain recurring day shall be cleared of this world's concerns and companies, and he be reminded, that the business of religion is its peculiar destination? It is a sound though homely maxim, that what may be done at any time is never done; and on this principle alone, it is good that a day shall be fixed upon—casting up at equidistant intervals, and on which the people of the land shall feel themselves more strictly and pointedly summoned to

the work of intercourse with God and of preparation for eternity. It is good for man that he is not left in this matter to his own caprice and his own listlessness—that whether he wills it or not, Sabbath should recur upon him at its own periods, and proclaim an authoritative halt on the business of the world—that this day, ushered in if you like with the sound of bells, should announce itself to his very senses as a day of sacredness—that it should give out another echo than that which falls upon the ear from the general buzz and action of week-day employment—or even that in the morning silence of our streets, and that hallowed peacefulness which overspreads the landscape, it should have its own mementoes to characterise it. We put it to the plainest understanding, whether, with such an arrangement, more of business will not be transacted with Heaven, than if man were left to steal to the hour he chose from the bustling urgencies of his business in the world. And on this ground singly, though there were none beside, would we say of our Sabbath, that, unlike to the days and times which were observed by the crouching devotees of Galatia, it is worthy of the homage of the most enlightened ages, for its wise and merciful adaptation to the laws of our moral nature.

And the maxim that what may be done at any time is never done, applies with peculiar emphasis to every work against which there is a strong constitutional bias—where there is a reluctance to begin it, and the pitching of a strenuous effort to overcome that reluctance, and the pleasant deception all the while that it will just do as well after a little more postponement—a deception which, as it overspreads the whole of life, will lead us to put off indefinitely; and this in the vast majority of instances is tantamount to the habit of putting off irrecoverably and for ever. Now this would just be the work of religion when shorn of its Sabbath—a work to embark upon which Nature has to arrest her strongest currents; and to shake her out of her lethargies; and to suspend those pursuits to which by all the desires of her existence she is led most tenaciously to cleave; and to struggle for the ascendancy of faith over sight, and of a love to the un-

seen God whom the mind with all the aids of solitude and prayer so dimly apprehendeth, over the love of those things that are in the world, and whose power and whose presence are so constantly and so inopportunely bearing upon us.— And will any say that in these circumstances, the cause of religion is not bettered by Sabbath, that weekly visitor coming to our door, and sounding the retreat of every seventh day from the heat and the hurry and the onset of such manifold temptations? It is not with dissipation's votaries that we are pleading this cause. But let us know, ye votaries of business, are ye able to preserve in your spirits through the week such a flavour of God and godliness, as to make you independent of any recruits that a Sabbath might afford you? Does sacredness so keep at all times its undisturbed place and pre-eminence, amid the turmoil of those many secularities by which you are surrounded, that any one set and specific time is not needed, on which, at a distance from the besetting world, you might relume that lamp of heaven in the soul which was ready to expire? Or if the time were left to your own discretion, are such your longings after a spiritual atmosphere, that you would be ever sure to make your escape to it, when like to be lulled or overborne in an atmosphere of earthliness? It is true you may lift up your hearts to God when you please—and even amid the thickening occupations of the market and the counting-house, is it possible that many a secret aspiration may arise to Him. But how often is it that you would so please, and tell us on your experience of the past, what, if all days were alike, would be the fervour, or the frequency of such aspirations? How often does the sense of God intrude upon your hearts in company; and how much of it do you carry abroad in the walks of merchandise; or if there must be occasional retirement for the keeping up of religion in the soul, and the time and the opportunity were left altogether to yourselves, would there be actually as much through the week of the work and preparation of the sanctuary as a Sabbath could comprise?

We appeal to every practical understanding, whether it is not better, that a time has been appointed, than that the

time should have been wholly abandoned to our random determinations; and that God's Sabbath should come to us, than that we should be trusted to find our spontaneous way to sabbaths and parts of sabbaths of our own? If in some hour of frenzied innovation our week were thrown into disorder, and our whole remembrance were obliterated of that day which has been consecrated by the observance of former generations—all the piety would depart from the land, along with all the Sabbath punctuality of our venerable forefathers. If this sanctuary, which has hitherto been fenced around from the outer court of week-day employments, were ever trodden under foot by the Gentiles, it would not be the sacredness within that should spread itself abroad over the whole mass of human existence; but the secularity from without would rush through the broken wall, and appropriate to itself the territory of holiness. The spirit of the world would engross and domineer over those last remnants of time which it had violated. The Sabbath of human life may be like the fleece of Gideon, when it was dry on all the earth beside, and the dew of heaven was upon it only. But we are not to expect, till the millennium perhaps has come upon our world, that it shall be dry only upon the fleece while the dew is upon all the ground; nor, should this day of solemn services be expunged from the history of man, are we to think that it shall offer any other aspect than one wide and unalleviated waste of earthliness.

We have already, though but briefly and incidentally, adverted to another benefit arising from a fixed and regular day for the services of piety. It brings a concert and a common understanding along with it. And this shields every family retreat from the inroads of boisterous acquaintanceship; and lays the alone effectual interdict on the calls and distractions of business; and not only throws a canopy of defence over the solitude of our private exercises, but affords to us a public and a social religion, and enlists the very sympathies of our nature on the side of sacredness, by impressing upon whole multitudes one consensual movement to the house of prayer. And there is a touching power even

in the visible insignia, wherewith, from this circumstance alone, the sabbath of Christians is decked and signalized—in the holiday costume, which is worn like a dress of ceremony to her honour—in that shut and barricadoed covering, which stretches along all the doors and windows of merchandise—in the suspension of human labour, and that general hush over the face of the world which marks the season of its deep and serious repose. This is all the fruit of a conventional understanding among men, which nought but the authority of a sabbath law could have rendered universal; and it is a fine poetical delusion, that even the lower animals of creation, together with its mute and inanimate things, partake in the stillness and solemnity of this hallowed day. It is indeed a most pleasing and allowable fancy—nor can we refuse our admiration to the lines which have so beautifully and with such tenderness expressed it:—

Calmness sits thron'd on yon unmoving cloud.
To him who wanders o'er the upland leas,
The black bird's note comes mellow'd from the dale;
And sweeter from the sky the gladsome lark
Warbles the heaven-tuned song; the lulling brook
Murmurs more gently down the deep-worn glen;
While from yon lowly roof, whose curling smoke
O'ermounts the mist, is heard at intervals
The voice of psalms, the simple song of praise.

But our main desire ought ever to be, not to regale with beauty, but to urge you with a sense of obligation. And, now, having endeavoured to rescue the sabbath law from the imputation of its being a paltry ceremonial; and to recommend it to the homage of enlightened minds; and to establish it in a rank co-ordinate with the highest principles of our moral nature; and to prove, in exception to the apostolic censure passed on the scrupulosity of the Galatians about days and months and times and years, that our sabbath, punctually though it does come round as clock-work, stands nobly and liberally aloof from all the ignoble characteristics of a drudging and mechanical observation—what now remains after the argument is finished, but to press it home upon your conscience, that you turn this day to all the high uses and facilities of which it is so abundantly capable? If it secure the retirement of your person from the world—let this be followed up by the escape of your

spirit from the world's cares and the world's vanities, and by its busy exercise with those eternal realities which in the throng of ordinary life are so little thought of. If it open for you the place of solemn congregation—see that you forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, and let the intense devotedness of your hearts through the week to all that goeth on in the haunts of business, rebuke its many flights and wanderings on the sabbath from all that goeth on in the house of prayer. If it afford you the quiet leisure of evening with your household—let it be your care to redeem the sacred opportunity; and let not the neglected souls of your children, be so many frightful vouchers on the day of reckoning, of the many neglected sabbaths that you have spent upon earth. To whom much is given, of them much will be required; and on this principle your sabbaths, these precious gifts of God to man will have to be accounted for. And O, forget not, that if these have been nauseated in time, Heaven, if you e'er were admitted there, would be nauseated through all eternity. Sabbath is that station on the territory of human life, from which we can descry with most advantage and delight the beauties of the promised land; and it is there, as if at the gate of the upper sanctuary, where we can command one of the nearest approaches whereof our nature is capable, to the contemplations and the doings of the saints in blessedness. There is nothing else but sabbath in heaven, and in hell there is no sabbath. Such is the character of these two realms; and judge for yourselves the state of human character that is suited to them—which is the likely abode of him who delights in sabbath, and altogether changed with its spirit, therewith impregnated and sanctifies the week; and which is the likelier abode of him whose taste the business of the week monopolizes, and who altogether charged with its spirit, therewith pollutes and desecrates the sabbath.

And if it be true, that to set apart a day in the week for the business of Christianity, both provides a greater security and adds a greater amount to that business—it is no less true that the cause is essentially served, by setting apart to the same object certain portions of each

successive day. The great use of sabbath is to Christianize the whole life of man; but for this purpose something more is required than a weekly festival. There must be a daily repast; and we would extend the principle by which we have endeavoured to advocate the sabbath, into an advice, that each day should have its specific hours for the readings and the prayers, and the various exercises of sacredness. We know that this is a process which may be superstitiously gone through, and just as if man were made for the hours like a time-telling piece of mechanism—and then would he come under the denunciation of my text on the churches of Galatia, or under that high-minded contempt which is now felt for the mummeries and the paternosters of a more modern ritual. But we also know that this is a process which may be most spiritually and intelligently gone through, and at given hours too, because hours were made for man; and he acting with the authority of an enlightened judge over the habits and tendencies of his own moral nature, and experimentally aware that what may be done at any time is never done, counts it the best of arrangements for the best of objects to have solemn hours for solemn performances. It is not that we want to lay you under stop-watch regulation—a matter, most assuredly, against which Paul and every sensible Christian after him would protest, as quite incompatible with the religion of liberty. But we want, and on a survey of the known laws and principles of our nature, to devise fittest and most effectual expedients for keeping the free and elevated spirit of this religion alive. It is surely a good thing to make use of such expedients; and our anxiety is, not that you do this thing at a given time, but to strengthen and to multiply the guarantees for its being done at all. The style of observation, which, if terminating in itself, would be the grovelling of slavish and sordid devoteeship, might, viewed in its consequences, be generous and noble, and altogether accordant with that higher cast of morality, which speaks the air and the spirit of our better dispensation. And, it is on this account, and on this alone, that we lay the stress even of a religious importance on your morning and your evening sacrifices—that we

bid you to the resolute observance of certain select portions of the day which you appropriate to sacredness, and which nought but overbearing necessity should ever tempt you to violate—that like those regular meals which recruit the body from the fatigues of business, you have also your regular occasions of fellowship with God, through prayer, or through the Bible, for that spiritual aliment which might recruit the exhaustion of your hearts, when the urgencies of business have well nigh driven the sense of judgment and eternity out of them. On the principle that man was not made for traversing in regular step and order the successive spaces of a diary, but for a nobler purpose—we forbear to assign either the length or the frequency of these holy exercises. But on the principle again, that time and all its various successions were made for man, would we ask you in practice thus to divide and thus to journalise it—and that just for the noble purpose of sustaining in life all the functions of man's spiritual economy, of upholding his perseverance in that lofty path of well-doing, which leads to glory, and immortality, and honour.

And again do we confidently put it to our men of business, whether if there were not set times for God and his bible, there ever would be any time—whether the spirit of man can thus be trusted to its own spontaneous cravings for the bread and the water of life—or if there be any such periodic hunger in the soul as there is in the body, that demands at short and frequent intervals of the aliment which is suited to it? The disease of a patient may call for regular air and exercise, and, such may be his indolence, that the stated hours must be prescribed to him, and the very assignation of the times may be the stimulus that secures his observance of them. And we all labour under a disease of the heart that calls for its frequent exposure and exercise in a spiritual atmosphere; and one sad accompaniment of the disease is its disinclination to the whole breadth and feeling of heaven's temperament; and to overcome this, there may be a weight of authority in the very hours which the patient has laid out for his own observation. And, it is most rational and fair to bring in this, as an auxiliary influence

on the side of religion. The theologian has as good a warrant for his punctualities on this matter, as the physician has for his. And thoroughly aware, therefore, though we be, that bodily exercise profiteth little in Christianity, while it is godliness alone which is profitable unto all things—yet still do we press upon you the religious keeping of a certain day every week, and of certain hours or parts of these hours every day; and for this single reason too, not that thy body may go through its set and regular prostrations, but that thy soul may prosper and be in health.

And, think not that business will suffer by the encroachments which we are now proposing to you. Think not that the elevation which a closet prayer leaves behind it on the heart, will transport away your attention from the manifold cares and operations of the counting-house; or that you will come forth from the exercises of the one, indolent and distasteful, and alienated from the exercises of the other. The bible recognises no such disjunction. On the contrary, it supposes that he who is fervent in spirit may be not slothful in business, and that in the departments both of work and of worship he alike serveth the Lord.

A religionist is thought by some to be a visionary, who is in hazard of dreaming when he ought to be doing; and who must find it ill to combine his monkish propensities to devotion with the alert and wakeful and ever-varying activities of merchandise. But this does not experimentally hold. The very power and taste for order, which has led him to apportion his day between the labours of the sanctuary and those of ordinary life, he will carry with him into all his subordinate arrangements; and the strenuousness wherewith he abides by his hours of sacredness, will also keep him most pointedly faithful and alive to the discharge of all his incumbent secularities; and that sense of duty which impels him to the observations of his privacy, so far from being stifled by them, will be strengthened and recruited for the affairs of society; and the very alacrity of feeling which these spiritual communions have given to him, will impart a satisfaction and celerity and success to the miscellaneous agencies that

are before him; nor will his ever obtrusive consciousness of the eye that is above, disturb, but rather urge and exhilarate his industry the more—for he knows it to be an eye which has respect to his performances as well as to his prayers, and that the genuine spirit which cometh to him from heaven is a spirit wherewith the whole of human life ought to be impregnated. It is thus that the time which is laid out on the work that goeth on in the chamber of retirement, so far from being lost to the work that goeth on in the chamber of common merchandise, may prove a great and positive accession to it. It excites instead of exhausting; and acting on the recorded precept of diligence in our callings, the spirit that we fetch down upon the world from the mount of fellowship with God, adds a momentum to the wheels of ordinary business, and not only stimulates, but methodises all its managements. A kindred influence is caught from Him who is the author of order and not of confusion, and to whom the morning has been consecrated. The light by which the heart of the worshipper is thus visited, is not lost on his transition to this world's familiarities; but remains with him to guide the history of his day, and to shed a useful and pleasing distribution over all the doings of it.

And while we thus would propitiate the man of active life to a set time for the duties and the preparations of sacredness, we should also like the religionist to understand that the business, whether of his profession or his family, has its times and its seasons too; and he is not to practise any hurtful inroad upon these, even though tempted so to do by the strength of his spiritual appetite for spiritual joys and contemplations. It is doubtless a case of exceeding rarity; but some there are of more ethereal mould, who, for hours together, can hold converse with God and be all the while in ecstasy—who, as if broken loose from the fetters of earthliness, and evolved on a beauteous field of light and liberty, can feel such transports, and breathe such ineffable delights, as if all the glories of Heaven had descended upon them—who, as if already borne upward to paradise, can, even in the body, taste of the seraphic joy that

flows throughout that bright domain of love and of holiness; and who, feeling with Peter on the mount of transfiguration that it is good to be here, could fondly linger in the midst of a beatific inagery, at the sight of which all the cares and employments of this vulgar world were forgotten. The American missionary Brainerd, of all our modern devotees, could keep the longest and the loftiest on the wing: And from him therefore it is a testimony of exceeding weight to the lesson we have been labouring to inculcate, when he vouches for a regular distribution of hours, in which the business of the lower world might be provided for, and be made to alternate with spiritual exercises—when he vouches for this as conducive even to the prosperity of religion in the soul—when he tells us, that were it for nothing more than the health of our personal Christianity, it is well that the affairs of earth should have their turn, even in the history of him whose engrossing care is so to advance his sanctification, as that he may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

After conceding thus much to the doings and the business of the world—after giving to the work of your merchandise, and to the work of your families, the benefit of the principle that there is a time for every thing—suffer us to come back upon you who have hitherto occu-

pled all your week-day hours with the throng and the thickening multiplicity of your week-day affairs; and demand, in the name of your best and highest interest, that not a day shall pass over your heads without its allotted time for the concerns of your eternity. We repeat it, that business will not suffer by your morning and evening sacrifice—that your ledgers will not run into confusion, though you should tie your unvaried half-hour's attention every day to the Bible—that your correspondence of penmanship with man will not run into a heavier arrear, because you have now instituted a regular correspondence of prayer with God. Time, in fact, is a talent given largely and liberally to us all; and it only depends on our own use and distribution of it, that we find in it an ample sufficiency for every thing. Be but resolute and orderly; and if, on the pretence of an overwhelming business, you have hurt or neglected the readings and the devotions of sacredness, summon up now such a principle of arrangement as shall provide for your daily converse with Heaven; and you will find, that under the prolific virtue of such a principle, you will subordinate to your power all those complexities that are now so oppressive to you, and acquire a thorough mastery over that business of which you are now the jaded and the overdriven slaves.

SERMON IX.

The accommodating Spirit of Christian charity to the scruples of the Weak.

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”—1 COR. viii. 13.

We have already affirmed what the two principles are, on which it is that a human work is held to be of low or worthless estimation in Christianity. The first is—when, offered as the price of our justification, it tends to bring down the honour of the divine law, by calling upon it to acknowledge, and to reward an imperfect obedience. The second is—when, destitute in itself of any moral or spiritual character, it tends personally

to degrade man by substituting points in the room of principles; and loading him with the observations of a paltry ceremonial, rather than infusing into his heart the essence of substantial virtue. It is worthy of being remarked however, that the first of these ingredients is greatly more obnoxious to the Gospel than the second—that it can tolerate no infringement on the ground of our meritorious acceptance with God; and so,

Paul resisted to the uttermost the practice of circumcision, when proposed by certain teachers to the church of Galatia, as indispensable to salvation. Yet the same Paul could tolerate this very rite, nay even himself inflicted it upon Timothy, when the great doctrine of the righteousness that is through faith was not endangered by it. What he resisted when it trenchd on a fundamental principle, he could, were this principle kept inviolate, give way to, on the ground of expediency. The very same thing which he opposed with all his might, when made to usurp the place of merit beside the righteousness of Christ—he was on certain occasions content to let alone, when only made to usurp a place of simple occupancy beside those other attributes of conduct or character, which make out the personal righteousness of man. When admitted on the first footing, it thwarts the whole spirit and design of Heaven's jurisprudence, that will not stoop to the recognition of any human work, whatever, as being of any avail towards the acceptance of the guilty, and will be challenged on no other plea than the one and unmixed righteousness which Christ hath brought in. Whereas when some little matter of outward or circumstantial observancy is admitted on the second footing—it may at least be borne with as a harmless, though not esteemed as a very honourable visitor. Its presence, though it could well be dispensed with, may not exclude the presence of what is really good and graceful and desirable upon the character—just as the garb of Quakerism may be worn by the same individual, who wears along with it the piety and the patience and the uprightness and the primitive worth of Quakerism, with all the ornaments of its meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God are of great price. One may smile, or perhaps one may regret, that the stress of any religious importance at all should be laid either on the hue or on the pattern of vestments—and think that this question of bodily apparel, like that of bodily exercise, signifies but little. But who would ever think of any serious controversy about so downright a bagatelle; or who would not, if it softened antipathies or added to the amount of charity and good will between man and man, put on

those very habiliments which have given so pleasing and picturesque a variety to this denomination of Christians? Did they assume to their peculiar dress the merit or the power, which belongs to the doctrine of Christ's righteousness, then Paul himself would have resented it as an aggression on the very foundation of our faith. But if it be only a way in which they think to adorn that doctrine, and a way that looks comely to their eyes, we believe that Paul would have let their taste and their peculiarity alone. He might have regarded it as hay or stubble lying on the foundation, along with the gold and silver and precious stones which had been deposited there, by men rich in the substantial graces of Christianity. But, instead of stooping to controvert the singularity, he, in all likelihood, would have postponed the question to that day, which shall try and declare every man's work, and manifest its real worth, whatever it may be. The man himself, standing as he does on the foundation, shall be saved. Yet all that was insignificant in any of his practices shall be consumed away into oblivion; and only that, which has the attributes of enduring excellence shall stand—for only that is capable of being translated into the great and abiding society of Heaven, where nought other worth is recognised than what is lasting as the soul, and dignified as are the faculties of its moral and spiritual nature. So that the very same observance which, in one view, is of such pernicious import, as, if admitted, would prove fatal to Christianity by sapping its foundations, might, in another view of it, be a mere innocent peculiarity, which could either be dispensed with or tolerated according to circumstances. This will explain all that might have else appeared incongruous or veering in the conduct of our Apostle. In his fourteenth chapter to the Romans, you will find the whole force and spirit of his understanding, put forth on the casuistry of points and scruples; and we have often done homage to the rare and admirable sagacity where-with he has delivered himself in a question, which, of all others, is most apt to elude our efforts to unrival it; and that, just from the very unimportance of its materials, rendering it difficult to bring

the light of any decisive or commanding principle to bear upon it. He was most thoroughly aware of the frivolity, in regard to substance, of all those doubtful disputations that related to meats or days or ceremonies; but never lifted the voice either of alarm or of authority on one side or other, save when an invasion was threatened on the ground of a sinner's acceptance. After having repelled this mischief, he looked to these various niceties, very much as a man of full stature and exercised discernment would look to the peculiarities of grown-up children—in which, for the sake of peace and good humour, he might benevolently indulge them—or in which, for the still higher purpose of maintaining the ascendancy of his Christian kindness over their spirits, he most wisely and most willingly might share.

There can be no mistaking the opinion of Paul, as to who was the more enlightened Christian—he who for himself sat loose to the punctualities in question, or he who was the slave of them. It is he who is strong that eateth all things: It is he who is weak that eateth herbs. Yet we never saw the qualities of mind and of principle in more beauteous combination; nor, do we conceive how the vigour of masculine intellect can be more finely attempered with the mild and merciful and condescending spirit of the Gospel—than when the apostle lets himself down from that high region of liberty whither he had been borne on the pinions of a noble and emancipated spirit; and when he who could roam with a free conscience over the wide domain of nature, and fearlessly partake of all its bounties, recollected the tenderness of a brother yet labouring in the distress and imprisonment of many difficulties, and protested that he would not eat flesh while the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend.

And there is a twofold mischief which the apostle avoids by this generous compliance with another's principle, even though he himself regards it in the light of a weak peculiarity. Should this brother be quite decided and tenacious of the scruple, that he has raised in his own mind to the dignity of an essential obligation, then will another's liberty be matter of sorrow or concern to him, and the

infliction of this painful feeling ought to be avoided, wherever it can be done with propriety—for, says Paul, if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Or, if he be not quite decided—if, diffident of himself, he be readily overborne by the authority of another—if, in deference to the judgment of the stronger Christian, he imitate him in certain freedoms of observation, about which, however, he has not altogether obtained satisfaction in the light of his own mind, then, there is still a struggle between the power of conscience and the power of example; and should the latter prevail, the man is led to do a thing, not from the impulse of his clear convictions, but in opposition to his labouring doubts, and thus suffers himself to be hurried into a transgression against his own sense of moral rectitude. And thus it is that a weak conscience is wounded—for on seeing him who hath knowledge sit at a kind of meat which he deems unlawful, his conscience is emboldened to take the same liberty; and through the knowledge of him who is enlightened, the weak brother perishes for whom Christ died. For though he has given way to the indulgence, it is not with his own faith, but in the mere following of another's practice; and he secretly condemneth himself in that which he alloweth; and whatever is not of faith is sin, whence he that doubteth is condemned if he eateth, because he eateth not of faith: And, so it is good, both on the principle of following after those things which make for peace, and those things wherewith one may edify another—it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. It is this which may invest with a character of very high principle, what else would have seemed a weak and wretched scrupulosity. It is this which may stamp upon it the dignity of the second law that is like unto the first, and give the grace and the loveliness of charity even to the imbecilities of superstition. On the person of him who is its trembling votary, they may look silly enough; but they gather into an aspect of nobleness on the person of him, who, instead of frowning, as some would, the driveller away, walketh by his side; and, toler-

ating the weakness for sake of the worth wherewith it is associated, can descend from the level of his own superiority, and stretch forth to this humble Christian the courtesy of his kind and respectful accommodations.

This suggests another principle in aid of all the others which have already been adduced on the side of Sabbath observations. You know that there is a certain style of Sabbath keeping, which is regarded by many as the best and most appropriate; and that this style varies in different countries; and that, in some of these countries there is a strong popular feeling of what the things are which are essential to the becoming sanctity of this day, and what the things are whereby this sanctity would be violated. Some could not without distress of conscience walk abroad upon the fields; and some could not reduce their double to a single attendance upon the house of prayer; and some could not cast their eye over the columns of a newspaper; and some could not spend an hour upon a worldly visit, or so much as one moment upon worldly conversation. We have already, as we think, alleged enough of substantial argument for the solemn observation of this day, inasmuch as it is one of the unexpunged precepts of the decalogue—and inasmuch as every man of genuine Christian affections will love such a day, instead of feeling it a load upon his spirit—and inasmuch as a set and specific time for the exercises of piety insures a far larger amount of these exercises, than if they had been left at random to the spontaneous and desultory movement of one's own inclinations. And, to supplement all these considerations, does the text supply us with one more, the force of which must be felt by every man who is at all endowed with the philanthropy of the Gospel—and just felt the stronger, if by the lustre of his unquestionable virtues he has earned a confidence among men, and has the homage awarded to him of being both an ornament and an example of Christianity. He may without offence to his own conscience go forth on Sabbath among the beauties of nature. He may, endowed as he is with the glorious and generous law of liberty, to quell some anxiety that oppresses him, search for the article of news after which

he is longing. It is even conceivable, that the withdrawal of himself from church into his own chamber, during the whole or the half of that time that is spent by others in its public services, might on some particular occasion be good for his spirit; and that he, without one remonstrance from his own heart, could then fearlessly be absent from the house of God. Nay, there might even occur to him in the train of accidents, such unlooked for urgencies of call or of intercourse, as would amount in his situation to a valid demand for worldly and secular converse—and that, too, on an hour that he else would have given to prayer and heavenly contemplation.

Throughout all these deviations from the letter of many a rigid formalist, might this enlightened Christian be able to clear his way, with a spirit unhurt, because with a conscience unviolated; and had he only his own things to look at, then with love to the Sabbath in his heart, might he still take the liberty of a son of God with Sabbath in his practice. But this very love teaches him to look to the things of others also—teaches him, while at perfect freedom in his own conscience, to be the servant even of the weakest of his brethren. And should he know that his Sabbath walk; or his Sabbath converse with the world; or his Sabbath indulgence, though on rare occasions, in the news and the business and the secularities of the week; or even his disappearance from church in any one of its services, though the time were consecrated to the secret labourings of his heart with God—should he know that any one of these freedoms would, under the cover of his revered example, embolden another to trespass against the light of his own mind, and so wound that spirit which, not yet strengthened to the discernment of what was substantially good and evil, is still over scrupulous and over sensitive about the externals of Christianity—Then in the spirit of our text would he feel, that what might else have been a mere insignificance, was now impregnated with the very essence of gospel charity and gospel obligation—and, taking up the language of Paul, would he resolve to do none of those things while the world standeth, lest he should make his brother to offend.

You will thus perceive that the precise style and etiquette of Sabbath observation is, to a certain degree, a question of geography. The Christians of England, for example, have altogether a freer and more negligent Sabbath exterior than those of Scotland; and this is perfectly consistent with a substantial unity of spirit and of principle among them both. A Scottish religionist might on visiting, or on shifting his residence to the south, maintain without prejudice, either to himself or others, all the rigidities of his accustomed practice. But the English religionist, on coming amongst us, could not without the hazard of damaging the principles of his new vicinity, retain the laxities of his. If the mind have long associated with a certain habit a feeling of deep and serious obligation, then the surrender of that habit were tantamount to a surrender of principle, and the conscience is vitiated. Higher elements are at stake upon the issue of such a contest; and though the scruple may be a downright futility in itself, yet the whole religion of him who entertains it, may by its violation be shaken to an overthrow. It may be so implicated in his heart with all the feelings of sacredness, that the scruple cannot be torn away without the sacredness coming up along with it; and so the same authority which conjures a man out of his frivolous punctuality, might conjure him out of his faith altogether. The very same example which left untouched the Christianity of one neighbourhood, might shed a deleterious blight over the Christianity of another. So, that while without detriment to any passing observer, Wilberforce, from the lofty and exposed terrace of his habitation, might, in unison with every Sabbath feeling, inhale the freshness of its summer evens, and verily catch a sweeter influence from Heaven upon his heart, when he looked abroad on the peaceful glories of the landscape before him—yet might the same exhibition spread a pestilential virus, through the atmosphere of many of our northern parishes: And we leave you to estimate for yourselves what the cast of that delicacy is, which would lead this most tender yet most liberal of Christians, to forego the much loved liberty in which his own spirit could most fearlessly have

expatiated—and tell us, whether it were narrow or it were noble, if, in his tour of recreation through our romantic territory, he, for the sake of the people's holiness, dearer to his heart than even the fond enthusiasm wherewith the face of nature is surveyed by him, he did on every seventh day suspend the enjoyment of her lakes and her mountains, and turn his Sabbath inn into a hermitage, rather than make the meanest of her peasantry to offend.

It is in this spirit that you ought to act. Beside all the previous considerations on behalf of Sabbath, you must compute the force of your example upon others—and each should contribute the decorum of his own grave and regular observations, even though at the expense of self-denial to his own tastes, that he may help within the sphere of his influence to arrest the declining piety of our age. It is woful to think at this period of benevolent forthgoing, on the part of the higher classes among the habitations of the poor—how listless after all they are of the Christianity of our city multitudes—and what woful havoc they do make, by their conspicuous departure from the gravity of the olden times, on the best and dearest principles of our land. And the mischief is not confined to its operation upon the brethren, or upon those who are already Christians, in causing them to offend, and so speeding them downward along the career of degeneracy. For this growing obliteration of Sabbath, and of all those solemn and impressive vestiges which went to characterise it, tell with malignant effect, in perpetuating and confirming the heathenism of our outcast population. It were well, for the sake of those in whom the power of reflection is so nearly extinct, as to leave almost nothing but the external senses, by which to find a conveyance for serious or pathetic emotion into their hearts—it were well for them that Sabbath should be upholden in all its venerable distinctions, and should stand visibly out with the aspect of religiousness on its very forehead. It is not we think in the spirit of a blind fanaticism, but rather in the spirit of a philosophy which can look into the secret mechanism both of our moral and sentient nature, that the opening on the Sabbath, whether

of public rooms or of public gardens, should be resisted as a measure of deadly import to the religion of the community at large; and on the same principle would we advocate that Sabbath police, which, without oppression and without violence, puts to flight those many desecrations by which the hallowed aspect of this day has been overborne. But our more immediate business is with you; and our present aim is, to lay the responsibility of the principle that we have now urged upon your consciences. Look not

merely to your own things but to the things of others also; and fail not to keep up both a congregational regularity in the eye of your fellow-worshippers, and a household regularity in the eye of your family. These are sensible memorials which serve both to grace and to signalise this day of sacredness; and so multiply the influences, in favour of that great Christian institution, a reverence for which seems to be identified with a reverence for Christianity itself.

SERMON X.

On the Amusements and Companies of the World.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—2 COR. vi. 14—16.

PERHAPS on no occasion does the Apostle evince a more delicate and discerning eye, than when pronouncing on the question of meet and allowable intercourse between his recent converts and those idolaters, who composed the great mass of the society around them, and with whom they were still connected by the ties both of neighbourhood and relationship. You see at once, how, strong in the important principles of the question, he could stand his own individual ground against all the scrupulosities of a weak and sensitive conscience. He for himself could eat the meat that had been offered to an idol—he could even have eaten it in the very temple of idolatry, and perhaps at the same table too with its deluded worshippers. What another Christian would have shuddered at as an abomination, he could fearlessly have done; and it was not any conscientious tenderness about the matter in itself, but a charitable tenderness for the points and perplexities of the feeble-minded among the brethren, which led him to abstain from it. The act he regarded as nothing, or truly as much too insignificant for any strenuous or imperative deliverance from him upon its own account.

But he took into account the effect of it, in the way of exhibition to other disciples; and how it might be matter of distress and difficulty to their hearts; and how it might embolden them to transgress against the light of their own conscience, and so be matter of defilement as well as of distress; and how it might be the means of bringing them more frequently into contact and exposure, with people who had no kindred quality of spirit or sentiment with themselves; and under the force of these considerations, does this free and firm and most intelligent casuist come forth with the expression of a resolve, the principle and application of which we have already tried to elucidate—“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest it make my brother to offend.”

In the text that has now been submitted to you, the apostle looks to the approximation in question between his disciples and idolaters under another aspect. Viewed as a mere bodily or external act, the eating with them of the same food, or sitting with them at the same table, he seems to regard as a point of indifference, and to number with the all things

which are lawful. But viewed not as the juxtaposition of different persons, but as the juxtaposition of different minds or of different principles, he looks to the spiritual character and contemplates the spiritual result that is likely to come out of such a companionship, and seems at once to number it among the things which are not expedient. He seems to regard it as a most unequal and unseemly assortment of people, who are wholly unsuitable and heterogeneous the one to the other. Their mere presence together in the same apartment, and their mere sitting together at the same board, and their partaking together of the same dishes and the same viands—these deeds and these circumstances of materialism, would argue in the religion of Christ, the grossness and the littleness of materialism, did it lay down its specifications and its categories for things of such frivolous observation. But when we think of the kind of moral atmosphere that is sure to gather and be formed around every assembled company; and how each individual spirit that is there, contributes a something of its own character by which to tinge and to peculiarise it; and that person cannot be approximated to person, without mind reciprocating on mind; and that there be manifold avenues of transition from one heart to another, whether by the utterance of direct sentiment, or by the natural signs of the eye and of the voice, or what perhaps is most insidious of all, by a certain tact of sympathy with the general pulse of those who are near us and about us, in virtue of which the tone and habit of a party have a certain power of diffusiveness that tends at least to a community of feeling among all the members of it—when we think that from these causes, there is a hazard that sacredness, by moving too near to the temperament of the region which is opposite, may sustain a blight from the withering influences of the contiguous secularity—then must we see that the topic on hand, instead of appertaining to the casuistry of mere circumstances, holds by an immediate tie on the clear and intelligent morality of principle: And, we must again award to our apostle, the homage of a high and powerful illumination—when, saying at one time that an idol is nothing and the meat

offered to an idol is nothing; he could say at another, that it was both hurtful and unseemly for Christians to associate with idolaters—between whom, in all the essential characteristics of the inner man, there was no fellowship and no agreement and no communion.

There seem to be two capital reasons why the men of a Christian spirit should not by choice, and as if prompted thereto by a spontaneous impulse of their own, associate with those of a worldly or idolatrous spirit. The first is, that there is really no congeniality between the two spirits. As there is the want of a common taste, so there is the want of common topics. The children of this world nauseate the favourite themes of the children of light; and the children of light hold to be insipid at least the favourite themes of the children of this world. For a man then to delight in the air and conversation of an irreligious party, bears on it the evidence of his own irreligion. It proves him to be of a kindred quality, with those who have nothing in them that is akin to sacredness: And the very facility wherewith his spirit can amalgamate with theirs—the very comfort and pleasure wherewith he can breathe in an atmosphere altogether tainted with ungodliness—the very circumstance of him not feeling out of his element, though in an element in which, for hours together, there has not been one sentiment exchanged that bears on the things of faith or of eternity—This ought to alarm him for his own state, as carrying in it the indication of its being a state in which nature still maintains great force, if it do not maintain the entire predominancy: And, if it be the apostolical symptom of having passed from death unto life, that we love the brethren, or love the society of Christian disciples—then may the love of another society, at utter antipodes with the former, administer the suspicion of a still unregenerated heart, of a still unsubdued worldliness.

But there is still another reason, distinct from the former, why there ought to be no gratuitous fellowship between the pious and the ungodly. The former reason is, that for a man to consort, and by choice, with the ungodly, argues that there is in him still a strong leaven or remainder of ungodliness. The other

reason is, that so to consort with the ungodly not only proves the existence of a kindred leaven in our spirit, but tends to ferment it—not only argues the ungodliness which yet is in the constitution, but tends to promote and to strengthen it the more. The one reason why it is desirable that a man in quest of spiritual health should shun an intercourse with corruption, is, that his very delight in that intercourse is in itself a most infallible symptom of spiritual disease; and the other reason is, that it only indicates the disease, but serves to aggravate and to confirm it. And who can doubt of the blight and the barrenness that are brought upon the spirit by its converse with the world? Who, that ever looked on human life with an observant eye, can question the might and efficacy of that assimilating power, which every circle of society has on the individuals who mingle with it? Such, even among those who have been long under a process of sanctification—such is the downward tendency of the heart, that it is indeed a work of strenuousness to uphold its spiritual frame for a single hour; and the hazard is, that, on being laid open to the full tide of that worldly influence which descends upon it from an alienated company, the whole unction of its sacredness will take flight and be dissipated. It is altogether with the grain and tendency of our old nature, to fall in with the prevalent tone of nature's unrenewed children; and this old nature, though subordinated by grace, is not extinguished; and so, there is ever present in us, a principle of ready coalescence with the taste and spirit and affections of men who have not God in all their thoughts; and thus to bring this earthly ingredient of our constitution into voluntary contact with such men, is tantamount, in fact, to a voluntary exile or departure, on our part, from the living God. It is as if, by our own proper choice, we left the tabernacle of God, that we might dwell for a season in the tents of iniquity; and as this, by our first consideration, bespeaks where the liking of the heart lies, and is therefore to be deplored—so, by our second, it is equally to be deplored, as carrying in it a most pernicious reflex influence upon the heart tending most assuredly to

deteriorate the gracious principle that is therein, if not to destroy it.

Both the one and the other of these considerations are directly applicable touchstones by which to try, we will not say the lawfulness, but at least the expediency, both of the theatre and of all public entertainments. Think of the degree of congeniality which there is between the temperament of sacredness, and the temperament of any of those assemblages which are now referred to. Compute, though it be only in a general way, the distance and dissimilarity that do actually obtain between the prevalent spirit of this world's amusements and the spirit of godliness. Bethink yourselves of any such tests as may help to clear and ascertain this matter; and perhaps one of the most effectual is, to recollect that one individual of all your acquaintanceship, to whom you would most readily award, and that in the most pure and holy and reverend sense of the term, the character of a saint; and on whose aspect, there stands out to your eye the most decided and unequivocal expression of saintliness. Then make an effort, and conceive of this very personage—either that, as one of the most delighted spectators, he drinks in the whole fascination of a scenic performance on the stage, and shares in the loudest peals of the merriment that is awakened by it; or that, with all the ecstatic glee of the most youthful in attendance, he plays off his agility and elegance in the eddying circles of an assembly. We do not ask you of any unseemliness in all this arising out of age; but we ask, if there be not palpable, even to yourselves, a most violent unseemliness arising out of the profession and the character? Do you not feel immediately awake to the utter discordancy that there is between the imagined exercises of the man in secret, and the public exhibition that he now makes of himself?

On your own impressions of human nature do you hold it possible, that a relish so decisive for the actings which are carried on in the temples of fashion, can dwell in the same bosom with a relish equally determined for the actings which are carried on in a temple of piety? Would you believe it of the man, thus the gayest of the gay, that he had spent

his morning hour in rapt and hallowed converse with Heaven; or do you ever think, that he who bears in his heart a cherished love for theatric declamation and song, carries in it also love for the psalmody of Christian worshippers? Is it not then your feeling, that, by the transition he has made, from the chamber of prayer to the concourse of fashionable gaiety, his character has, even in your eyes, sustained a grievous desecration? And what is this to say, but that you hold the atmosphere of the one place to be of diverse quality from the atmosphere of the other?—that, yourselves being judges, there is a real and substantial opposition between the temperament of piety and the temperament of a dissipation, which, however refined, is at least utterly devoid of the breath and the being of godliness; that there is a certain want of assortment between the two things, in virtue which you cannot imagine a great delight in the one, without some distaste or aversion for the other; and that, therefore, and of necessary consequence, the abandonment of oneself to the rounds of fashionable life, while it may imply no infraction in the outward act of single specific requirement to be found in sacred writ, may yet most decisively imply an utter alienation of the heart from all sacredness.

Thus much, then, for the act of delighted attendance on public entertainments, viewed as the symptom of a state of spiritual disease; and then, as to the second point of view in which it may be regarded, that is, as a course by which the disease may gather strength and be aggravated—this also may safely be referred, we think, to your feelings and your own experience. We have already presumed on the fact of your voluntary presence in the theatre or ball-room, and eager participation in their amusements, as being itself an indication, that on the morning of that day, you had not reached in your closet to the heights of saintly or seraphic communion with the God of holiness. And the question remains, whether the glee and the giddiness and the splendour that you have witnessed and have shared, will send you back again to your closets in the evening, in better trim, if we may be allowed the expression, for another and more

successful attempt on Heaven's sanctuary than before? The simple matter to be determined is, will the dance, and the music, and the merriment, and the representation, and the whole tumult of that vanity through which you have passed, and in full sympathy too, it is to be presumed, with the joyous multitude around you—will these attain the consent of the spirit to the feelings and the exercises of sacredness? Would you say of any one place of fashionable gaiety, that it makes a good antichamber of preparation for that house of solemn interview, in which converse is held, either with the still small voice that is within, or with that God above who bids you sanctify Him at all times in your heart, and do all things to His glory. These are experimental questions; and perhaps the memory of some who are here present may serve for the solution of them. And if their recollection be, that the almost unfailling result of an evening of gaiety, was to be hustled and jaded out of all their spirituality—that the whole unction of religiousness had fled; and, if prayers were uttered at all, they were lifted up in the mockery of meagre and downright heartlessness—that, in truth, there was a general riot or restlessness of their internal feelings, which nought could compose but sleep, and sleep held under the unacknowledged eye of Him who never slumbers, and still kept His wakeful guardianship over the unconscious moments of that creature, who, for a season had chosen to disregard Him—Oh, is it needful for us to suspend you any longer on the issues of a deep and doubtful casuistry—or will we not be helped forward by the responding of your own bosoms, when we say, that this cannot be the habit of one who knows himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth—cannot be the habit of one who has tasked himself to the work of nursing up his spirit for eternity?

We have all along assumed these places of public and fashionable resort, to be innocent of any specific or tangible offence against the proprieties of human life, or the delicacies of human sentiment; and, on this assumption, the most favourable for them, have we nevertheless attempted to demonstrate, how utterly at

antipodes they are with the soul and habit of one, who is singly aspiring after immortality. But should this assumption not be true—should it be found that in these haunts of assembled elegance, a regardless impiety is sometimes connived at, and sometimes a sensitive and high-toned delicacy is laughed out of countenance—should there, in the midst of all that disguise and decorum which signalises the present above the former generation, should there be the hazard of so much as one sportive effusion by which the most pure or the most pious ear could possibly be offended—Then the question instantly emerges out of all its difficulties; and the Christian, instead of having to grope his way through the ambiguities of a yet unsettled controversy, will recoil from the poisoned insidiousness, with the promptitude of as quick an alarm, as he would from the most direct and declared abomination.

Now, what is true of this world's amusements is also true of this world's companies. If there be risk, either with the one or the other, of being exposed to the language of profaneness or the language of impurity, this were reason enough, without any lengthened or recondite argumentation, why a Christian should maintain himself at the most scrupulous and determined distance from them both. But it so happens, that like as the theatre, for example, has been refined out of much of its original coarseness, so a similar process of refinement has taken undoubted effect on the conversation of private society. And when the public representation on the one hand, and the household party on the other, have thus been delivered of every specific transgression—where is the harm, and where is the hazard, it may be asked, of our most faithful and repeated attendance on them? It is when every thing in the shape of distinct or definite impropriety is cleared away, that many feel as if the cause of liberty, both as to fashion's entertainments and fashion's visits, were restored to an impregnable standing-place. It is thought, that when the enemies of any indulgence have nothing specific to allege against it, they, on that account have nothing substantial to allege against it; that in the lack of solid materials they

have recourse on imaginative phantoms; and with their plea attenuated to airy nothing, all which remains to them is the fierceness of an irrational and intemperate bigotry, or a certain subtlety of argument that is far too ethereal for the grasp of an ordinary understanding.

Now, you will recollect, that on the question of public entertainments, our reasoning, in the main amount of it, was directed, not against any specific violations of propriety wherewith they were chargeable—but against them on account of their spiritual character and spiritual tendency. We affirmed, that, in virtue of that change which Christianity induced upon its converts, the once passionate votary of fashion would cease to be any longer enamoured of its dissipations and its gaieties; and that, simply from the willing impulse of his new taste, these old things would go into desuetude and then pass away. And then might this world's amusements be abandoned without any imperative deliverance at all upon the subject of them—not given up, because of any precept of Christianity that required the specific action; and yet at the same time given up, because of the power of Christianity over the affections. And one reason why it is very undesirable to behold a professing disciple as intent as before in pursuit of gaiety, is, that it is the symptom not only of no change in his habits; but much there is room to fear it as the symptom of there yet being no change in his heart. And another reason of its being undesirable, is that, besides a taste for the amusements of the world being the symptom or the indication of a worldly spirit—the indulgence of this taste seems to fix and to strengthen this worldliness the more. We are not conscious of any thing mystic or unintelligible in all this. There may be a difficulty in replying to the interrogation—What is the crime of music? Yet would you feel yourself entitled to rebuke the scholar whose love for music dispossessed his love of study, and whose gratification of this appetite dissipated his mind away from all the preparations that were indispensable to his professional excellence. And in like manner it may be difficult to state what that specific thing is in which the criminality of the theatre or the ball-room lies

—and more particularly, if refined out of all that is literally or outwardly exceptionable. And yet without any remote or scholastic process of ratiocination—may it be clearly made out, that these are among the earthly things, the liking of which is at diametric variance with the habit of him who has his conversation in heaven—that, without any departure from the wisdom which is soberly and strictly experimental, they may be denounced as a nuisance and an obstacle in the path of spiritual education—reprobated, not dogmatically but reprobated intelligently, by him who with an eye fresh from the lights of observation, and well exercised in the phases and phenomena of human character, can pronounce on the whole atmosphere of fashion as being pervaded with the breath of a diverse spirit from the atmosphere of godliness; and lift up a true warning when he says, that the more you prosecute of this world's gaities, the more you darken the hopes and enfeeble the preparations of eternity.

And, as it is with this world's amusements, so it may be with this world's companies. It may not be possible to single out that one enactment of the statute-book which, by any specific act, or by any specific expression has been trampled upon. There may be none of the excesses of intemperance. There may be none of the execrations of profanity. There may be none of the sneers of infidelity. There may be none of that foolish talking, which to use the language of the apostle, is not seemly or convenient. It is true, that neither the doctrine, nor the devotional spirit of Christianity, may have contributed one ingredient throughout the whole of the evening's conversation. Yet all may have been pure, and dignified and intellectual—or if not a very enlightened society, all at least may have been affectionate and kind, and free from any thing more obstreperous or jovial than what a simple light-heartedness would inspire. And, then, the gravelling question is put—where is the mighty and mysterious harm of all this? By what magic of sophistry, will you fasten on such a familiar and oft-acted companionship, the atrocious characters of carnal and ungodly and anti-christian? What are the prin-

ciples on which so bland and amiable and domestic a looking party are to be stigmatized as a party of unregenerates? And are we to be shocked with an affirmation, in every way so transcendently revolting—as that in a scene often realised at our own tables; and enlivened by the humour and hilarity of our own choicest acquaintances; and still more endeared by the smile and the sparkle, and the engaging loquacity of our own children—there is nought but the tainted atmosphere of corruption; and that we must shun the infection of such a circle, as we would that of so many reprobates or unbelievers who are ripening for the society of the damned.

The intelligent Christian will not fail to recognise in all his vehemence, the very repugnance that is felt in the heart of a worldly yet respectable man, when the minister tries to pursue him with the demonstration of his utter sinfulness. It is a thing not felt and not understood, by the conscience that has not been spiritually awakened, to the rightful ascendancy of Heaven's laws over all the desires of the heart, and all those affections which it charges with revolt and idolatry, simply because the things of sense have seduced them from God.

There may not be one member of an assembled company, who has not much that should endear him to our most kind and complacent regards—whether as the honourable citizen; or as the benignant matron of the party; or as the joyous and free-hearted companion, whose very presence lights up the expectation of pleasure in every countenance; or as the son, who though now verging upon manhood, has never yet cost his parents, or his sisters, a sigh, but who all of them rejoice in the opening anticipations both of his prosperity and his worth; or finally, and to complete our sketch of this happy and harmonious assemblage, may we advert to those lovely infants, who are permitted for a season to shed a beauteous halo of innocence and delight over the scene of enjoyment. And again, it may be asked, is it the mandate of stern and unrelenting theology that all this shall be broken up; or at least, that it shall be shrunk from by its own votaries, as if charged with the noxious elements of a moral or a spiritual pesti-

lence? Is it for Christianity to look with the hard eye of a Gorgon on this living scene—peopled as it is with the best family affections, and with all those feelings which flow in grateful circulation around a gay and generous companionship? Or can it at all be endured that the grace and embellishment and heart-felt charms of society shall thus be scared away; and that too, at the bidding of a principle the reason and authority of which we cannot comprehend?

You will thus perceive, that by meeting our antagonist in all his plausibility, and in all his force, we have landed ourselves in what some may regard as a task of no common difficulty—which is, to steer our way between the truth of what Christianity affirms regarding our nature, and the tenderness which Christianity feels towards every individual who wears it; or to prove of orthodoxy, that it is not only sound, but amiable. You will further perceive, that we cannot advance a step upon this subject, without taking the essential principles of the gospel along with us. And it ought to reconcile the hearer to a greater length of disquisition on the one topic of conformity to the world than might else have been tolerated, that thereby the fundamental doctrines of our faith might obtain a new enforcement, when thus carried out to a new and generally interesting application. Think not, then, that we are lavishing an enormous amount of time and labour barely on one of the subordinate moralities of the New Testament—for, in truth, there can be no substantial or satisfactory management of the question, without settling it deeply upon an evangelical basis, and repeatedly appealing therefrom to the highest and most peculiar principles of the evangelical system.

It must not be disguised then, that, with all the attractive qualities which each member of the company referred to may personally realise—it is quite a possible thing that there be not one trait or tincture of godliness on the character of any one of them. They may all be living without God in the world; and deriving though they do all the moral and all the physical gracefulness which belong to them from the hand of the great human architect, He may be utterly for-

gotten; and by a tacit but faithful compact during the whole process of this conviviality, all thought and all talk of the ever present Deity may for the season be abandoned. It is said in one of the old prophets, that they who 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. Now, how we ask, would the topics of any of our every-day companies appear in the book of Heaven's remembrance? What sort of document would you frame, by taking a full and a faithful record of its conversation? It may not be licentious, it may not be profane, it may not be enlivened by so much as one touch of scandal; and yet withal be just as remote as possible from sacredness. If it be from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and out of the whole mass of the utterance that has been poured forth, not one sentence was heard that bore upon religion or eternity—what can we infer but that religion or eternity has not been in all their thoughts? God, by common consent, has been shut out from the party altogether, and has been as little regarded, and as little recognised, as He would have been in a region of atheism.

So, you will observe, that it is just with our fashionable parties, as it is with our fashionable amusements. Both have been much purified of late years from all that is directly revolting or abominable. Both may be animated with that play of heart and of humour, which is quite accordant with the kindness of nature. All the feeling, and all the fancy which circulate there, may be in perfect unison with those best sympathies, which go to cement and to sweeten the intercourse of human society. And yet, the whole breath of this fair society on earth may be utterly distinct from the breath of the society in Heaven. In the very proportion of its freedom from that which would alarm or repel a sensitive delicacy, may it in truth be the more pregnant with danger to the souls of the unwary. It may only engage them the more to the things that are beneath, and alienate them the more from the things that are above. And thus it is a very possible thing, that,

in simply prosecuting your round of invitations among this world's amiable friends and hospitable families, you may be cradling the soul into inter insensibility against the portentous realities of another world—a spiritual lethargy may grow and gather every year till it settle down into the irrevocable sleep of death—and, without one specific transgression that can be alleged of the companies among which you move, still may you be inhaling in the midst of them an atmosphere that makes you as oblivious of judgment, and as oblivious of eternity, as if you had drunk of the waters of forgetfulness. It may not be the air of vulgar profligacy, or abandoned licentiousness, but it may be still the air of irreligion; and you, assimilating more and more to the temperament by which you are surrounded, in confirmed irreligion may expire.

This is the leading principle that is applicable to the question of indiscriminate converse with the society of this world. The love of it is opposite to the love of God; and the indulgence of the love of it serves to confirm and strengthen our enmity to sacredness the more.—In as far as it goes to indicate the disease of a worldly spirit, it is to be regretted.—In as far as it goes to cherish or to aggravate that disease, it should be forthwith relinquished by all who have at heart their preparation for the upper sanctuary. We do not say that even the most wakeful feeling of its danger, will lead in fact to a total abstinence from general company; or even that it ought to do so. But sure we are that it will very much abridge the intercourse; and that in every specific instance when it is thought right or allowable to venture upon it, it will lead to the most vigilant guardianship—to the jealousy of a spirit that forewarns and forearms itself against the hazards of the coming party—to the strictest maintenance of Christian humility and holiness and love, during the currency of its dissipations and its blandishments—and finally, to a solemn reckoning upon its effects and its influences, after that the season of its exposures has gone by.

We think it right in stating our comparison between the influence of this world's amusements, and that of this

world's companies—as we have not disguised or extenuated the former, as little to shrink from giving a picture of the latter equally aggravated and equally alarming. Nay, we are not sure but that it has greater power than the other to confirm the spiritual lethargy, and to steal away the heart into a pleasing oblivion of God and godliness. The show, and the festival, and the great public entertainment may more violently discompose the spirit out of its religiousness for the time; and, acting by successive assaults upon the frame of our personal Christianity, may at length demolish it altogether. But we can conceive the disciple to be more upon his guard against a danger so direct, and so palpable—and thus better able to withstand the shock of a hostility, that renews its attacks upon him at given periods, and does so with the full-blown note and circumstance of preparation. We can conceive of him, that, even though present among the tumults and the gaieties of the public entertainment, he may come off more unhurt, than from the polite and placid circle of a very kind yet wholly unchristian society—when mind comes vastly nearer to mind; and so the assimilating power of man upon his fellows, acts with tenfold advantage and effect; and is besides inconceivably heightened by that rapid interchange of thoughts and feelings, which takes place in conversation. And complaisance sits in smiling supremacy there. And cheerfulness which the introduction of an ungenial topic would at once put to flight, has her post of long and well established occupancy there.—And who can withstand the pleasing illusions of all the glow, and of all the graciousness, which are current there? And thus it is, that the very kindness of nature may beguile the spirit into a sweet forgetfulness of the ever present Deity. All sense of religion is charmed away from the heart, soothed and satisfied as it is amid the sweets of youth or generous companionship: And if it be a likely thing that the occasional atmosphere of a playhouse, pealing aloud with the thunders of merriment and applause, shall storm the human bosom for a season out of all its piety—then know it to be a still more likely thing of the daily atmosphere of many a parlour, that,

lighted up as it is with smiles and perfumed with the incense of mutual reverence and regard, it may stifle into irrecoverable death that piety which the other might only at intervals scare away.

And what gives additional soreness as well as subtlety to this oft recurring mischief, is, that it may not only injure the Christian, but may cause him to reflect the injury back again on those who are around him. Let him have but the name and the authority of religiousness—let it be held enough by the many that they reach the standard of his observations—let his example be quoted as the measure of a safe and sufficient imitation; and then let them witness with what kindred delight, he can give himself up, and that for hours together, to a scene of unmingled earthliness. Let him there exhibit a full and approving sympathy with the joy of creatures who have no joy in God, and share in all the busy interest they feel, about topics more paltry and ephemeral still, than is the passing world they tread upon. Let it be seen how willingly he can disport himself among fellow men, who, if his Christianity be true, are on the brink of a fearful lake, from whose devouring billows there is no other way of escape, than by the living faith and thorough regeneration of the gospel. And after all this, will it be said that no damage is sustained by human souls, from this man's easy connivance at the ungodliness of the world; or from his complacent toleration of those parties by whom a sacred or scriptural utterance would be felt as a most unseemly and most unwarranted intrusion, and so put a sudden arrest on all that hilarity which they had met to indulge in? Think you not that the cruel delicacy of this man's silence about the cares and concerns of eternity; and the countenance that he sheds by his presence on those meetings of conviviality, from which by tacit but unviolated compact religion is alienated; and the free abandonment of himself to the trifles, or at least to the temporalities which form the all wherein the carnal and the unbeliever can expatiate—think you not that these will serve to reduce still farther in the eyes of men the high topics of immortality?—and will they not foster the delusions of that practical infidelity which

so abounds among us?—and do they not tend to satisfy that heart, which, did it feel as it ought, would be all awake and in disquietude about its state of condemnation?—and do they not lend a most pernicious sanction to the whole habit and history of creatures, who have taken up with the world as their resting-place; and, engrossed with the bustle of its companies and its joys, never cast one look of earnestness to the eternity that is beyond it?

And now is it time for the question—that if an unbridled indulgence in this world's companies be to the full as deleterious as an unbridled indulgence in this world's amusements—how comes it that in point of fact, a Christian, and of most entire and decided character too, may not unfrequently be seen to mingle with the one, and need never in a single instance lend his presence to the other?—How comes it that the same individual, whom, because of his spiritual taste, you will never once detect within the walls of a theatre, you may, and without, it is to be presumed, any compromise of his taste or his principle, often meet even in a carnal or common-place household party? By what clue of reasoning is it, that we shall make out the consistency of the feeling that the atmosphere of the latter is just as tainted with ungodliness, as the atmosphere of the former—with the fact that he is never known to enter within the limits of the one, while he oft is compassed round with the other, and breathes it for hours, not perhaps with great positive satisfaction, but at least with toleration or even with comfort? Surely if the element of this world's companionship be as uncongenial with that of Christianity, as is the element of this world's more public and fashionable gaieties—then should not a disciple be just as much out of his element in the one situation as in the other; and let us know therefore, how you count it an unlikely thing that a Christian should ever be found to take part among the diversions of earthliness, when you affirm of him, that, actually and historically, he may at times be found among the societies of earthliness?

The great principle by which this whole obscurity is unravelled is, that there is a mighty difference between the

act of your going voluntarily forth upon temptation, and the circumstance of temptation coming unsought and unasked for upon you. The first sort of encounter is by your own will; and you have no warrant for believing that you will be upheld in safety, against a hazard which you have presumptuously dared. The second sort of encounter is by the will of Him who has placed us among the duties and events, each of his own neighbourhood; and we do have the warrant for believing, that we shall be upheld in safety against a hazard into which we have been providentially brought. The man who looks with heedful jealousy to his way, will not rush upon temptation. But still God may suffer him to be tempted, though not beyond that which He will enable him to bear.

Now this, generally speaking, is the difference between a public amusement, and a private company. Both may be alike uncongenial with godliness—nor may it be possible to inhale the spirit, and catch the prevalent tone and sympathy of either, without dispossessing the heart of all sacredness. But to be in contact with the one, you have, speaking in the general, to make the originating movement. To bring you into contact with the other, there are a thousand foreign urgencies that have their origin without, and which come upon you in the attitude of passiveness. That you be in the theatre, there must be a spontaneous forth-going on your part; or if you did not originate the proposal, you could easily, still speaking in the general, and without offence have made your escape from it—so that if there, you are there because you choose; and, whatever seducing influence may be in this place of entertainment, you have voluntarily approached or presumptuously braved it. That you be in the private society, may be the effect not of choice, but of circumstances—a trial not of your own making, but a trial brought upon you by the arrangements of Providence—an exposure which in itself may be fully as hazardous as the other, but still an exposure that instead of courting, you rather would have shrunk from, had it not been for some call of necessity, or even some call of obligation which you could not otherwise have conscientiously opposed

of. For, take notice—there is all the difference possible as to indication of character, and all the difference as to security against any pernicious operation on the character, and all the difference as to the will and countenance of Him with whom in every footstep of your history you have to do, between the movement adopted by one who at his own bidding goeth out of his way, and the movement impressed upon one by the manifold besetting influences which meet him on his way. And who shall say, that, by one sweeping and summary act of rejection, all these influences are to be cast aside? Who shall say that it is the part of the Christian, to shut his door against the stranger that has been thrown upon his courtesies?—or distantly to scowl on all the convivialities which take place within the circle of his unconverted relationship?—or even fearfully, as if in superstition, to absent himself from those festivities which are made subservient to the plans and the consultations of merchandise? The path of every heavenward traveller is beset with difficulties—yet it is not his part to vault them, by one single act of rapid and resolute energy; but to walk and to feel his way through them, with wisdom and prayer to God and much circumspection: And most assuredly of all, has he failed of hitting the exact proprieties of his condition—if the aspect he bear among his fellows, be that of a morose and repulsive and unconciliating gruffness; or if he so wear the badge of his profession, as to disguise from the eye of the world the great characteristics of Christianity, as the religion of kindness and the religion of liberty.

It is no infringement upon a man's liberty, that he is led by the impulse of his own taste; and so, with a taste that disinclines him from the society of the world, does a Christian, in the full exercise of freedom, keep aloof as much as he may from companies, with whose spirit and with whose favourite themes he cannot amalgamate. Neither is it any infringement on a man's liberty, that he is led by the impulse of his own fears, to shun an exposure by which he may hurt or hazard the very dearest interest that his heart is set upon; and so, still in the full exercise of freedom, may he

cultivate to the uttermost his distance from a society, the very breath of which serves to taint, and to reduce the spirituality of all his affections. Thus far, you will allow that he keeps on the high walk of reason and principle—not at all recoiling like a man of points, and with slavish or superstitious fearfulness, from the mere act of worldly association; but reflecting like a man of sense and observation on the spirit or tendency of the act, and laying down the general habit of his life accordingly. And it is thus, that wherever he can, he will of his own independent choice seek for his companionship among the godly rather than among the ungodly; among those who are travelling to Heaven, rather than among those who grovel in the dust of this perishable earth; among the generous aspirants after the holiness of a divine nature—rather than among those who care for nothing higher in grace or in virtue, than the equities of human business or the civilities of human neighbourhood.

Yet it may often happen, that, instead of him seeking after the companionship, it is a companionship which has beset and closed around him—instead of a temptation upon which he has voluntarily gone forth, it may be a temptation into which he has been providentially brought, a thing not of will, but of circumstances; which, though he had no call of duty to create for himself, yet, now that they are created for him by another, he has no call of duty to make his escape from—but the contrary. And it is here that the strength and the sacredness, and the liberality of the Christian spirit, will come into manifestation; and he will prove how nobly he stands exempted from any wretched scrupulosity about the act, and that all which concerns him is the enlightened guardianship of his own heart against the consequences; and most gratefully will he mingle with the society to which the hand of some fortuitous, or perhaps some duteous necessity, has brought him; and decorate the scene not upon which he has entered, but rather to which he has been carried, by the living light of his own Christianity and the loveliness of its moral accomplishments; and, walking to those who are without in a wisdom that he has already prayed for, will he be upholden through all the

delicacies of an intercourse, which, at times, it may be necessary to have, but which he knows it were most hazardous to indulge in. And thus, while called upon to love not the world, and to dread a contamination to his own spirit, should he for the sake of its gratifications, volunteer his presence among its companies; yet, through these very companies will he pass unhurt, when either the calls of duty or the necessities of business have so involved him. That world which, at all times it were unlawful to court, ceases at these times to be a forbidden territory; and, teeming though it does, with the elements of moral evil, it is often by the arrangements of Providence the field of Christian warfare—that appointed scene, among the duties and the dangers and the difficulties of which, the soldier of Jesus Christ is trained and disciplined for the services of eternity.

The apostle Paul seems, in one of his epistles to the disciples at Corinth, to look on their occasional convivialities with the men of the world as unavoidable; and that it was not possible entirely to give these up, without going out of the world altogether. The honest experience of those who now hear us, will be the best authority which they can consult upon the question—whether this is or is not in some measure still the place and the predicament of Christians—whether it were possible or even right, to cut with the intimacies of relationship—or if the urgencies of business do not indispensably require the acts of festivity, as well as of fellowship, with unconverted men—or if it were doing a service either to one's own spirit or to the cause of that gospel which he is bound to adorn, did he keep morosely aloof from the traveller who has been recommended to the protection of his roof or the politeness of his courtesies. Bring a free and a fearless spirit to these investigations. Never lose sight of Christianity, as being, not a religion of acts, but a religion of principles; and that whenever the latter can be guaranteed from injury, it regards the former with a most smiling and benignant toleration. Be very sure that there is a way of being rightfully acquitted of all this casuistry, without escaping from it into a cell or a hermitage. This is an alternative from which our great apostle most evidently

declines; and it is in striking conformity with his deliverance* that our Saviour prays on behalf of his disciples—not that they should be taken out of the world. He only prays that they should be kept from the evil of it.

* See 1 Cor. v. 10.

SERMON XI.

On Christian Conversation.

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”—COLLOSSIANS IV. 5, 6.

WE trust, we may have now made it abundantly palpable, that a man of truly spiritual taste will not cultivate a voluntary and habitual companionship with the children of this world, save from an impulse of duty, or from the design of rendering to them a Christian benefit. But whether he move forward to their society or not, their society will often close around him; and that, in the course of opportunities which he ought not to decline, and under providential arrangements that he neither can nor ought to control. And, when thus implicated, the question is, how shall he acquit himself so as to walk in wisdom to those who are without?

In the observations which follow, we shall restrict ourselves to the wisdom of speech as distinct from the wisdom of conduct; and that the apostle had the former chiefly, if not exclusively, in his eye, we hold to be apparent, from the second of these two verses—“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

From this passage it would appear, first, that mere sincerity and strength of Christian affection are not enough of themselves, to carry us aright in our walk and conversation to those who are without. There is much to be gathered from the selection which the apostle here makes of that one attribute, by which he would have the deportment of Christians towards those who are without, to be characterized. It is the attribute of wisdom. It would appear that zeal is not enough,—that affectionate earnestness, is

not enough,—that the fervency of our desires for the glory and interest of religion, is not enough. Had we nought to do but to resign ourselves to the impulse of these, as the sole actuating principles of our converse with the world,—then might we just give unrestrained and unregulated vent to that abundance of the heart, out of which the mouth speaketh. And thus, many would be the effusions of warmth and of vehemence that should break in upon the ear of general society; and daring, as well as frequent, would be the inroads of Christianity on those festive boards, where now, the topic were a very strange and before unheard-of novelty; and often, would there come forth at random, from the lips of some honest and desirous believer, such an utterance, as, in our present habits of intercourse, would lay a freezing arrest on the whole current of the foregoing conversation, and leave the adventurous zealot to fill up, as he may, the pause of silence and astonishment that he himself had created. Such eruptions were certainly more frequent amongst us, but for the delicacy, or rather, perhaps, the cowardice of Christians. Yet there is a higher principle than either of these, which should go a certain length to repress them. The words that are uttered should be words in season. The man who speaks them should know how he ought to speak. So, that the apostle does not confide the matter of religious conversation to zeal or earnestness alone. And, accordingly, in the text, he singles out wisdom, if not as the impelling, at least as the guiding principle, that should

preside over this important occasion of frequent and almost daily occurrence in the walk of Christians.

Secondly, there might be an excess of talk upon Christian subjects to those who are without. If there be any wisdom that is more specially meant than another in this passage, it must be the wisdom of winning souls. Now, the zeal that would urge you onward to ceaseless and indiscriminate loquacity about religion, were directly in opposition to such wisdom. Whenever disgust, or irritation, or any feeling of annoyance, is manifested at the topic, there must be a material damage inflicted upon the hearer by persisting in it. For it is very possible thus to arm him into a more resolute and stout-hearted defiance of the whole subject; and to add to the number of those unpleasant recollections wherewith in his mind it stands associated; and, in a word, to make serious Christianity more the topic of his ridicule or his resentment than before. That there lies a limit somewhere to the freedom and the copiousness of our speech on the topics of sacredness is evident, from such injunctions, as—“Give not that which is holy unto dogs”—and, “Cast not your pearls before swine”—and, “If they will not hear you, shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them.” It is thus, we believe, that many a Christian conversation is repressed in embryo—even in companies where there may be a few individuals whose heart is wholly toward these things. By means of a delicate and discerning tact, the surrounding taste and disposition may very speedily be ascertained; and the way may have been sounded in an opening, and found to be impracticable; and it may have been concluded, and most rightly concluded, that there was something in the general pulse of those about you, that was unsuited to serious conversation, and forbade the introduction of it: And, thus it is possible, that the man who never breathes more congenially than in the free circulation of Christian feelings and Christian experience, may hold it expedient to keep the aspiring tendencies of his bosom in check or in inaction; and that bent, though he is on the honour of his Master’s name, he may still in such

circumstances count his best and fittest wisdom to be the wisdom of silence.

There are many reasons, why the topics of Christianity should not be pressed beyond a certain limit, on those who refuse to entertain them. It may often be distinctly seen, whether the effect may not be to harden their conscience the more; and to aggravate the guilt of all their previous resistance to the gospel; and to encourage those who are beside them, and perhaps not so established in impiety as themselves, to join forces against the man who has thus gratuitously offered to jar, and discompose the society, and thus to cause that which is good to be evil spoken of, by transforming a thing of high benevolence, into a thing of offensive controversy. All these evils might be incurred by the heedless and premature introduction of this great concern as a topic of conversation. You must be aware of many companies, where the whole mischief which we have now specified, and much more, would be a certain result of the experiment in question: and this might serve to prove that along with a spirit of zeal prompting to the utterance of religious feelings, there should also be the vigilance of an enlightened wisdom to regulate, and sometimes to restrain it.

But, additional to this, there is a very wide gradation in the amount of that welcome, which different people will give to Christianity, and in the kind of topics they are prepared to listen to with pleasure, or at least with toleration. Some will bear to be addressed on the highest mysteries of a Christian’s experience, and can sympathise with the utterance of his most saintly and spiritual affections. Others, without much experience, but with much earnestness, can suffer to be spoken to of the urgent and awful importance of the gospel, and to be told of its high demands on the attention of guilty creatures—who are so fast speeding their way to death and to the judgment-seat. Others, who would recoil from any personal exhibition either of their feelings or their fears, would not refuse to take up Christianity, with that calmer sort of interest which attaches to a matter of intellect, or a matter of spe-

culatation—and thus an opening may be had, and room for conversation may be found, in the doctrine of the Bible, in the meaning of its passages, in the evidence that there is for its authority and inspiration.

Many more there are, who would decline from such an argument as this, but who would give their attendance throughout all those outworks of the subject, which might be denominated the environs of Christianity; and the man who is all things to all men, might, at certain moments of this excursion, along with the topics of patronage, or pauperism, or civil and ecclesiastical polity, give his timely thrust to the conscience, and make his skilful transition to the very essentials of that question, on which there turns the good of a sinner's eternity. But still you must perceive there is need for wisdom, as well as zeal in the whole management of this intercourse with human beings; and that it is not enough for the heart to be full of sacred affections, but that further than this, the way in which its abundance shall be discharged upon others, should be intelligently gone about. It must be quite evident that no good is done by the effusion of this Christian adventurer, unless he carry the willing regards of his company along with him, unless he have felt this way to a certain measure of acceptance for those high themes on which his heart is set most desirously; and that there are distinct intimations in the awkwardness or restiveness or embarrassed silence of the party, against which it were utterly vain to attempt their religious good by talking of religion, as it would be to proselyte the stones of the field, or preach among the rocks of the desolate wilderness.

Thirdly, there may be such a difficulty of management in this matter, as to justify the cultivation of an assiduous distance from the world. And you may now see perhaps more strongly than before, the principle which may be expected to regulate the fellowship of a Christian with the children of this world. It is not to be thought of him, that he will by the impulse of his own proper taste move himself towards a society, where he has no hope either of doing good or receiving it—that he should love to mingle in person for hours together, among those with

whom there is no responsive mingling of hearts at the utterance of that name, which is most dear to him—that he should not feel in a state of exile, or of abandonment, when fated to a condition, where no door of access is to be found for those themes, which stand linked to his imagination with the fondest hopes and the highest glories of his existence. In every other department of human life, you see how they are men of kindred profession, and kindred pursuit, who draw most frequently together—how dull and listless a thing conviviality is with those, between whom there is no community of feeling or of interest—how the scholar of abstract and abstruse meditation, would droop as if out of his element at some joyous festival of gay and gallant military—or the mariner would sink into downright apathy and weariness, at a meeting of agriculturalists. It is thus, in fact, that the various orders of acquaintanceship are formed—that likeness of habit and of condition is the great assimilating tie, which associates men into intimacy together—that wherever there is the greatest alliance of taste, or of circumstances, then also there is the most frequent interchange of hospitality: And all we ask is allowance for the same peculiarity among the people called Christians—that on the universal principle of men ranging themselves according to the sympathies of their kindred condition or character, it shall not be thought unnatural, if they, who are dying unto the world, shall often be found in close and separate companionship among themselves, and standing aloof from those who cling to the world as their only resting place. Let some hopeful and distant adventure be held out to our people; and a hundred families be tempted thereby to a purpose of emigration—you will instantly perceive a busier and more exclusive intercourse among them than before. They will leave to others the whole argumentation of home prices and home politics, and all that variety of home intelligence, from the feeling of which, and the interest of which, they are now upon the eve of a final disruption; and the urgent topics of the preparation, and the outfit, and the voyage, and the employments or the gains of that foreign territory on which they are to spend the

remainder of their earthly existence—these will groupe our adventurers together into many a keen and separate conversation. And who would ever think of remarking this as an oddity that was at all unaccountable? And yet it is just on the working of the very same human propensities, that we can vindicate all the exclusion and all the illiberality which are charged upon Christians. Most happy would they be, that the whole species were to embark on the same enterprise for heaven with themselves. But, if otherwise, you are not to wonder that these voyagers of immortality have much to say, that will be of mighty interest to one another, and of no interest to the world—that engrossed as they are with the preparation, and the outfit, and the splendours of that eternal city whither they are bound, they who thus walk by faith, and not by sight, should talk often together—that, save when the leadings of duty or of Providence are upon them, they should never feel moved to a frequent intercourse with those who are without, by the leadings of their own inclination—and that but to gain more recruits to the expedition on which they have entered, they should seldom mingle in those societies where God is forgotten, and where all sense of eternity is suspended.

Fourthly, what adds to the difficulties of our walk among those who are without, is that while an excess of talk on Christian subjects may disgust them—there may be such a deficiency of talk as is tantamount to the denial of Christ. And what adds to the perplexities of a Christian disciple upon this subject is—that, whereas, if in general company he should say too much, he may injure the cause that he should labour to recommend—yet, if in the same company he should say too little, he may incur the guilt of denying the Saviour. He may deny Him by his silence. He, at least, if silent, abstains from confessing Him—and then to think of the appalling denunciation that whosoever confesseth not Christ before men, neither shall Christ confess him before the angels which are in heaven. And it is often shame, too, that restrains his utterance—that shame of the Saviour as his Lord, which shall make the Saviour ashamed of him as

His disciple—that fear of man which is a snare—that delicacy which recoils from such an exhibition of his feelings or of his faith, as causes him to falter from the intrepidity of a firm and consistent profession—that cowardice, which might not have shrunk from a gospel testimony under the threats of an inquisition in ancient Rome, but which will shrink from the same testimony under the terror or the tenderness or the undescrivable restraints of a drawing-room in modern Christendom—that nervous imbecility which would not have succumbed at sight of the grim apparatus of martyrdom, but which does succumb to the might and the mystery of that spell, wherewith the fashion of this world hath subordinated all its votaries.

It is the dread of his own treachery to Christ—it is the secret consciousness of a misgiving from His cause in the presence of its enemies—it is the felt urgency of the obligation to do all and to say all in His name, contrasted with that fearfulness by which he knows that he is actuated—These are what might often impel him to disburden his conscience, by breaking forth on the ears of an astonished party, with the utterance of his distaste for the world and the world's vanity. But aware at the same time that it is of mightier importance to win others than to relieve himself; and that he is bidden to be wise as well as courageous; and that he ought not to outrage the feelings which he can possibly conciliate; and that his way is not clear through the mazes of a dilemma which he still finds to be inextricable—It is under the contest of these deeply felt and oft experienced difficulties, that many a conscientious disciple has retired to as great a distance from this world's majorities as he may—declining the general society that can be avoided, just as he would some missionary ground that is found to be impracticable—and praying for the guidance of the wisdom that is from on high, through all that society which he neither ought, nor is able to abandon.

Fifthly, we must not abandon in despair the cause of making a general impression on the world, even through the medium of this world's companies. And in the midst of all this helplessness,

there is one thing which the Christian never must abandon—the cultivation of every opening for the Christian good of his fellow men. If in pursuit of this object, he have hitherto knocked in vain at the door of general society, he may retire for a season, but to arm himself with strength and wisdom for a fresh attempt on that which he yet has found to be impregnable. It is possible that he himself may not be ripe for such an experiment—not yet enough of Christian decision—not yet enough of simple dependence upon God—not yet enough of sacred benevolence in his own heart, which beaming forth in unquestionable evidence on all whom he addressed, might propitiate their respectful hearing, to the urgency wherewith he bore upon them—not yet enough at ease in his religion, so as to come forth spontaneously and with the full command of all his resources in the face of resistance and ridicule.

It may only be one man in a hundred, who could acquit himself of all the delicacies of such a task, or act the part of a Christian apostle when seated at the board of hospitality. But though there should be only of such a very few who are now hearing us, yet, let us give these to understand, that the vocation for which God hath accomplished them, is of importance as high, as that of those hardy adventurers who bear the tidings of the gospel to distant lands—that to carry the doctrine of Christ with acceptance into the heart of our alienated companies at home, were an achievement as much to be wondered at, as to carry it abroad among the deepest recesses of Paganism—that to cross the sea, and to penetrate the desert in quest of proselytes to the faith, is not an enterprise more daring, than to scale those moral barriers which lie around a polite and lettered society, and there to propound the terms and the mysteries of our faith, in the midst of an assembled audience. And, if one may judge from the aspect of the times, the day is not far off when a talent like this will find scope and matter for its exercise—when the demand for Christian information will become more intense, and the realities of the gospel will challenge a larger space in the affairs and the conversation of men—when the veil shall be lifted off from many eyes, and the things

of eternity shall be revealed in all the commanding magnitude which belongs to them—and in return for the wisdom of those who are the friends of Christianity, the Spirit shall subdue under them the will of its enemies.

Lastly, much is to be done through the medium of private and affectionate converse. For meanwhile, and in defect of the talent or the hardihood that may be requisite for tabling the matter amidst the collisions of general society—it were well if every devoted Christian laid himself out to Christian usefulness, on every occasion that he felt himself able for; and more particularly, if unfit to brave the exposure of himself on a wider and more conspicuous arena, that he distilled the sacredness of his affections through the privacies of individual acquaintance-ship. Here too, often is there the barrier of a formidable delicacy in the way of a full and explicit communication; and never at times is it felt to be stronger than between the nearest of kindred; and it absolutely looks as if withheld by infernal sorcery, the man cannot though he would unbosom himself to those of his own blood, on the topic of their highest and mightiest concernment. And yet were this accursed incantation only broken; and did each mind step forth from its obstinate hiding-place; and could the one friend burst loose from all the restraints which heretofore had held him, and pour of his Christian fervency into another's ear—may it be found that the man whom you never could have arrested in the midst of other company, will when spoken to alone, offer a glad and grateful welcome to your message: And, precious reward of intrepidity and faithfulness, may we reclaim a brother from the error of his way, and cause Heaven to rejoice on a new accession to the great spiritual family.

And here we must remark, as an encouragement to more frankness and freedom than at present do obtain throughout society in the utterance of religious sentiment, that often, in quarters where it was least expected, is it found to be met, not with toleration merely, but even with thankfulness. It is, therefore, worthy of an occasional experiment, though it should be hazarded in companies which you fear to be most alienated. It is hard

that while trade, and agriculture, and politics, and science, all find such ready and respectful acceptance in the converse of society—no place and no entertainment should be found for Christianity; but, for ought that is known previous to an attempt, this may be as much due to the despair of her friends, as it is to the dislike or resistance of her enemies. It were too much to try the establishment of a monopoly in her favour; but why, amid the free and abundant circulation of other articles, should this alone be treated as contraband? And therefore it were not amiss, that a man of sense, and colloquial firmness, should at times reconnoitre the party by which he is surrounded, and actually propounding that theme which is dearest to his bosom, should adventure himself on the currency and reception that it may meet with. Let it be done with ease—let it be done with breeding—let it be done, not in the spirit of fearfulness as if for the relief of an oppressed conscience, but done in the more generous style of one who loves the fellowship of his species, and should like to raise every member of it to the delight of his own exercises, and the dignity of his own contemplations. We are aware that with all this to recommend it, the attempt may misgive, and a sudden arrest be laid by it on the flow and facility of conversation, and the adventurer be instantly made to feel as if the door of access was shut against him. But there are times, and there are places where it is otherwise; and where unexpected welcome is given to the utterance of seriousness; and where a responsive feeling is awakened, and room afforded for the lifting up of a gospel testimony; and delight both courteously expressed, and cordially felt at this novel style of entertainment; and the discovery made, that the general silence of this world's companionship on the high topics of eternity, may be sometimes as much due to the want of intrepidity in the one party, as to the want of disposition in the other. So that on this untrodden walk of Christian philanthropy, something may be achieved. "The field is the world;" and there may be places on the civilized region of it, more inaccessible, than on the most remote countries of its savage and unknown territory; and the ocean or the wilder-

ness which separate from the latter, may not be of more difficult transition, than are the thousand artificial delicacies which obstruct the pathway of communication to the former. And, thus the zeal and the devotedness, and withal the wisdom of a most accomplished missionary, may be as indispensably called for, in a service which ought not to be neglected, as altogether unpromising; and, in the face even of its many discouragements, ought not to be abandoned in despair.

And let us specify one thing, which would do much to clear and facilitate the way to such an enterprise as we are now recommending. Its heaviest obstacle by far, is the deep and the deadening silence that often ensues on the first utterance of a religious sentiment. The adventurer must be supported by the co-operation of your replies, or the experiment is abortive. That he should be left to sermonize at the board of free and equal companionship, is altogether out of the question. It is not a dissertation that is wanted, but a dialogue—a thing that is sustained by the play and the colloquial interchange of human sentiments—the reciprocation of mind with mind, inasmuch that a contest with well-bred infidelity, were not half so insupportable, as this formal and ministerial harangue in the midst of a dumb-struck auditory.

Were it but a question that marked the interest of the hearers, it might serve as a stepping-stone, and an encouragement to the process; and you cannot but perceive, how much out of keeping it were with the whole character and complexion of a party, if the speaker shall be abandoned to work his long and solitary passage through the still medium of a freezing and hopeless taciturnity. The thing in short demanded and felt to be necessary is, that a topic connected with Christianity, shall be taken up as easily and fallen in with as readily and prosecuted as freely, as any other topic of human interest or speculation: And just as the politeness of genteel and cultivated men forms, in general, a sufficient guarantee against the disturbance that might be excited by the acrimony of a heated partizanship in politics—so, under the shelter of the same guarantee, religion in its piety, or religion in its great and essential principles, may be talked of, with-

out involving the circle in the offence or irritation of its controversies. The thing may be attempted; but without the contribution of some such welcome and acceptancy as this, the thing is utterly impracticable. The very feeling of such a barrier, is intimation enough of the topic being a fruitless one; and, just because the moral climate is unsuited to it, that, to be productive of a blessing, it must be borne away to a soil which is open to receive it, where it may find the harbour of another circle of acquaintanceship, and be made to thrive in the atmosphere of another society.

Now, this were one good effect that should result from a more free and intrepid utterance on the part of Christians. There would then be a more clearly ascertained line of distinction between those who inclined to religious conversation, and those who disrelished it. There is nothing that one nauseates more, than the companionship of those who have their own favourite topics—for which he feels no taste, and upon which he can hold no intelligent sympathy whatever with those who are around him. Many of you must recollect how tiresome and disgusting it is—when the attentions of a whole party are monopolized by a few, whose peculiar likings or peculiar acquirements, invariably lead them to one walk of remark or argument, that is just as insipid to all the others, as would be the gibberish of an unknown tongue: and, be it for example, the jockeyship of field sports, or the politics of a city corporation, or some rare topic of connoisseurship that none but themselves can either value or comprehend—you both see what a ready and rejoicing coalescence they have with each other, and at the same time, how ill they are fitted to amalgamate with general society. And it is thus that the intimacies of social life are formed; and, just as it should be, that the spectacle is held forth of men drawn into more close and separate association together, by the tie of their similar pursuits or similar predilections; and all we want is, that Christianity shall not be smothered under the weight of those many delicacies, which have interred her in deep concealment from the notice of society, and in virtue of which her friends remain unknowing and unknown to each other. It were right, that they,

too, should feel their way to a common understanding; and be indulged in the free and frequent participation of their mutual sympathies; and should be seen aggregating together in clusters—even as you see men of a kindred character or kindred profession in all the other walks of the community. It is most true, that if they give way to the abundance of their heart in general conversation, they will leave many at a distance, and perhaps many as impatient and as distasteful of their presence, as you would be of those who are ever deafening their company with topics that no one savours, or no one cares for. But thus it is that the needful discoveries are made; and the men of a common taste find out one another; and, in obedience to the impulse of it, they naturally and freely resolve themselves into distinct circles of companionship; and the line of demarcation between the decided and the adverse comes forth into visibility; and, precious fruit of that more frank and fearless exhibition of our Christianity which we now recommend, would they who are hostile, spontaneously, and of themselves, fall away, and they who are friendly, as spontaneously groupe themselves into associations of willing and congenial intercourse.

And lest this should appear like raising a barrier of everlasting separation between the church and the world, let us here shortly evince the style of management that obtains, we have heard to a great extent, in the metropolis of British society. There, devoted Christians do associate more exclusively with each other, and keep far more distinctly and decidedly aloof from the minglings of general acquaintanceship, and maintain a sort of hallowed and secluded ground that does not lie open to the random invasions of those who are without; and yet is not closed round by a fence that is utterly impregnable. For the practice, as we understand it, is so to arrange the festive or the social party, as to comprehend a few from among the wide and general outfield of humanity, though not so many as to overbear its character of sacredness. Let but the preponderancy be secured for the Christian spirit and conversation of the meeting; and, up to this indispensable object, may admittance

be granted even to the farthest off in alienation from the concerns of eternity. The experience is, that, however difficult for the friends of the gospel to face this world's majorities, with an incorrupt testimony and a pure or consistent exhibition in its favour—it is not so difficult to charm, or even to assimilate the loose and scattered minorities of the world, when the collective influence of a number of Christians is brought, as it were, separately and piecemeal, to bear upon them. The very fact of their presence, their very acceptance of the issued invitation, may argue a degree of predisposition, which only needs to be fostered by the delicacies of judicious kindness, into an established attachment for the ways of peace and of true wisdom. So that it is not necessary to abandon the world to itself, or to lay a stern interdict on all its approximations. There is a way in which, consistently with all that has been urged or advanced by us, the very hos-

pitalities of human intercourse may be made subservient to the evangelization of our species; and often when the voice of expostulation has fallen from the pulpit without efficacy, has it been found of Christianity that she has other graceful and happy exhibitions at command, wherewith to soften the heart of man out of all its prejudices—that what cannot be done by the verbal demonstrations of the minister, may be done by the personal exhibitions of worth and mildness that are frequently held out in the converse of private society. And when religion is thus blended, as it sometimes is in the upper walks of life, with the fascinations of taste and elegance and literary accomplishment—such a union of saint-like piety on the one hand, with the polish and the ornament of finished cultivation on the other, has often sent forth an influence upon the beholder on the side of that gospel he wont to despise, which he has felt to be utterly irresistible.

SERMON XII.

On Christian Casuistry.

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”—ROMANS xiv. 5.

THERE is a kind of minuter casuistry which it is extremely difficult to handle from the mere want of something very distinct or tangible to hold by; and about which there is the greatest degree of indecision, and that just from the loss at which we feel, to get any decisive principle of unquestioned evidence and authority to bear upon it—And, so it is, that even the Christian mind fluctuates thereanent, and exhibits itself upon this subject in a state both of vacillation and variety. For while one class of the professors are heard to declaim, and to dogmatise, and most strenuously to asseverate with all the readiness of minds that are thoroughly made up on the matters alluded to—there is another class of them who cannot assume this certainty without cause being shown, who must have something more to allege for the vindication of their peculiarities than

the mere conventional Shibboleth of a party, and who wait till a clear reason approve itself to their judgments, ere they can utter with their mouths a clear and confident deliverance.

Some may have already guessed what the questions are to which we are now adverting. They relate to the degree of our conformity with the world, and to the share which it were lawful to take in its companies and amusements. You must be aware on this topic of a certain unsettledness of opinion; while we know of none that wakens a more anxious degree of interest and speculation among those who are honestly aspiring after the right, and are most fearfully sensitive of the wrong in all their conversation. And if to tenderness of conscience, they add a certain force of intelligence, they will not be satisfied with a mere oracular response from those who

seem to be somewhat, and who speak as if from the vantage ground of their long initiation into higher mysteries. They are prepared for every surrender, and are in readiness to follow fully wherever the light of scripture, or of argument may carry them; but this light is the very thing they want, and are in quest of. It is their demand for the *rationale* of this matter, with the difficulty they feel in reaching it, that has thrown them into a kind of harassment about the whole affair from which they long to be extricated. And neither in the magisterial, but unapproved dictation of one set of Christians; nor in the yet unstable practice of another set of Christians, who are hovering about the margin that separates the church from the world, and ever tremulously veering between the sides of accommodation and non-conformity therewith—from neither of these parties in the great professing public of our day can they find repose to their spirits, because from neither, they have found effectual relief to the painful ambiguity under which they are labouring.

What has now drawn our attention more especially to this subject, is its strong identity in regard to principle with that question of Sabbath observance, which we have recently attempted to elucidate. The elements of Christian liberty and expediency, and charity, appear to be similarly involved in both, so as that we may avail ourselves of the same guidance as before, from the manner in which the apostle hath cleared and discriminated his way through the controversy that arose in his time about meats and days and ceremonies. Instead, however, of going the whole ground over again, we shall barely state, rather than argue, many of our positions—trusting for your concurrence to the recollection of what you may before have heard, and before have acquiesced in.

First, then, when the giving up of the theatre, and the giving up of public places, and the giving up of the festive and the fashionable parties of this world, are laid down for the observance of the young disciple in the shape of so many distinct and categorical impositions—it is a very possible thing that he may be thereby misled into an utter misconception of the

design and nature of Christianity. For these acts of rigid abstemiousness occupy the place of works; and the punctual fulfilment of these may minister the complacency of self-righteousness, and so lead us in the capital error of transferring our plea for God's meritorious favour from the ground of Christ's obedience, to the ground of our own obedience. And besides, they are such acts as do not necessarily imply any graceful or elevated morality in the individual who has performed them. With him they may be the mere heartless austerities of formal or Pharisaical devoteeship—the morose penances and self-inflctions of one who resolutely denies to his taste, that gratification which he, nevertheless, is still most desirously set upon—the stated sacrifices which are offered, not with, but against the entire current of the soul, that pines, perhaps, in secret mortification after those jubilees of mirth or of splendour, which, at the bidding of a stern, rigid, and uncompromising puritanism, he has been taught to put utterly away. It is, indeed, a very possible thing, that Christianity may thus be made to wear another aspect than that in which she smiles so benignantly upon us from the New Testament—that instead of a religion of freedom, because her only control is that of heavenly and high-born principle, wherewith she rules, and by moral ascendancy alone, over her willing and delighted votaries, she may be transformed into a narrow system of bigotry, whose oppressive mandates of touch not, and taste not, and handle not, bear no relation whatever to the spiritual department of our nature—only galling and subordinating the outer man, while they leave the inner man as remote, both in principle and affection from the likeness of God, or the character of godliness as before.

It is for this reason that we think it greatly better, with every young inquirer, at least, to begin at the beginning—to aim a blow at the root of his corruption, instead of mangling and lacerating at one of its branches—to go at once to the very essence of the controversy between him and God, even that he idolizes the creature, and with a heart set upon its enjoyments, has cast the love and homage of the Creator away from him—instead of

charging him with a matter of doubtful criminality, to put it direct to his conscience, whether the world, or He who made the world, have the most permanent and practical hold of ascendancy over him. After having reached his convictions on this point, and laid open to him the nakedness of his spiritual condition, we would tell him that the thing for adjustment at present was not the habitual attendance of his person upon places of public amusement; but the devoted attendance of his heart on the high places of a far more stupendous and engrossing idolatry, to which he was wholly given over. We should, in all these cases, feel inclined to forbear the casuistry of theatres and assemblies, and the various resorts of fashionable gaiety, as being really not the matter on hand. To make use of parliamentary language—we should be disposed, on the starting of this topic, to move the previous question—or borrowing another expressive phrase from the same quarter, we should proceed to the order of the day. The point of immediate urgency, and that should be first taken up, is his general state with God. The charge to be first brought home, is not that he is occasionally seen in a room of public entertainment; but, of far more tremendous import, that the ground which he constantly occupies is a ground of alienation from God, and from godliness. The quarrel is, not that he may sometimes be detected in one of this world's favourite haunting places—but that the world, with the full power of its seducing influences, has at all times the possession of his heart, that his only portion is there, and that there he has been living up to the present hour without any prevailing sense of God, or of eternity.

In a word, we should like for the time being, to decline with him the ambiguous controversy about public festivals and public entertainments—and that, for the purpose of sounding in his ears the alarm of an actual, and a greater controversy that is still more appalling. In short, our indictment against him has only one article—not that he has been incidentally seen in places, which lie without the territory of sacredness; but that, from that territory, he is wholly an outcast and a wanderer. With such an enquirer we should prefer dealing for the

present among those solemn and undoubted realities, the very magnitude of which, both gives them an imperative power over the attention, and causes them by the eye of his mind to be more distinctly, because more forcibly apprehended. Thus, instead of trying to clear our way through the ambiguities of any subordinate question, we should like to reduce him—an arrested and a conscience-struck sinner to the question, what shall I do to be saved?—and would admit nothing else into our solution of it, than the mighty elements of his exile from God, and the way that God has taken to reconcile and to recall him.

Now, it is on the personal settlement of this question, that a great personal change takes place upon the enquirer—that a vista is opened up through which desires and delights that were before unknown are let in upon the soul—that there ensues a great moral revolution, in virtue of which, what was before shrunk from either with dislike or with terror, becomes the object of a most attractive tenderness; and what was before the object of eager pursuit and of much loved indulgence, is now regarded with unconcern, if not with positive detestation. Many, it is true, who profess the faith of the gospel, evince no such translation into another habit and another history: But there are none who actually acquire the faith of the gospel—the tendencies of whose inner man are not thereby shifted, so as to point either in a diverse or opposite direction from that they did before. Other glories than those of this world's splendour now engage the affections; and other paths than those of this world's dissipations, are now the paths of peace and the ways of pleasantness. The man who before was of the earth and earthly, now breathes with his spirit of the air of heaven; and loftier to him than the highest earthly flights of poetry or song is the music of Heaven's psalmody. He now feels his kindred atmosphere to be in the house of prayer; and that time which wont to be an oppressive load upon the heart that ever sighed for relief from the burden of its own vacancy, he can now fill up, and most congenially, too, with the labours of love and the works of righteousness. It may not, however, be with the fierce intolerance,

of a bigot, that he looks on the amusements of other days, but simply with the indifference of one who has found his way to higher and better amusements. In the new tract to which he has betaken himself, all that we behold is the spontaneous emanation of a new taste—and not a rigorous or reluctant compliance, with any of the rigorous proprieties of formal and common-place professorship. And should the result be, that he keeps himself from the ball-room or the theatre, this result is only one among the many; and but an humble corollary out of the operation of great and noble elements. Along the whole of that march by which he has been conducted, we see nought but the impulse of generous affections and elevated principles—nor in any step of the process, whereon the passionate devotee of this world's gaieties, has at length utterly and conclusively renounced them, is there one such character of moroseness or constraint, as would ill become the religion of liberty.

Secondly, this forms another reason why we feel so much disposed to avoid any thing like a dogmatic deliverance on the subject of this world's entertainments. It gives to the general eye an appearance of narrowness to our religion which really does not belong to it. Better surely to impregnate the man's heart, first with the taste and spirit of our religion; and, then, if this should supersede the taste and affection he before had for the frivolities of life, it impresses a far nobler character of freeness and greatness on the change of habit that has taken place, when thus made to emanate from a change of heart—than when it appears in the light of a reluctant compliance with the rigid exaction of intolerance, the rationality and rightness of which are at the same time not very distinctly apprehended. Let the reformation in question, if reformation it be, come forth upon the habit of the man in this way—as the final upshot of a process by which the heart has been reformed, as the fruit of an internal change that has taken place on the taste and on the affections, through the power of the truth that is in Jesus, and whereby all old things have passed away, and all things have become new. Better thus, than by a mandate on the subject issued from the chair of au-

thority. Better that it spring up, in kindly vegetation from the soil of the new nature, than that it be forced and driven forward at the stern call of an uncompromising or unmeaning dogmatism. Better that it come at will as the spontaneous efflorescence of a previous change upon the inner man, than that without choice and without consent, it be laid as a yoke of bondage upon the outer man. You have heard of the new wine that was put into old bottles. The wine had not yet done with its fermentation; and the leathern bottles of these days, that had lost their elasticity and were altogether hard and unyielding, did not expand to the process, but were rent asunder and burst, so that both wine and bottles were destroyed. And the same may often be the result of prematurely putting into an old and yet unregenerated man those new observations, which are in most pleasing accordancy with the whole desire and habit of an altogether Christian. The current maxims of professorship, about the total abstinence of his person from this world's gaiety and companionship, lock to him as so many senseless and arbitrary impositions. The light of his mind does not yet go along with them. The high and tumultuating spirit of the man is stirred up to a revolt, against an intolerance for which he cannot see the authority of the reason. He is galled and restive under the shackles in which he has been made to fester; and for no purpose which he can understand, as at all worthy of the self-denial that has been laid upon him. He will positively not bind himself down to the attitude of being so beset and harassed; and the danger is, that, in some fit of explosive impatience, he casts Christianity, along with the lessons of this injudicious Christian tutorship, away from him. This new wine should be put into new bottles, which, without being torn, can stretch and accommodate their capacity to the ebullitions of the new liquor that has been deposited therein. In other words the man should be renovated. The mighty transition from nature to grace should take effect upon him. The great and elementary principles on which there hinges the conversion of the heart, should have told upon his conscience; and he, being ushered by the Christian

faith into the joys of the divine countenance and the hopes of eternity, the inordinate love of this world should have already given place to those high and heavenly affections by which it is dispossessed. When the new wine is thus put into a new bottle, both are preserved.

The commandment to renounce the amusements of the world ceases to be grievous, or rather the commandment itself ceases to be necessary. The man, in all likelihood, may, after this change, never once be seen at any one indiscriminate intercourse—where fashion, and finery, and pleasure, form into one blended and brilliant attraction for the assembling together of this world's multitudes. Yet it is not the scowl of monkery that he casts at them. It is not in the grim and ghastly spirit of antiquated puritanism, that he keeps his distance from them. The whole amount of the matter is, that he is otherwise employed. He is taken up with something else that he likes better. He does not ask them to withdraw their presence from the place where their heart is. And they surely should not expect him to lend his presence to a place where his heart is not. Let your theatres be purified of all blasphemy and grossness—let the gossip of your parties be free of the venom of calumny—let your games be unruffled by the fierce and frenzied agitations of desperate adventure—and let your assemblies be chastened out of all but the thoughtless vivacity of light and emancipated spirits, that love, at the impulse of music, to expatiate in fairy circles on an illuminated scene of gracefulness and gaiety: and we are not aware upon what ground he can single out and stigmatise as a monstrous abomination any one of these varieties. And, yet he may look upon them all as so many varieties of earthliness—as the occupations of a moral region distinct from the one through which he is travelling—and the delights of a clime of diverse air and quality, from that in which he can breathe with comfort or satisfaction. It may be true that he has abandoned them, yet not at the bidding of a capricious intolerance, but in the unforced and unfettered exercise of his own liberty. As the new wine is suited to the new bottle, so are the present habits to the present heart of the new

creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. In the act of giving up the fashions or the frivolities of a passing world, he only follows the high behests of the judgment and the taste and the affection that are freely operating within his own regenerated bosom—he only, in this instance, exemplifies one of the many exhibitions that come forth of their own accord, from the feelings and the faculties of his spiritual nature.

The reply that was once given by an aged Christian to the question of an anxious beginner at the work of Christianity, is quite in the zest and spirit of the principle that we now advocate. He saw his young friend to be on a hopeful career of enquiry, and had no doubt of the final result of all his conscientiousness; and perceived that he was moving aright among the great elementary feelings that relate to sin and repentance and faith; and when the question was put by him, whether he should now continue to go to the theatre, the answer was, that he might go as long as he could—an answer, we own, very much to our taste, and appearing to us as if replete with wisdom of a very high order: And, we appeal to yourselves, whether it was not greatly better, that, instead of admitting him to this doubtful disputation, he was left to the wholesome exercise of his spirit on the leading essentials of our faith, and, at length found his own way to that lofty vantage ground, whence he could descry such unfading glories as gave to his heart its full entertainment, and whence he could turn him from the now tasteless enjoyments of the world, to purer and nobler gratifications.

But still it may be asked, is it not true of all the amusements referred to, and to which so many immortal creatures have devoted themselves, that in them the spirit of earthliness has the undoubted predominancy; and that the places where they are held, leave their company on the broad way, and not on the narrow path, which leadeth to life everlasting? Grant this to be true, and that all these obnoxious assemblages were broken up and dispersed of their visitors—these visitors may still keep on the broad way; and we cannot distinctly see what is gained by drawing thousands away from the theatre and ball-room, if in the move-

ment that we have impressed upon them, they shall all tarry at any point that is short of the conversion of their souls. There is a line of demarcation between the two great regions of the carnal and the spiritual: and though to the former you assign all the houses of public entertainment that ever had been reared, and so fulminate against them till they are levelled to the dust, yet we see not the profit that accrues to Christianity, if all the worshippers of these conceived abominations still keep that side of the line of demarcation which they went to occupy. In these circumstances, we would not like to address a worldly assemblage on the vanity of public places and public entertainments. We should take a loftier aim. We should feel as if nothing had been effected by pulling any one of these conclusively away from the theatre, if we had not pulled them across the mighty line of separation that marks off the region of grace from the region of sinful and unconverted nature. To the achievement of this great transition then, would we give our first earnestness and our first energies; and, meanwhile, holding the subordinate question in abeyance, would we try to find a way to their conscience with the appalling thoughts of a yet unchristianized soul, of a yet unprovided eternity.

Some of you may have read, in the life of the celebrated Whitfield, of the well-known attempt that he made at one of the great London fairs, when, amid all the fantastic and grotesque erections of such an occasion, he contrived to introduce a pulpit; and, braving the whole uproar of riot and ridicule excited by his appearance, actually preached for days together to the assembled multitude.—We know not, particularly, what was the subject of his addresses. But sure we are, that there was a something in them of far more comprehensive import, than that of denouncing with intemperate and untimely zeal as a gross abomination, the scenes of madness and merriment and festivity wherewith he was surrounded. He went there charged with the gospel of Jesus Christ; and his errand was not to put down one of the modifications of worldiness, but all worldiness. And if, on the strength of the great and essential truths of Christianity,

he gained but twenty converts from darkness to light, he did a higher achievement, than if, without Christianizing one, he had dispersed the assemblage of twenty thousand—frightened by his menaces, but not led by the power of his ministrations to that following of the Lord fully on earth, which terminates in His approval of them at the judgment-seat, and their welcome to His everlasting habitations. He did, it is said, as the reward of his noble intrepidity, secure a goodly number of converts on that occasion. He did not break up the fair, for it is still upholden; but he did a great deal better, he gathered out of it a harvest for eternity. He did more by the conquest he made over a few hearts, than if he had only put to flight the persons of all this mighty multitude. The sons and daughters whom he turned unto righteousness, he withdrew from their former amusements, not by a movement of superstitious fear, but by a high movement of affection and principle—their favourite haunting-place having now become the house of prayer—their best-loved resort the companionship of the saints, the conventicles of praise and piety.

It would need more than the nerve and the intrepidity of a Whitfield, to force a sermon into any of those places of public amusement which we have had occasion to specify in the course of our present argument. The thing is impossible, and could not be tolerated. But the fact is undoubted, both of the sons and daughters of this world's gaiety, that, among the other sportive caprices which fashion has been known to indulge in, she sometimes sends her votaries to church; and varies by a sermon on the Sabbath, the giddy round of her weekday entertainments. And should any of her enamoured followers be now listening, we would have them to know, that it is not at present with any one of those entertainments that we are now holding controversy. But we are charged with a controversy of import far more tremendous. Our impeachment of them is, because of their ungodliness. Our direct affirmation, and let them carry it to their consciences and try it there, is, that they live without God in the world; that, to the purpose of any practical influence on their hearts and on their habits, He is

not in all their thoughts; and that in the whirl of time's gratifications and of time's concerns, they have buried all effective consideration of eternity. We say that the element in which they live and move and have their being, is an element of earthliness—which, seeing that it is really in God that they live and move and have their being, is tantamount to the element of a wilful and rebellious atheism. We would warn them, that, through that pleasing atmosphere of deceit by which they are encompassed, the eye of Him who sitteth on the throne of Heaven, now looketh with an eye of clear and penetrating intelligence; and beholds in them so many imperishable creatures, who forgetful of their high destination, are pursuing the follies and the frivolities of a short-lived day to the ruin of their souls. And, it is not upon this one folly, or upon that other frivolity, that we would enter our protest against them; but, pointing direct to the citadel of their hearts, garrisoned to very fulness with no other than earthly desires, we would call their parties of pleasure and of public amusement, not so much the acts as the insignia of their rebellion—as indications of the state of an inner man that had deeply revolted against God. It is to heal this mighty breach that the gospel is declared to them—not to achieve a few circumstantial reformations in their history, but wholly to regenerate their hearts; and from the habit of those who mind earthly things, so to make all old things pass away, and all things to become new, as that their conversation shall be in Heaven, and their treasure there.—Be first Christians, and then we may satisfy your curiosity about the lawfulness or the unlawfulness of theatres. Give up the love of the world for the love of God, and then may we say in how far this world might be used without abusing it. Let the balance be fairly struck between time and eternity; and after this mighty calculation is over, then may we have heart and leisure for pettier calculations, and say what of time may be given to recreation, and what of it to those solemn exercises which have a direct bearing on eternity. Consider your ways.—Try your hearts by the standard of God's spiritual law. Look to Christ as the Mediator, who, by His sacrifice and right-

eousness can alone settle all your deficiencies. Turn from folly and iniquity unto Him, and He will usher you unto the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace.

But it is now time to have done with this long excursion, among the details and the difficulties of a casuistry, by which the Christian mind has oft been exercised. For, let it never be forgotten, that a heart with rightly-set affections and desires is after all the best of casuists. If the heart in its various regards be as it ought, this is our securest guarantee that the history in its various manifestations will be as it ought. The man who is stationed at the fountain, and whose business is to keep it in living play, may abandon it for a time to clear and trace out through their proper windings the channels by which the water ought to run. But it is possible that while he carries at this employment, the fountain may run dry—and of what avail are all his conduits, and all his lines of accurate and well-drawn conveyance, if there be nothing to flow through them? It is quite obvious that his main and important office is to feed and stimulate the fountain—that there his presence is most frequently, and most urgently required—that it is the post from which he ought never to prolong his absence beyond the rigid necessities of the case—and that if for the perfection of the whole apparatus, it be at any time expedient that he should move away to its subordinate parts, or even its more distant extremities, it is indispensable to the whole use and purpose of the apparatus, that he ever and anon reiterate on the well-spring, where the whole being and activity of the operation are upholden. And how much more true is this, if in fact the impetus of the waters shall force a right descent and direction for themselves; if, by the might of their own currency, they can wear a deep channel, and clear away all the obstacles to their progress; if without artificial guidance, they can spontaneously, and by the pure weight of their own native momentum, find their own way to their best and their fittest destination.

Now, we must not forget, while lingering among the turns and the windings of Christian casuistry, that there is a place whence the impulse may proceed of

strength enough to overbear its difficulties, and to force a way through all its dark and ambiguous passages—that the new-born desire of a Christianized heart is worth the catalogue of a thousand solutions to a thousand perplexities—that the best way of restoring to light and to liberty the conscience of man, is to enthroned love in his bosom—and that in willing discipleship to this gentlest, yet most persuasive of masters, will every new creature find the best and readiest outlet from all the bewilderments that meet him in his progress, through this great labyrinth of our earthly pilgrimage. Give us but once a taste for sacredness—and we need scarcely speak on the details of sabbath observation to him who already loves that hallowed day, to whom all its exercises are sweet, and all its opportunities are precious. Give us a heart set on the things that are above; and what calls for warning against the amusements of the world, the man who in the midst of higher and better engagements feels their utter insipidity? Or gives us an affection for God in Heaven, or for the likeness of God in those who are under a process of renovation to His image upon earth—and we are already anticipated in all our dissuasions against a preference for this world's companionship, or an indiscriminate converse with its festive and fashionable societies. America, said Lord Chatham, must be conquered in Germany. The way to subordinate the human history, is to obtain possession of the human heart—and better than this continued skirmishing among the details and outposts of casuistry, would it be to ply with the right engine, that central and commanding fortress, which looks down with imperial sway over the whole territory of this extended warfare.

So that, after all, we may have lingered for too many sabbaths on those details of pious or prudential observation, over

which the single principle of love in the heart might have given the entire mastery. Only let this fountain be replenished with sacred affection, and there is no fear, it may well be thought, of the uniform sacredness that will emanate therefrom on all the diversities of human conduct and experience. To this object, then, ought the main force of every Christian teacher be directed—and could he only enlist the will of his hearers on the side of God, then may we be sure, that though he should trace in description of all the varieties of their outward way, it will mainly and substantially be a way of godliness.

And we trust that this observation will serve as another argument, for the mighty importance of our much and urgently insisting on the fundamental articles of Christianity. The great achievement is to possess your hearts with the love of the gospel, and this can only be done by possessing your understanding with the truths of the gospel. We know not how to win your regards to God, but by representing Him as God in Christ reconciling the world. We know not how He can become the object of your tenderness, but by His ceasing to become the object of your terror. We know not how your fond affection to Him can be made to arise, but by your fearful apprehensions of Him being made to subside. In other words, the patent way of finding access for love into your bosoms, is to find access for faith—and could we only obtain credit for the message of peace with God, through the blood of a satisfying atonement, then, by the moving forces of gratitude and good will should we reach a far more effective mastery over all the details of the Christian life, than all the skill of cunning men, all the wisdom of learned moral artificers could possibly obtain for us.

SERMON XIII.

Of the Flesh and the Spirit.

“For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.”—GALATIANS vi. 8.

THE term “flesh” has obtained a wider signification than it previously had; and, corresponding to this, the phrase of our text, “the desires of the flesh” has obtained a proportionally wider range of application. These desires, in fact embrace one and all of the enjoyments which are competent to the natural man while he is in the body. Had the species remained innocent, there would have been nothing, either in these desires or enjoyments, that would have either thwarted the will of God, or carried any forgetfulness or disinclination towards God along with them. But as the matter actually stands, it is far otherwise. With the desire that we have for what is agreeable, there mingles no desire and no liking towards God. With the enjoyment that we have in it, there mingles no remembrance and no pleasure in God. The thing is desired for itself; in itself the heart rests, and terminates, and has full complacency; and the enjoyment is in every way as much detached from the thought of God, as if the belief of God had no place in his creed, or as if God Himself had no place in creation. Now this is not merely true of the grosser appetites of nature. It is true of every appetite which has for its object something separate from God; of every appetite which points to any one thing that the world has to offer, while God is not recognised as the giver of it, or as having that superior claim upon our affections which the giver has over the gift; of every appetite in the prosecution of which and the indulgence of which, the mind may all the while be away from the consideration of God. Now this applies, not merely to the desires of the epicure, and of the voluptuary. It belongs as essentially to all the other desires of unrenowned nature. There may be as little of God, for example, in the delights of literature, as there is in the delights of

sensuality. If it be true that it is He alone who doeth the will of God that endureth for ever, the one may be as little connected as the other with the eternal life of our text. Both may be equally fleeting in their duration; and both may pass away with the vapour of our present life, when it passeth away. They may end when the body ends; and thus it is, that many generous as well as many grovelling desires, that the propensity of the heart to power and glory or to the objects of lofty ambition, may, as well as the lowest propensities of our animal nature, come under the brief but comprehensive description of “the desires of the flesh.”

Recollect then that in this extended sense, we employ the term flesh throughout the whole of our discourse. All the desires which it is competent for a man to feel, who has no care, and takes no interest about the things of God or of another world, are the desires of the flesh. All the enjoyments of which man is capable, apart either from the duties or the delights of religion, are the enjoyments of the flesh. They may or they may not be the enjoyments of a shameless and abandoned profligacy. The line of demarcation between flesh and spirit, is not that by which the dissipations of life are separated from its decencies—but that by which all the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of our present life, in sense and in the creature, but apart from God, is separated from the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of the spiritual life with God in Heaven. A man may be wholly occupied by the former desire, and be wholly devoid of the latter—in which case he is of the flesh and not of the spirit; or, to make use still more of the phraseology of scripture, he is carnal and not spiritual; or he walks by sight, and not by faith; or he is one of the children of this world, and not

one of the children of light; or, finally, he minds earthly things, and neither his heart nor his conversation is in Heaven. Now to answer this description of character, it is not necessary, that he should be immersed in vice and in voluptuousness. He may recoil from these; and yet the world in some other of its varieties may have the entire mastery of his affections, and it be the alone theatre of his hopes and his interests and his wishes. What the earthly thing is which engrosses him, we may not be able to specify; and yet it may be very sure that earthly things are all which he minds, and that to the pleasure and the pursuit of them he is wholly given over. In the judgment of an earthborn morality he may not be at all criminal; and yet, in his tastes and tendencies and practical habits, he may be altogether carnal.

The next thing which requires to be understood, is what is meant by "sowing to the flesh." Let it be observed then, that the act of indulging its desires is one thing, and that the act of providing for the indulgence of them is another. When a man, on the impulse of sudden provocation, wreaks his resentful feelings upon the neighbour who has offended him, he is not at that time preparing for the indulgence of a carnal feeling; but actually indulging it. He is not at that time sowing, but reaping, such as it is, a harvest of gratification. But when, instead of tasting the sweets of revenge, he is employed in devising the measures of revenge, and taking counsel with the view of putting some scheme of it into operation—he is no doubt stimulated throughout this process, by the desire of retaliation; but it is not until the process has reached its accomplishment, that the desire is satisfied. It is thus that the sowing and the reaping may be distinguished from one another. We are busied with the one, when busied with the preparatory steps towards some consummation which we are aiming at; and we obtain the other in the act of consummation.

This distinction may serve to assist our judgment, in estimating the ungodliness of certain characters. The rambling voluptuary, who is carried along by every impulse, and all whose powers of mental discipline are so enfeebled that he

has become the slave of every propensity, lives in the perpetual harvest of criminal gratification. If with him the voice of conscience be ever heard, amid the uproar of those passions which war against the soul, it only serves to darken his intervals of vice—when, on the assault of the next temptation, and the coming round of the next opportunity, it is again deafened and overborne as before, amid the mirth and the riot and the recklessness of profligate companionship. It is not to such a man that we should look as our best example of one who sows. We should rather look to another who is equally immersed in vice, but with more of steadfastness and self-command in the prosecution of it—who can bring intelligence and cool deliberation to bear upon its objects—who can patiently take his stand; and calculate upon his advantages; and, after the disguise and preparation of many months, can obtain the gratification of an unhallowed triumph over some victim of artifice. To the eye of the world, and with the general decency of his regulated habits, he may have a more seemly character than the unbridled debauchee. But if to disobey conscience, when scarcely heard amid the ravings of a tempest, be an humbler attainment in the school of impiety, than to stifle conscience in the hour of silliness and circumspection—if it be not so hardy a resistance to the voice of duty, when she calls unheeded along with a crowd of boisterous assailants, as when, with the cool and collected energies of a mind at leisure, she is firmly bidden to the door—then, though both these wretched aliens from God be surely posting to the place of condemnation, if there be degrees of punishment in hell, even as there are degrees of glory and enjoyment in heaven, we leave the question with yourselves, whether he in the present instance who has most been occupied in sowing, or he who has most been occupied in reaping, shall be made to inherit the deepest curse, or have the heaviest vengeance laid upon him.

But it is more useful still, to complete this distinction in the walks of reputable life; and for this purpose, we may notice a very frequent exhibition of it among the members of a prosperous family. A daughter, whose whole delight is in her

rapid transitions from one scene of extensive brilliancy to another—who sustains the delirium of her spirits among the visits and the excursions, and the parties of gaiety, which fashion has invented for the entertainment of its unthinking generations—who dissipates every care, and fills up every hour, with the raptures of hope or the raptures of enjoyment, among the frivolities and fascinations of her volatile society—She leads a life, than which nothing can be imagined more opposite to a life of preparation for the coming judgment or the coming eternity. Yet she reaps rather than sows. It lies with another to gather the money which purchaseth all things, and with her to taste the fruits of the purchase. It is the father who sows. It is he who sits in busy and brooding anxiety over his manifold speculations—wrinkled perhaps with care, and sobered by years into an utter distaste for the splendours and insignificancies of fashionable life. He provides the elements of all this expenditure, yet in the expenditure itself may have no enjoyment whatever. On all his habits there may be imprinted one unvaried character of regularity—punctual in hours, and temperate in enjoyments, and exemplary in all the mercantile virtues, and with no rambling desire whatever beyond the threshold of his counting-house, and engrossed with nothing so much as with the snug prosperity of its operations.

In the business of gain, there is often the ruffing of an occasional breeze; and the one who so employed is, to make use of a Bible expression, “sowing the wind.” In the business of expenditure there is often the fury and agitation of a tempest; and the other who is so employed is, to make use of another Bible expression, “reaping the whirlwind.” The habit of both is alike a habit of ungodliness. Giddy and unthinking in the latter; but certainly not more hopeless, than the settled ungodliness of the former—where system, and perseverance, and the deliberate application of the whole heart and the whole understanding, are given to the interests of the world—where every thought of seriousness about the soul, instead of being lost for a time in the whirl of intoxicating variety, is calmly and resolutely dispossessed by thoughts of equal

seriousness about a provision for the perishable body—where wealth has become the chosen and adopted divinity of the whole life; and, in place of the God who endureth for ever, every care and every calculation are directed to a portion, frail as our earthly tabernacles, and fleeting as the vapour that soon passeth away.

But there is still another word that needs explanation. The term corruption in this passage is expressive, not of moral worthlessness as it frequently is, but of decay or expiration. The meaning of it here is in precise contrast to that of the term incorruption, in the place where it is said that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Where it stands in this verse, it is expressive, not of a moral property, but of a physical one. The corruption that is spoken of in the text, is simply opposed to the eternal life that is spoken of in the text. It is not here designed to affirm the wrongness of any carnal pursuit, but the instability of its objects. We are only translating the text into other language, when we say that all the harvest which is reaped by him who soweth unto the flesh cometh to an end—whereas he who soweth to the spirit will reap a harvest of pleasures which shall be for evermore. So that the lesson here is quite the same with that of the apostle John, “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Now that we have finished these various explanations, the first lesson which we urge from the text, is the vanity of this world's ambition. We are elsewhere told in plainer language, not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world. To gratify our affection for these things, is to reap of the flesh, all which the flesh, even in its most extended sense, has to bestow upon us. To provide again for this gratification, is to sow unto the flesh. The man sows, when, under the impulse of a desire after earthly things, he plies and prosecutes his measures for the attainment of them. He reaps when he does attain. Were it not for a strange anomaly in the moral nature of man, this distinction could not have been better exemplified, than by him who first labours, with the whole heart and strenuousness

of his soul, after the money which purchaseth the objects of this world's gratification; and then gives himself up to the harvest of indulgence. But what mars and confounds the distinction in this instance is, that, when man devotes himself to the acquisition of that money which purchaseth all things, it is not always with the view of purchasing. Wealth is often prosecuted without that view. An independent charm is annexed to the bare possession of it. Apart altogether from its power of command over the enjoyments of life, it has become with many an object in itself of the most passionate and intense ambition. All the pleasure of the chase is keenly felt in the pursuit of it, and all the triumph of a victory as keenly felt in the attainment of it; and this without any regard to that harvest of subsequent enjoyment, into which it has the power of ushering its successful votaries. It is thus, that, although the mere shadow and representative of enjoyment, it has at length infatuated its worshippers into a higher relish for itself, than for all the enjoyments of which it is the minister—so that, instead of a handmaid to the gratification of our other appetites, itself has become with many the object of an appetite more domineering than them all; and wealth apart from all its uses and subserviencies, now stands to their imagination in the place of a mighty and dispensing sovereign, to whom they render the devotion and the drudgery of all their services.

In those cases, however, where wealth is the terminating object, there is still the process of sowing—even that process of diligence and of busy devisings, by which the schemes of this earthly ambition are carried on. Only the harvest, instead of consisting in any ulterior things which wealth can purchase, consists in the mere acquisition of the wealth itself. In the walks of merchandise, were we to look to the minds and the motives of its most aspiring candidates, would we often see that it was not what comes after the wealth, but the wealth itself which both set them agoing and keeps them agoing. They may be sowing, not unto the lust of the flesh, not unto the lust of the eye, not unto the pride of life, all of which are opposite to the love of the Father. But still they are sowing; and to that, too,

the love of which is equally opposite to the love of the Father. They who are seeking treasure for themselves, instead of seeking to be rich towards God, are in fact sowing unto the flesh, for they are sowing unto that which terminates with the body—They are sowing unto that which is altogether corrupt—understanding by this term altogether transitory. They are sowing unto that on which death, in a few little years, will put its impressive mockery. They are rearing their chief good on a foundation that is perishable. They are labouring for one portion only, which will speedily be wrested from them by the gripe of a destroyer—who will leave them without a portion, and without an inheritance for ever.

They are labouring for a part in this world's substance, and in the possession of it, verily they have their reward. But, in regard to the substance which endureth, as for it they have never laboured, so it they never will acquire. They have sought to be arrayed in perishable glory, and perhaps will find a little hour of magnificence on earth, ere they bid their everlasting adieu to its infatuations. But that hour will soon come to its termination; and Death may leave all the possessions untouched, but he will lay his rude and resistless hand upon the possessor. The house may stand in castled pride for many generations, and the domain may smile for ages in undiminished beauty; but in less, perhaps, than half a generation, death will shoot his unbidden way to the inner apartment, and, without spoiling the lord of his property, he will spoil the property of its lord. It is not his way to tear the parchments, and the rights of investiture from the hand of their proprietor; but he paralyzes and unlocks the hand, and they fall like useless and forgotten things away from it. It is thus that Death smiles in ghastly contempt on all human aggrandizement. He meddles not with the things that are occupied, but he lays hold of the occupier; and this to him is as entire a deprivation, as if he trampled all that belonged to him into powder. He does not seize upon the wealth, but he lays his arrest upon the owner. He forces away his body to the grave, where it moulders into dust; and, in turning the soul

out of its warm and well-loved tenement, he turns it adrift on the cheerless waste of a desolate and neglected Eternity.

We are not told here that it is wrong to sow unto the flesh. This may be, this is a doctrine of the Bible; but it is not the doctrine of this particular verse. It does not pronounce on the criminality of the pursuit—but just on the evanescence of its objects. It simply tells us, that the good attained by sowing unto the flesh is temporal; and to this the whole experience of man bears testimony. He cannot look upon general history, without perceiving the rapid movement of one generation after another. He cannot live long in the world, without perceiving the fall of acquaintances upon every side of him. He cannot have a circle of relatives around him, without the lesson of death being brought home to his feelings, by the touching incidents of his own domestic history. Should he still persist in associating either durability or magnitude with his earthly interests,—this may prove a moral or an intellectual derangement in himself; but it proves nothing against the affirmation, that, in sowing unto the flesh, he will of the flesh reap only corruption. As he grows older in years, he may grow more inveterate in delusion. As he draws towards the termination of his earthly existence, he may cling with more intense affection to its vanities. As the hour of his eternal separation from the world approaches, he may grow in the estimation of its value; and adhere more tenaciously to all its objects, and to all its interests. This proves him to be the child of infatuation; but against the truth of the Bible, it proves nothing. It may bespeak the virulence of some great spiritual disease, which hath overspread our species. It may demonstrate, that, in reference to a great and awfully momentous truth, we labour under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. But the truth itself remains unshaken; and on every individual who is born into the world, it will be most surely and most speedily realized.

The second lesson, founded on these explanations of our text, that we would propose, is the unprovidedness of all those men for eternity, whose affections are settled upon the world, and who possess not one wish or one practical in-

terest beyond the limits of its sensible horizon. That, indeed, is a meagre theology which would look upon the outcasts of human society, as the only outcasts from Heaven; and which would represent the path that leadeth unto spiritual and everlasting life, to be so gentle and so accessible that few do miss it, instead of representing it as that arduous and narrow path, of which our Saviour hath said that there be few who find it. It is a woeful delusion, and we fear the undoing of many an immortal spirit, that nought will shut us out of Paradise, but such literal and flagrant offences against the law of rectitude, as would degrade us beneath the average character of those decent and respectable and neighbour-like families, by whom we are encompassed; and that if we but acquit ourselves with tolerable fairness upon earth, we are fit for being translated when we die, among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Now, it is true, that we may stand exempted from all gross and outrageous delinquency. We may fulfil all the honesties of social intercourse. We may even have more than the average share of its humanities. The cordialities of domestic affection may, by the mechanism of our sentient nature, flow through our bosoms, in a stream as warm and as kindly as does the blood that circulates through our veins. And to many of the graces of private life, there may be added the activities of public life and of patriotism—the pulse of high and honourable feeling—the blush of unviolated delicacy—the ingenuousness of nature's truth—the sensibilities of nature's tenderness. And withal, there may be a taste most finely and feelingly alive, if not to those spiritual beauties which irradiate the character of the Godhead, at least to those sensible beauties wherewith the face of our goodly creation hath been decked so profusely by his hand; and there may be science, and imagination, and towering intellect, and sublime thoughts of truth and of the universe, and all the virtues which the happiest constitution can engender, and all the philosophy which loftiest genius can achieve.

Now we would put it to your own sense and experience of our common nature, if you think it impossible, that a man so gifted shall breathe the element

of irreligion; that, from morning to night, the God, amid the glories of whose workmanship he all the day rejoices, shall be to him like an unknown or a forgotten thing; that satisfied, and in full occupation with the business of the peopled region in which he dwells, he should cast not one look beyond the death to which his footsteps are carrying him, should heave not one aspiration through the illuminated concave that is above his head; and that thus the Being, who hath graced and invested humanity with all that so proudly or so pleasingly adorns it, should be habitually and wholly disregarded by him, whom the hand of the Almighty Sovereign hath called forth, and exalted into the noblest of its specimens. And if indeed a creature so accomplished, might nevertheless live and die in ungodliness, then let us not be deceived into fatal security, by the virtues of an average and every-day world. They one and all of them may consist with alienation from God; and utter strangers to the spirit, or to the things of that spiritual economy which He has instituted, they may, throughout all their rounds of business or companionship or pleasure, be sowing only unto the flesh, and making this earth, this perishable earth, the scene of all their joys and of all their expectations. We charge them not with crime—yet, if so immersed in earthliness as to have lost all practical sensibility to God, we must refuse their Christianity. The whole drift and tendency of their affections are to the things which are beneath. The effort, the anxiety, the perpetual longing of their hearts, are all toward the accommodations and the interests of time. They are carnally minded, which is death. They sow unto the flesh, and of the flesh they shall reap corruption.

And this is the consummation of their present being, not because they have lived either in profane or in profligate wickedness, but simply because they have lived without God—because they have made earth their resting-place; and, altogether pleased with what is perishable, the general habit of their souls has marked them to be citizens of earth and not of heaven—with this world as the alone repository of their interests and hopes, without one pilgrim sigh, and far less one pilgrim step, towards the land of

Eternity. Were you to put it to their choice, whether, if all was prosperous here, it was not here that they would like to live for ever—it might bring the state of their affections to the test, and decide the question of their being carnal or spiritual men. Let the proposal be made, that, with health and fortune and friendship, and the bloom of perpetual youth, and the blessings of joyous companionship, and an affectionate family, there should withal be the elixir of immortality poured into your cup; and on the face of this goodly world, so full of sweets and of sunshine, you should be permitted to expatiate for ever. Tell me, if, on these terms, you would not cleave with fondest tenacity to your present habitation; and be willing to live all recklessly as heretofore of the God that upholds you? Would you not be glad to take everlasting leave of your Maker; and, could you only be spared the encounter of that hideous death which disembodies the soul and conveys it to the land of spectres, would you not consent far rather to sojourn and to spend your eternity in this more congenial land? In other words, would you not prefer that God and you should be everlastingly quit of each other—rather than be wrested from your tenements of clay; and deprived of your footing on that territory, where alone those earthly enjoyments are to be found, that are suited to your earthly nature? Tell me if you could not forego even heaven and all its psalmody to be fairly let alone; and, for the sake of a lasting and undisturbed inheritance in this smiling world, would you not agree that God should withdraw Himself in eternal oblivion from your thoughts, and that you should be eternal outcasts from God's spiritual family?

You may plead in apology, that, in choosing for earth rather than heaven, you just make the universal choice of nature; but it only proves the truth of this great Bible position—that Nature is in a state of exile from God—and that there is indeed a wide disruption between the planet on which we dwell, and the rest of God's unfallen creation. It only proves that you are yet of the flesh and not of the spirit; and that you have not made that mighty transition by which the affections are carried upward from the

dust of this perishable world, to that upper sanctuary where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and where God sitteth on a throne that is at once a throne of grace and of righteousness. Be assured if so, that you are not in a state which it will do to die in. There will be no such earth as the one that we inhabit—after the present economy is dissolved; and succeeded by a heaven where all is sacredness and seraphic ecstasy, and a hell where all is the defiance and the desperation of rooted, resolved, and implacable ungodliness. Such a middle region as the one we at present occupy, where the creature enjoys himself amid the gifts, and cares not for the giver, cannot long be tolerated. It is an anomaly on the face of creation, and will as such be swept away. And meanwhile the processes of our text are those which connect your doings here, with one or other of the two destinies hereafter. “If you sow unto the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. If you sow unto the spirit you will of the spirit reap life everlasting.”

We have hitherto used the term corruption in the sense it has in the text—that is the property of being perishable and so transitory; and, ere we conclude in a few words with the common sense of the term as denoting the moral property of being criminal or faulty, let us just make one remark which at present we cannot afford to expatiate on. It is this—that the man who soweth unto the flesh, or in other words labours to secure some earthly enjoyment, that he should reap only corruption, or reap only that which at length passes away from him and ceases any longer to be—why this is in perfect keeping with all the analogies of nature and human life. It is the proper result of the course on which he hath entered. It is in conformity with all that takes place in other paths of activity and exertion—where it is found that as is the aim so is the accomplishment. The schoolboy seeks for amusement, and he finds it—he gets the one thing his heart is set upon, but not another thing—he gets not the acquisition of a fortune for example. The daughter of many graces and many accomplishments seeks for distinction in the circle of fashion, and that may be realised; but you

would never look, for the result of such an aim or such an enterprise, to distinction in the circle of politics. The citizen looks forward in perspective, and labours in the walk of busy merchandise, for the sum which he thinks will satiate the ambition of his nature—this he may reach, but not surely an eminence of literary fame. And so of every other landing-place to every other path of exertion.—As is the seeking so is the finding. The man of business does not get a name in philosophy. The man of letters does not get to the pinnacle of affluence. The man of victory in war, does not obtain the glory which is achieved by the man of discovery in science. And so, to use a designation comprehensive of them all, the man of the world realises some one or other of the world's objects; but he does not realise the things or the interests of heaven. Verily he hath his reward. He gets what he sought for, and has no right to complain if he do not get what he never sought for. He reaches the appropriate termination of his path.—Time and Eternity are both set before him; he made choice of time, and he hath sped accordingly. But his eternity is a blank; and it were in violation of all the analogies of human experience if it were otherwise. It is thus, if we had time to illustrate the lesson a little farther, that a flood of light may be thrown upon the position that—not because a man's actions are criminal, but simply because his affections are earthly—not because in the deeds of his hand there has been ought of the violent but because in the desires of his heart there has been nought of the spiritual—not because he hath done that which should disgrace him in this world of sinners which is soon to pass away, but simply because he hath neither sought after a place nor laboured in the work of preparation for that world of saints which is to remain in brightness for ever.—On these grounds alone, and without the imputation of any notorious delinquency at all, there is many a most respectable citizen, who, viewed in reference to his capacity as an immortal creature, lives all his days in a state of utter negation and nakedness; and who, when overtaken by death, will find himself on the margin of an unprovided eternity, with nought in its mighty and unexplored

vastness before him but the dark imagery of desolation and despair.

But the final issue of such a life as he hath spent in the world, is something additional to a mere shortness from heaven. There is further included in it the positive wretchedness of hell: And ere the reason and the conscience can be reconciled to such a consummation as this, it is not enough to make out that he has been all along sowing to that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is transitory; but that further, he is chargeable with that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is morally reprehensible and wrong. The great difficulty of a gospel minister lies in convincing of this, our amiable and virtuous but withal worldly men. Our chief encounter in society, is with a meagre and superficial imagination of guilt. Men know not what they have done, that should land them in so frightful a consummation, as the hell of the New Testament. They understand not how it is, that any sin of theirs should have lighted up those fires which are to burn everlastingly. They will admit that they have failings; but surely nothing commensurate to a vengeance so relentless and so interminable as this. There may be some desperadoes in wickedness—there may be a few of stouter and more stubborn hardihood than all their fellows—there may be men of fiend-like atrocity, whom the children of this world so little resemble, that the world at large would shudder at them—these may be the befitting inmates of that dire and dreadful Pandæmonium, where the spirits of the accursed dwell. But surely the kind and the courteous and the companionable men of our own daily walk and our own familiar neighbourhood, with whom we exchange the visits of hospitality and the smiles of benignity and good will—you would not assimilate their guilt, with that of the daring outcast, who passes through life in utter recklessness of all its duties and of all its decencies. This cause of the peace which men feel about their eternal prospects is distinct from the former. It is a juridical principle that is quite current among men, and lends a mighty reinforcement to the apathy of Nature. They are at peace, because they do not see that theirs is at all a guilt so grievous as to bring down

upon it the burden of a grievous condemnation—and so a peace which we fear is no peace. There is indeed in all this a very complete illusion. For a man to be execrated as a monster in society, he must have outraged the duties of that relation in which he stands to his fellow-men. Now of all these he may have acquitted himself in a very tolerable way; and yet there is another and a distinct relation, to which also belong peculiar duties of its own, and which he may have altogether neglected—we mean the relation in which he stands, not to the beings of his own species, but to the Being who made him. He may have discharged himself of all that he owes to his fellows upon earth, and yet have been utterly unmindful of what he owes to God in heaven. He may have felt the force of all those moral and sympathetic affections, which bind men together into a community below—and yet felt no attraction whatever to Him who is the great Parent and Preserver of the human family. There might be many a close and kindly reciprocation of mutual esteem, and mutual tenderness, and all the virtues of good neighbourhood, among ourselves; and yet the whole of this terrestrial society, be in a state of utter disruption from Him who is at once the source and the centre of the created Universe. It is just as if a stray planet might retain its cohesion, and its chemistry, and all those laws of motion and plastic influences which would continue to uphold many of the processes of our present terrestrial physics; but which loosed from its gravitation to the sun would drift waywardly in space, and become an outcast from the harmonies of the great mundane system. Now this is precisely what the Bible affirms of the spiritual world. The men of this planet have broken off their affinity to God. They retain many of their wonted affinities for each other; but they have made disruption and a wide and general departure from God. They have yet a terrestrial ethics with the graces and moralities of which some are so richly adorned, as to shine in beauteous lustre before the eye of their fellows; while others, even in reference to these earth-born virtues, are so marred and mutilated, that they are looked upon by all as

the objects of a revolting deformity. Of the great principle of the celestial Ethics, both may at the same time be alike destitute. It is experimentally true, that the man of compassion and the man of cruelty, with hearts so differently affected by the sight of distress, may be in the same state of practical indifference towards God. It is the spirit of a sound philosophy, as well as of a sound faith, to affirm that Humanity, with all her complexional varieties of character between one specimen and another, may be throughout impregnated with the deep spirit of ungodliness.

This is the representation of that scripture which speaketh to us from heaven; and to this, we believe, that every enlightened conscience upon earth will re-echo. It charges not injustice upon all. It charges not gross and abominable licentiousness upon all. It charges not open or scandalous profaneness upon all. But it charges ungodliness upon all. When brought to the bar of civil or criminal law, when brought to the bar of public opinion, when brought to the bar of social or conventional morality amongst men, you may be most fully and honourably acquitted. Yet when brought to the bar of a higher jurisprudence, there may be laid, and most rightfully laid upon you, the burden of an overwhelming condemnation. It is then, and then only that ungodliness stands forth as an article of the indictment against you. It is then that the Being who made you takes up His own cause, and appears in support of his own controversy. It is then that question is made, not of the claims which men have upon you, but of those peculiar and transcendental claims which God has upon you. It is then that you are met with the question—"What have you done unto God?" In reference to the moralities of your human companionship below, there is perhaps not one earthly tribunal before which you might not stand in the attitude of proud integrity. In reference to that transcendental morality, which relates the thing that is formed to Him who hath formed it—there is the overthrow of every pretension, and man's boasted righteousness melteth utterly away.

Now it is man's blindness to this prin-

ciple, which forms one main ingredient of the false and the fatal peace that is so general in our world. There is blindness to the jurisprudence of the upper sanctuary, as well as blindness to the futurities of the unseen state. The two together have the effect of a most deadly opiate; nor are we to wonder if our species have been charmed thereby, into so profound a spiritual lethargy.—And thus it is, that though the creatures of a fleeting and fantastic day, we tread on earth with as assured footsteps, as if, instead of its shortlived tenants we were to be everlastingly its lords. And the laugh, and the song, and the festive gaiety, and the busy schemes of earthliness, all speak a generation fast locked in the insensibility of spiritual death. Nor do the terrors of the grave shake this tranquillity—nor do the still more awful terrors of the judgment-seat. That day of man's dissolution which is so palpably at hand, and which sends before it so many intimations, fails to disturb him. That day of the world's dissolution, when the trumpet shall be sounded, and the men of all generations shall awake to the high reckonings of eternity, and this earth and these Heavens shall be involved in the ruins of one mighty conflagration, and the wrath that now is suspended in this season of offered mercy shall at length break forth into open manifestation on all the sons and daughters of ungodliness—this day, which when it cometh, will absorb every heart in one fearful and overwhelming interest—now that it only is to come, and is seen through the imagined vista of many successive centuries, has no more effect than a dream of poetry. And, whether from the dimness of nature's sight to all the futurities of the spiritual world, or from its slender apprehension of that guilt which in the sacred eye of heaven is so enormous—certain it is, that men can travel onward both to the death and to the judgment, and say peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The awfulness of the first of these events, even death, bears in it experimental proof to God's intolerance of sin. If He indeed felt our guilt, as little as we feel our danger—if His displeasure were a thing as slight and as gentle as our alarm—why so dreadful a visitation upon

our species as death?—a thing unknown to angels, and from which the whole of sentient nature shrinks as at the approach of most unnatural violence. If God be as much at peace with the world, as the world is at peaceful complacency with itself—why keep up so hard and so hostile a dispensation against it?—or if sin be of as trivial account in the estimation of Heaven, as it is in the estimation of human society—how should it have brought down such a vengeance upon earth, as to have smitten it with a plague of mortality throughout all its borders; and swept off to the hideousness of the grave, all the life and beauty and intelligence of its successive generations. That surely is no trifle, which has turned this bright and blooming world into a vast sepulchral abode for the men of all ages. Its moaning death-beds, and its weeping families, and its marred and broken companionships—these are all emphatic testimonies of God's hatred of moral evil; for that sin brought all this calamity upon the world, is a principle announced to us in scripture—and it is the only principle which resolves to us the mystery of death. And when the same scripture announces that after death cometh the judgment—O let us not give in to the treacherous imagination; that He who hath made such fell exhibition of severity in the one, will in the other but manifest and indulge his tenderness. But let us be very sure, that, as death is to every unrepentant sinner but the beginning of his sorrows, so judgment will be to him as a second death.

We shall be happy, if, as the fruit of these observations, we can convince any of you, that, apart from crime, apart from literal transgressions of the divine

law, there may be the utmost spiritual destitution in the mere earthliness of our affections—the most entire unfitness for heaven above, simply because our heart's delight and desire are set upon the world that is below—an eternity wholly unprovided, because the pleasures and the provision of time are all that we seek and all that we care for. There is a juridical principle, that nothing will condemn us at the bar of our final reckoning, but crime; and then that mere carnality, in the general sense of the word, is no crime. Now it is not a crime in the eye of human jurisprudence; but in the eye of the divine jurisprudence it is the most enormous of all. It is the preference of the creature to the Creator, and will terminate in the gloom of everlasting deprivation and despair, after that Creation, in its present power to engage and to gratify, shall have passed away, and we shall have to do with the rebuke and the resentment of Creation's Lord who endureth for ever. O be persuaded, then, of your need of a gospel; and give up from this time forward your indifference and contempt for it. Be assured that the great apparatus of a Mediator, and a Sacrifice, and a risen High Priest, and an Intercession to reconcile, and a Spirit to sanctify—be assured that all this was not uncalled for: and now seek unto Him who is able to change you from the carnal to the spiritual, to crucify those affections which have their objects on earth and are now so vigorously alive, and to quicken within you such new affections as have their objects in Heaven, and without which heaven can never be the place of our abode, and just because it cannot be the place of our enjoyment.

SERMON XIV.

On the Knowledge of Christ and Him crucified.

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”—1 COR. ii. 2.

You are aware that Christian truth consists, not of one article, but of many articles; that in the treasury of sacred wisdom, there are things both new and old, and all of which ought to be brought forth and unfolded to the view of those who are attending the lessons of preparation for eternity; that just as in a landscape of nature, so it is not one single object which either by its magnitude occupies the whole of the spiritual landscape, or even by the lustre of its overbearing worth and importance ought to engross our exclusive regards to it. There is not one object in the whole field of revelation, which should so fasten and concentrate our observation upon it, as to detach us from all the others that stand out there in the visible exhibition; nor one of such exceeding size and prominency, as should cause us to overlook the variety of lesser objects that are strewed around its pedestal. But still as you may have often noticed on some scene or representation of visible beauty, that, all crowded though it be with traits of loveliness, there is some one figure in the groupe bearing itself so nobly and so commandingly over the rest, as to be ever drawing the eye and the admiration of the spectator towards it—so, among all the diversities which the Bible places before the spiritual eye, may there be one truth of such eclipsing superiority over all the others, as that ever present, or at least of constant recurrence to the thoughts, it may be the one on which a Christian heart shall dwell with perpetual fondness, and be oftenest absorbed in the contemplation of it. Paul in the text points to such a truth; and if he do not just tell us that it ought to monopolise the regards of every disciple, he at least tells us of its lofty and superlative claims upon them. It is well that in this matter we have the guidance of apostolical taste and apostoli-

cal discernment; nor can we do better than look to that very quarter where this gifted man of inspiration is so fixedly looking, when he says I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

While so employed, we should like chiefly to confine your attention to the specification which the apostle attaches to our Saviour, when he passes from the mention of Christ in the general to the mention of Him crucified; and to demonstrate the title which this object so specialised has on the supreme attention of Christians. And it will appear in the course of our observations, that, though Christ crucified should be the supreme, He is not the sole object of our regard; and that, so far from the dignity of the object being reduced in consequence, it is in fact enhanced when thus translated from a place of solitude to a place of supremacy.

The first title that Christ crucified hath upon our attention is, that by the knowledge of this we are provided against the most urgent and appalling calamity which hangs over our species. If we abide in ignorance herein, the wrath of God abideth upon us. Let the apathy of man to his real condition be what it may—this may lighten for a time his fears, but it does not lighten the actual burden of his curse and his condemnation. He may have been seized by the spirit of deep slumber; but he only sleeps on the eve of a coming storm. Such may be the profoundness of his spiritual lethargy, that the denunciations of vengeance are unheard; and the storehouse of that vengeance in heaven, even the breast of the offended Godhead, in which are treasured up the remembrance of all His wrongs, and His unalterable purposes of redress and vindication—this may lie hid in deep oblivion from his eye; and just because

the danger is wholly unfelt, the deliverance therefrom may be wholly unprized. He may be alike reckless of sin and of the Saviour; and because the one falls lightly upon his conscience, the other may be of light esteem in his computation. But it is not his blindness that can either change, or can annihilate, the eternal relationships by which he is surrounded. He is within the domain of an eternal government, beyond which he cannot transport himself. He is under the authority of a strict and unchangeable law, from which he cannot escape. There is a throne in heaven, and a God sitting upon that throne, from the rebuke of whose countenance he cannot flee away—by whom the meanest of His accountable family cannot be overlooked—and all those dealings with every creature whom He has formed, will serve to illustrate the force and the purity and the rectitude of a high moral administration. It is in the power of man to shut his eyes and so extinguish his preception of the truth: but he cannot extinguish the truth itself.

These are the real, and stable, and substantial conditions of his being, and he cannot obliterate them. He hath broken a commandment, the awful sanctions of which were set forth in the hearing of men and of angels; and in their sight they must be executed. There is a solemn day that will speedily overtake us all, when we shall be reckoned with for our ungodliness—when we shall be charged with having lived out our time in the world, regardlessly of Him who made the world—when the heart shall be taken cognisance of for all its stray affections from Him to whom it owed supreme allegiance—when the question shall be put, what hast thou done unto God; and the mighty requirement of doing all things to His glory shall be set up, as the only standard of reference by which to try all our duties and all our deviations. All this we may cancel for a time from our own recollection; but we cannot cancel it from the book of God's remembrance—nor can we cancel it from those certainties which shall be fulfilled, on the person of every sinner who dies an outcast from reconciliation. Truth will have its way upon him. The jealousies of an incensed God will burst forth into

an open discharge; and all the attributes of a nature that is holy and unchangeable must then stand out in their own proper demonstration. Among the frivolities of a short-lived day, we may have cradled our souls into unconcern; and this may disguise from us, but it cannot destroy in itself, the reality of things. The treachery of this world's delusions, can never belie the truth of heaven's declarations. And still it remaineth, amid all the unheedings of nature's incredulity and nature's blindness—that there must be some awful adjustment between God as the insulted Sovereign, and man as the rebel who hath defied and disobeyed Him.

The direct, and, if one may so term it, the natural way of bringing about this adjustment, were by the infliction of the threatened penalty on those who had incurred it—precisely as the difference between a creditor and a debtor is adjusted, by enforcing payment. It is thus that God might have eased Him of his adversaries, and swept away from the face of His creation that guilt which had deformed it; and made full demonstration of His justice and His power, by lifting up the red arm of an avenger over the hosts of the rebellious; and as it were cleared out from the domain of purity, the loathsome and offensive spectacle of sin, by dooming all who were tainted with it to an accursed territory, where they should be for ever apart from the children of His own kingdom. And this is the very doom that lies on humanity—the very curse that adheres to each individual member of it—the very sentence which, whether you tremble under it or not, is written against you in the book of condemnation. And could we only pursue each conscience, with the apprehension of this, as with an arrow sticking fast; and make known to its owner, how unrelenting the law of God is, and how impossible it were for Him, by any compromise of dignity or of truth, to connive at transgression, or look to sin without the full attestation of His righteous abhorrence—then might every soul, awake to the dread reality of its own condition, above all other knowledge, hold the knowledge of a Saviour to be indeed the most precious.

And it is through a Saviour, that the adjustment between the Lawgiver and

the sinner has been made. The tidings of this adjustment form the very essence of the gospel. The debt is not exacted from the principal, because paid by a surety. The penalty is not laid on the transgressor, because laid on a substitute. To remove the offence of a dishonoured law, there needeth not now that the offender shall be borne away to a place of exile or imprisonment—for by the price of a Redeemer's blood hath the law been magnified; and, grander exhibition far of its authority than that the sinner should die, is that he should pass under the covert of His mediatorship who gave himself up a nobler sacrifice. It is this which constitutes the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified. There was a need be, that the wrath of God should be discharged; and it has been discharged on the head of this illustrious sufferer. There was a need be, that if ever mercy should go forth from heaven upon our world, it should wear upon its forehead the impress of the truth and justice and holiness of heaven; and that these perfections of Him who dwelleth there should so appear in vindicated majesty, as that glory to God in the highest might meet and be in harmony with peace on earth and goodwill to the children of men: And nowhere but in the cross of Christ hath the world beheld so very peculiar a manifestation of the Godhead. There was a need be, that, if ever again the sinner could be admitted into the august presence of Him whom he had displeased, the way of readmittance should be guarded by such a ceremonial, as would announce to him in solemn and emphatic characters the evil of sin; and for this purpose, a way has been opened, through the rent veil of a Saviour's flesh, and been consecrated by the blood of a divine atonement. And what can more concern you, than to know this path of recall from your eternal banishment? What more momentous to us, than that there has been found out another way for the descending vengeance of heaven, than that it should fall on our guilty and devoted heads? What is there on the wide universe in which we are placed, that should come more urgently home to our personal interests and fears, than when told of that mighty and mysterious transference, by which

the whole burden of this tremendous curse has been made to pass away from us; and we are again ushered back into the friendship of heaven's family?

And let us have you all to understand, that this is not the general exposition of an argument, in which you have no concern, and to which you may look from a distance with an eye of cold and intellectual speculation. There is none here present, on whom it does not bear with the specific import of one who is pointedly and individually address by it. The message of the gospel is something more than a voice, which merely reports to all what is good that all may hear of it. It is in fact the bearer of what is good, and brings the good nigh unto each that each may lay hold of it. There is in it no doubt the testimony of a great deliverance for sinners; but this testimony is just as good as an offer to all who are within reach of the sound of it—for there is a way of so receiving the testimony, as that the deliverance of which it speaks shall be received along with it, and it thus be fastened on by an act of appropriation. And the way in which you have to receive it, is simply to receive it with credit. Put faith in it, and you will have in your own person the full experience of its faithfulness. It is your trust in this gospel salvation, which constitutes your acceptance of it. It is on the stepping-stone of belief in the record, that you pass from death unto life. This is the one and only turning point of your reconciliation; and did we know how to frame the intimation, so as to bring it more plainly and more persuasively to your doors, we should labour to assure you of this, that the more firm your reliance on the blood of the great propitiation, the more certain is your possession of all it hath wrought and of all it hath purchased for you.

Let the sinner then be fairly arrested by a sense of danger—let his conscience be up in alarm because of the coming judgment; and truth with its penetrating beams make known to him that he is in the hands of an angry God—let him once be overtaken by that fearfulness, which, under a just view of his exposed and guilty condition, should sieze upon his soul; and, shooting his anticipations across that barrier of death to which he

is so rapidly approaching, let the eternity beyond it be peopled to the eye of his mind with the appalling imagery of vengeance and despair—O how fondly would he desire, and how highly would he appreciate the tidings of Christ crucified; and even join the apostle in saying, that nothing else than this he desired to know, because nothing but this could bring him relief from the terrors by which he was occupied. Wretched, and wearied out with attempts to find the door of escape, would he hail with rapture that outlet from the penalties of the law, which has been opened up by the expiatory death made known to us in the gospel; and when he sees in the provisions of its wondrous economy, how by the noblest of victims there had been rendered to the justice of God the noblest of vindications—how it must rejoice him to find that the Divinity might at once be glorified and he himself be safe.

But of what avail it may be thought, is the doctrine of Christ crucified, when there is no such vivacity of alarm—when people immersed in worldliness have no care or concern for any thing beyond it—when these terrors are all unfelt, and the tidings of deliverance are therefore all unheeded—and the medicine is in no demand, just because the disease has excited no apprehension? This is very much the general condition of men in society. They are in peace already, and therefore need nothing to pacify them. Christ has been called the anchor of the soul; but ere the soul go in quest of an anchor must it not first be thrown into stormy agitation? And must there not be revealed to the spiritual eye the vengeance that lies upon guilt, ere it can discern or look with fond complacency on the worth of the offered atonement?

Now it is very true, that, were we to describe the religious state of the great majority of our species, we should say that the danger on the one hand and the deliverance on the other are alike unseen by them—that if they have no joy in the pardon of the gospel, they have as little consternation in the threats of the law—and that, profoundly asleep unto both, they live without delight in Christ as their Saviour, and without dread of God as their Judge.

And thus it has been a most natural imagination among Christian writers, that, ere men will seek to know Christ crucified, they must be made to know themselves as liable to the punishment that he hath borne—that they must first be awakened to a sight of the enemy who pursues them, ere they will flee to that place of refuge where they are in safety from his power—that a sense of guilt must take the precedency in their hearts, of any anxious longing after absolution from it—and that each must feel with pungency he is a great sinner, ere he can feel the preciousness of Christ as a great Saviour.

Of what use then, may it be thought, is it to preach Christ to a listless and lethargic auditory? Paul, it is true, said that he determined to know nothing else among his hearers—but is not one thing at least indispensable to be previously known, ere the excellency of the knowledge of Christ can be at all appreciated? Must not the people who are address with the offer of salvation, be convinced of sin, ere salvation can be at all dear to them?

Let us attempt to state in a few words, how we conceive that this matter practically stands. And first we think, that we must have the testimony of many consciences when we say, that there is not much of grief, there is not much of sensibility, there is not any very pungent or penetrating conviction of sin in your hearts—nothing we fear that amounts to a state of spiritual distress or spiritual restlessness—and that, bating a few week-day forms and a few sabbath observations, the successive months and years of your existence in this world pass tolerably away, without any thing being either very sensibly felt, or very strenuously done by you, for the interest of your eternity.

Now it is not by the very same footsteps, that all are led from their present state of death in trespasses and sins, to the state of being spiritually alive. Could we in the first instance disturb them out of their security—could we lead them to see that gulph of destruction, which lieth at the end of the broad way, crowded as it is by a multitude as heedless as themselves—could the frown of an incensed lawgiver be made manifest to their souls,

and they be told to their own apprehension that by nature they are undone—this were a condition which some have realized; and weary and heavy laden under a sense of its terrors, have at length heard the invitation to rest, and to their happiness have found it. The terrors of the law have shut them up unto the faith of the gospel; and they have arrived at peace, through a labyrinth of many disquietudes. It was by an avenue through the dark forebodings of guilt, that they at length reached a landing place among the comforts and promises of the gospel; and, as we often read in the history of conversions—the transition of their hearts, from the false peace of nature to the true peace of Christianity, was through a long intermediate passage of many doubts and many agitations.

Now though this is a frequent way of passing out of darkness into marvellous light, it is not the only way. We would not ply you exclusively with the threatenings of the law—till we judged the alarm to be enough lively, and the affliction for sin to be enough deep and sorrowful, and the sense of danger and of helplessness to be enough overwhelming, and the whole discipline of legal remorse and legal apprehensions to be enough lengthened out—for then plying you with the overtures of reconciliation, through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We should rather incline to mix both at the outset of our ministrations; and, alike removed though many of you may be from the fears of guilt and the consolations of grace, yet, within the compass of single breathing, should we like to tell that while by the one all has been lost, by the other all has been regained for you.

And our reason for this, will perhaps recommend itself to your own experience. No man likes to open his eyes to the spectacle which gives him pain; and, should he have the power, he would rather turn him away from it. Could he, by the putting forth of his own volitions, drown the remembrance of that which hurts or which disquiets him—then the temptation will be felt to a little more sleep and a little more slumber. He will bid off the unwelcome intruder if he can; and that for the sake of a peaceful or a pleasing oblivion from all that might harrow up his soul—just as the mariners

of a sinking vessel, or the adventurer on a sea of commercial speculation who finds that his coming bankruptcy is inevitable, have been known to take an opiate in mad intoxication from the agonising sense of the ruin which impended over them.

Now it is just so with the human mind in reference to eternity, and to Him who has the disposal of it. Let a demonstration be offered in the characters of terror; and man's first and natural movement would be to make his escape from it. He will keep aloof from a spectacle that disturbs him; and by the very distance at which he stands from it, may protect his conscience from all violent or distressful agitation. In these circumstances, let the severities of the law be offered and nothing else, and the man may seek after any outlet rather than brave a contemplation so appalling. He may never, through his whole life long, have experience of the deeper agonies of horror or remorse—and, just because of the wilful and resolute distance at which he keeps himself from the whole contemplation, he, from the place he occupies, may view religion as a dull and a comfortless system; and while perhaps he acquits himself of its outward decencies, he will take care if he can help it not to drink in its terrors. And many are his facilities for keeping it at abeyance, and for postponing all settlement of the question to a more convenient season—when like to tremble as Felix of old, under the power of its denunciations. How easy it were in the glee of merry companionship, to drown the urgencies of the last menacing sermon. How manifold are the varieties of business or amusement, in whose whirl he can dissipate every rising impression of fear or of seriousness in his bosom. With what effect can he lull the alarms of his inward monitor, by any of the thousand soporifics, which sense and time and the world administer to carnality. And then how possible it is for a man to throw himself into the arms of forgetfulness, and to cradle his soul in the repose of a deep and determined insensibility. The preaching of the law, though in all the thunders of its violated majesty, may have no more power to shake the sinner out of his spiritual lethargies, than the

louder fury of the storm has to recall to duty the inebriated mariner. The manifestation of a coming vengeance to the one, may have just the effect that the manifestation of a coming shipwreck has upon the other. It may drive both to their expedients of stupefaction; and the excess of an abandoned crew on the eve of their engulfment, is but the counterpart to the insanity of those, who, in this world's oblivious draughts, hush all sense of their dark and fathomless eternity.

The way to rally this desperado crew were, not that the tempest should blow more fiercely, but to cause the signal be heard of relief and safety at hand; and then would they put forth all their strenuousness to make for it. And the way to summon back again from his plunge of reckless dissipation, the merchant who had lost all hope of his affairs, were not to astound him with the tidings of another disaster—but to come forth with such a gift or offer of suretyship, as might cover all his deficiencies, and make credit and independence again to smile upon his labours. And so it is with the voyagers of our great earthly pilgrimage; and so it is with those who are debtors to do the whole law, and who are shortly to be brought to the bar of heaven's reckoning. Quite in vain to tell them of the coming storm, if this be all. Quite in vain to threaten these irrecover-

able defaulters with the eternal imprisonment that awaits them, if they have no other remedy than mad and insensate carelessness against the horrors of despair. The only way to recall them to the path and the attitude of immortal creatures, is to clear away that thick and awful darkness, which before sat on the prospects of their immortality. There is no other way of rescuing them from the state of being without God, but by rescuing them from the state of being without hope in the world. If you want to move them out of their lethargy, you must follow up the demonstration of their sin, by the demonstration of the Saviour who died for it. It is this which gives such effect to the preaching of the gospel; and turns its peace, and its invitation, and its kindness, into the elements of a ministry still more awakening, than any which has nought but the threats and the terrors of legality to sustain it. And you who have hitherto withstood all that is tremendous in the thoughts of the fierceness of Almighty God—some even of you may be drawn to do Him homage, when you look to the embassy of love that He sent by His Son into the world; and, more especially, when you see that the great barrier of separation is now taken down, and that a high way of conversion has been opened for you all through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

SERMON XV.

Danger of neglecting the Gospel.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.”—HEBREWS ii. 3.

WE recently observed, in discoursing on the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of Him crucified, that some were visited with an alarming sense of danger, and were long kept in a state of pain and of perplexity, and had much of disquietude upon their spirits—ere they found their way to a place of rest, or a place of enlargement. They had to describe a course of dark and strong agitation among the terrors of the law, ere they arrived at their secure haven among the

comforts of the gospel. And manifold is the recorded experience of those, on whose desolate hearts the light of the offered reconciliation never beamed—till they had been preyed upon for months and years, by the remorse of a coming guilt, by the dread of a coming vengeance.

But we further observed, that, though this was frequent in the history of conversions, it was far from universal. And why should it? There is a message of

pardon from heaven at our door ; and its very first demand upon us, is that we should give credit thereto. If any one claim upon us be preferable to another, surely it is the claim of Him who cannot lie, that we shall believe in His testimony. Are we to hold the truth of God at abeyance, aye and until we have walked some round of mental discipline and experience, that may liken the history of our translation from darkness unto light, to that of some fellow-mortal who has gone before us ? Are we to postpone our faith in an actual report, brought to us from the upper sanctuary, till we have brought the frame of our spirits to its right adjustment, by having travelled over a course of certain feelings and certain fluctuations ? Meanwhile let us recollect, that an embassy from Heaven is waiting to be heard ; that it is charged with the tidings of an atonement for sin where-with God is satisfied, if we are but satisfied ; that we lie under a peremptory invitation to look unto Christ and be saved ; and that overtures of peace and of forgiveness are before us, of which we are expressly bidden to entertain and to close with them.

This is a light, in which the gospel hath dawned upon some at the very outset of their religious earnestness ; and no sooner did it so shine upon them than they rejoiced. The earliest morning of their Christianity arose in gladness—so that they were scarcely sensible of any tempestuous passage midway, from the peace of nature to the peace of the gospel. The call to believe, they felt to be imperative ; and coming as it did with what they were made to recognise as a voice of authority, it permitted not the lapse of a single day, between the conviction that they were great sinners, and the consolation that Christ was a great Saviour. They felt that they had no right to suspend their assurance in the truth of what God said, till they had completed a given period of sighing and of sorrowing, because of their unworthiness. And so, they drew almost instantly to the tidings of great joy, that there is salvation for all who will ; and of course they as instantly became joyful. Their transition seems to have been immediate, from a state of ungodliness to a sense of God as their recon-

ciled Father. Some, in the process of being alive unto God, are made first alive to Him as their offended judge ; and then alive to Him as their friend, whose anger has been turned away, and who has nought towards them but thoughts of peace and of great kindness. Others again arrive at this without any stepping-stone. They are drawn at once by the cords of love, without being driven by the terrors of the law. Instead of being awakened by the thunders of its violated authority, they are awakened, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, by a music of sweeter and softer utterance, that breathes peace on earth and goodwill even to the guiltiest of all its generations.

Now we should not object to any one individual who is here present being so awakened. Let the habit and history of his life up to this moment have been what they may, we could not forbid that he should now look to the amplitude and the freeness of the gospel offer, and therein rejoice. Though never visited till now, with one thought of practical seriousness towards God—yet even now is it competent for him, to meet the Father of his spirit and count on a Father's tenderness. We ask not one moment of distrust or despondency at his hand ; and should like it rather, that, sunken though he be in the depths of spiritual lethargy, he were aroused therefrom, not by the appalling denunciations of vengeance, but by the sounds of jubilee, and the proclaimed welcome from Heaven of a God waiting to be gracious. We know that there is a peace where there is no peace ; and better than this sleep of death, where the disturbance of loud and perpetual alarm, from which there might be no respite to the sinner, till forced to betake himself to the alone effectual hiding-place. But better most assuredly still, that you saw the hiding-place to be open now ; and that, without the interval of a single moment, you now fled for refuge there, and that the soul had no sooner broken loose from the tranquillity of nature, than it instantly fastened on the anchor of a hope that was more sure and steadfast. At this rate there would be no reason of intermediate dreariness. Converts would experience now, what was oft experienced

in the days of the apostles. Their belief would instantly come in the train of the gospel testimony—and their joy would instantly come in the train of their belief. The glad tidings of the new Testament would have precisely the same effect upon their spirit, with any other glad tidings. It would simply make them glad; and so, without the gloom or the agitation or the terror through which many have to pass, might there be a direct hold on the promises of scripture,—the settled peacefulness of a heart, that has found its rest and its dependence under the canopy of the accepted mediatorship.

We know that there are some who apprehend a danger in making the salvation of the gospel too accessible—who think that it ought not thus to be cheapened down to a level with any of those common beauties of nature, to the free participation of which all are welcome—who would demand in every instance a course of preceding terror, ere the disciple shall reach the triumph or the tranquillity of Faith—who feel as if it were due to the vindication of God's dignity as a Lawgiver, that every believer shall be solemnized into a more awful sense of the evil of sin, than he is likely to attain, by an easy and immediate transition from a state of wrath to a state of acceptance—and who, for this purpose, would have him to undergo the chastening of a legal discipline, during which he might taste the bitterness of remorse; and be left for a season to mourn or tremble under the hidings of God's offended countenance. Now we dispute not that this is one, and a very common way, in which the law acts as a schoolmaster for bringing men to Christ. Yet it is not the invariable way. And still we affirm, that the gospel cannot be trusted in too soon; and that men cannot give up too early their doubt and their unbelief in the truth of Heaven's communication; and that the more quickly we are rid of all suspense, in regard to God's own testimony, the better—or in other words, the more shortly that the period of dread and disturbance comes to an end, and the sooner we thus arrive at the tranquillity of the Christian faith, the more prompt and therefore the more

pleasing is the homage that we render unto God's faithfulness.

And there is nought in the freeness of the gospel, that should cheapen or degrade the honours of the law. For in reference to those who do accept the offer of its immunities, Christ hath made ample provision for all their offences and indignities against the law of God, by taking upon Himself the burden of their atonement. And in reference to those who decline the offer, against them the law still reserves the right of its entire vindication. Those penalties, which, by fleeing to Christ, they might have evaded, will all be discharged upon them; and the frown of offended majesty will gather into tenfold darkness, because, to the provocation of a broken commandment, they have added the further provocation of a despised and rejected amnesty. Their first blow was at the sceptre of Heaven's authority; and for this they have incurred condemnation. Their second blow is at the sceptre of Heaven's clemency; and for this they seal their condemnation, and make it irreversible. It is most true, that, by the constitution of the gospel, there is a free and willing dispensation of mercy to all who will; and the vilest of sinners may at the instant, set himself down under the shadow of it, and be safe. Some have listened to its call, and the law has not been degraded by their justification—for in the person and sacrifice of Christ, the noblest of all indemnities has been rendered to it. And many have been unheeding of the call, and neither in them has the law been degraded or brought to shame—for the justice of God will only burn the more fiercely, because the voice of His compassion has been lifted up in vain. In very proportion to the tenderness of that slighted call which came forth from the mercy-seat, will be the force and the power of that anger which shall descend from the throne of judgment on the still unreclaimed hosts of the rebellious. The more rich the provision of grace is, the more fell and hopeless will be the condemnation of those guilty, who have spurned it away from them. If the herald of forgiveness have made full and open proclamation, the executioner of vengeance who comes after him, will on

that account break forth in the uttermost of his fury on all whom he finds to be still standing on the ground of defiance. Should the sacredness of God have appeared to let itself down by a proposal of fellowship with sinners,—tremendous will be the reaction of His offended dignity on those sinners, who shall refuse to entertain it. The very greatness of the offered deliverance will be the sorest aggravation to the doom of those who have met it with repulse and indignity—for how can they escape, when they neglect so great a salvation?

Such an economy is at one with the most familiar and recognized principles that are current in human society. The man who has been insulted and defrauded by another, and has suffered the provocation of many sore and repeated injuries at his hand, is admitted to have a direct claim of redress and reparation. But should he forbear the prosecution of the claim—should he, in the tenderness of his nature towards the individual who had aggrieved him, stifle the vindictive propensities of his heart, and give way to a pitying sensation in behalf of himself and his family—should he, by a movement of generosity, hold out the right hand of fellowship, and assure the author of all his wrongs, that still his only desire was for peace, and his only purposes were those of yet unquelled kindness and regard for him—should he, though the offended party, come down so far as to entreat a reconciliation; and to protest, in the voice of a suppliant, his readiness to forgive all and to forget all—Who among you does not feel from the workings of his own bosom, that, though it were possible to stand out the provocation of direct and multiplied offences, yet to stand out the provocation of trampling under foot the despised and derided clemency that has been so generously awarded may not be possible? The malice, and the calumny, and the injustice of the man, may all be borne with; but the contempt, and the carelessness wherewith he hears of the offered pardon, or eyes the advances of a wished-for and attempted reconciliation—this cannot be borne with. The power of sufferance may have been tried beyond the limit of that uttermost compression whereof it is capable—but when at length it does break

forth in the might of its elasticity; and overleaps all those barriers of restraint, within which the angry passions of nature lay struggling, as in the bosom of a volcano—who does not see that the patience and the long-suffering, which were in the mind of the long unwearied benefactor, and above all the message of forgiveness which proceeded from his lips—who does not see that these are the very causes which enhance the guilt of the scorner, the very elements which bring the most overwhelming discharge upon him?

And this is the very evolution which takes place under the economy of the gospel. You are now beseeched by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. In a little while, and you may run to hide yourselves from the wrath of the Lamb. To-day, if you will hear his voice, the goodness of God would lead you unto repentance. But if, in the hardness of thine impenitent heart, the touch of a practical impulse be quite unfelt by you, then is there another day which is called the day of the righteous judgments of God. There is not a hearer now present, who is not honestly invited to kiss the Son while He is in the way—but, along with the invitation, he must also take the alternative, that time is short; and the way of reconciliation will soon be closed against him; and the Son of God, instead of being found in that way, will be seated on a throne of judgment, whence His wrath shall speedily begin to burn against all who have failed compliance with Him. You have first set at nought the authority of the law; but this is a controversy that might still be settled. But if you now set at nought the grace of the gospel, this will be the consummation of your injuriousness towards God, and the breach between Him and you will be wholly irreparable. You first took from Him the tables of a holy commandment, and these to your own condemnation, you have broken. He then stretched forward the olive branch of forgiveness; and you, by your unconcern, may now lay upon it the most degrading mockery. It is this which gives the force and the operation of a two-edged sword to the preaching of the gospel; and, while the savour of life unto life to all who will, it is this which

makes it the savour of death unto death to all who will not. In proportion as the unrelenting sinner is plied now with the looks and the language of tenderness, will he have to brook then the glances of a fiery indignation; and that grace which were sufficient here to efface the whole guilt wherewith his nature is so deeply and inveterately tainted, will, if turned away from, but aggravate there the reproach and the reckoning of a God of vengeance.

You may now see how it is that the law and the gospel, instead of thwarting or obliterating each other in the exercise of their respective functions, reflect on the provinces of both the greatest possible force of illustration. In looking towards them, we may say with the apostle, behold then the goodness and the severity of God; and, instead of these in a state of conflict, each, by every new exercise, strengthening that wall of demarcation by which the territory of the other is guarded from all violence. Should a sinner, pursued by the terrors of the one, take refuge among the promises of the other—he does not therefore defraud the law of its challengeable rights; but renders to it, in fact, the greatest possible homage, by bowing unto Him, who, in honour of the law, bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. Or, if the sinner stand out in defiance to the threat of the law, and be alike indifferent to the promise of the gospel—then does the latter still leave him in the hands of the former. The gospel does not strip the law of a single prerogative; and, instead of harbouring the renegade who would trample upon both, the rejected mercy of the one unites with the incensed justice of the other, in giving tenfold force to the penalties of a broken commandment.

But Nature is alike blind to the reality of both. In the gospel, it takes no delight; and, from the law, it finds no disturbance. The voice of remorse, and the voice of mercy, are alike unheeded. The open gates of Hell and of Heaven, which lie on the other side of death, are hidden, as if by an impalpable screen, from the eye of the senses; and with every man who is still unawakened, they are equally hidden from his spiritual eye. One might conceive, that, by a partial unfolding of the screen, the way which leadeth from

this world to the place of the accursed opened first on the view of the beholder; and then should we witness conscious guilt in its state of remorse and restlessness and alarm—till the screen had been further unfolded; and the way that leadeth to the place of the redeemed, floating with the signals of invitation, and announcing itself to be accessible to all, stood revealed to the eye of the earthly traveller. And this is a process that is oft exemplified on those, who are called out of darkness into marvellous light. But often, too, the intercepting veil is at once lifted away; and both the danger and the deliverance are made palpable alike to the soul, now ushered for the first time into a scene of manifestation; and no sooner are the thunders of an enraged law heard by the spiritual ear, than are heard along with it the glad tidings and assurances of the gospel; and, with both in your full contemplation at once, might you be urged to a choice between the death and the life that are set forth evidently before you. They are both placed beside each other in the text, which suggests to the reader, at one and the same time, the greatness of the ruin, and the greatness of the deliverance therefrom. It makes a dread of the one, the instrument for shutting up unto the other; and urges the alternative of the coming wrath, as the reason on which we ought to flee to the hope set before us in the gospel. For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

And it is observable, that the purpose for which the greatness of the salvation is here argued, is to vindicate a heavier doom on all those who shall live and die in the negligence thereof. After such an offer being rejected, their blood remaineth on their own heads. God wipeth His hands of them; and what more, may He well say, could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it? Had there been no way of escape pointed out to you, it might not have been so easy to answer the complaints of the sinner against God. But now that a way at once so palpable and so free has been provided, and provided too for all under the economy of the gospel—when, in lack of all righteousness of his own, the righteousness of Christ is held out even to the chief of sinners, that

he may put it on and appear before God invested in its honours and crowned with its everlasting rewards—when invited, as he most truly and tenderly is, to wash out his guilt in the blood of a satisfying atonement; and delivered at once from the fear and the shame of an accusing conscience, to walk in the land of the living with the erect confidence of him who never had offended—when plied with the demonstrations of a Father's love, that hath been made to beam upon the world from a Saviour's countenance, and to descend upon it in softest utterance from a Saviour's lips—when the oath, and the protestation, and the assurance of welcome and goodwill, and the widely-sounding call of look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved; when these are hung out to view in the indelible record of God's own testimony—when He hath thus embarked, and in the sight too of men and of angels, the credit of His honesty, on the fulfilment of the promise, that, if you will but close with Christ and accept of Him as He is offered to you in the gospel, you will receive along with Him an unfailing protection upon earth and a blissful eternity in Heaven—when things of mighty import as these are rung from sabbath to sabbath in your hearing; and every day of the week solicit your notice, through bibles or ministers or the various remembrancers of Him who hath not left Himself without a witness in the world—O tell us how you can pass through the ordeal of the coming judgment, if it shall be found, that, deaf and listless and wilful in the midst of all these encouragements, you still would grovel in the depths of your own sin and your own sordidness—moved by no terror in the threats of vengeance, and by no allurements in the offered friendship of God.

And what is it that makes you feel so reckless and so bravely independent? Do you really think yourselves in a state which it will do to die in? Would no misgiving sense of unpreparedness come over your heart, did you but once find yourselves in good earnest on the margin of eternity? Can you seriously imagine of God's law, that its honours can be compromised—or of God himself, that He can be mocked with impunity by a creature who his whole life long has

turned him to his own way? Tell us, honestly, whether the peace of your now deep and settled unconcern, is that of a man who has blinked the question of his eternity, and so left it unresolved—or that of a man who has sifted and scrutinized it in all its bearings, and at length placed it on the footing that will rightly uphold him in security through life, and keep him firm and undismayed under the agonies of his death-bed? What! can you lay your hand upon your heart, and say that there is nothing there which might well make the death and the judgment and the eternity to be thoughts of fearfulness; or bold in the sense of your own integrity, could you now stand the reckoning of a Holy God without a gospel and without a Saviour? Are you not aware of sin, that it has deranged the whole of the relationship between you and God; and is it not true that this is the strong though secret jealousy, under which you would fain escape the contemplation of His presence or tremble at the thought of Him as of an enemy who was armed to destroy you? And whether is it for Him the offended party, or for you the offender, to find out the adjustment of this sore controversy; and to dictate the terms and the treaty of reconciliation? Or, should He, in pity to our fallen world, stoop from the heights of His affronted majesty, and again beckon to His own realms of love and of purity its hapless wanderers—tell me is it for you to quarrel with that path of access which He has prescribed, or strong in the testimony of an unappalled conscience, to say that you want no salvation and stand in need of no mediatorship.

But we cannot think of any here present, that, with minds thus made up, they can bid their whole-hearted defiance to the invitations of the gospel. They do know that all is not right about them. They do feel that many are the bible texts which look hard at them. They are aware of God as a Lawgiver; and how it is that He can both be just and a Saviour, is a knot of difficulty in their minds, which, till resolved, leaves the question of their eternity at abeyance. There is the impression of a barrier between Him who sitteth on the throne and their own persons, which to them at least

is insuperable. And perhaps at one time or other, the thought may have come over their hearts—what a mighty enlargement were this barrier done away and the sore burden of this heavy and helpless alienation were disposed of, and all remembrance of our sins were expunged for ever, and the gate of a secure and blissful Heaven were open to receive us, and we heard the shouts of welcome gratulation on bending our footsteps thitherward. What a contrast to the things and the influences which are now around us, could we find it only thus—and we, in full and confident march to immortality, knew the Saviour to be our friend, and God to be rejoicing over us. Well then my brethren; and is this the translation into a state of betterness that your fancy ever dwelt upon, and has longed to realise? This thing on which you are so intensely set, is the very thing that the gospel hath spread out before you. By what mistake is it, that you and the gospel of Jesus Christ have not found their way to each other sooner?

What you so vehemently wish, He hath accomplished. His right arm hath brought for you the whole of this salvation; and now it is finished, and lies ready at this moment for your acceptance. Why stand you thus in vain and fruitless aspirations, after a matter that is already secured—and which now you are simply invited to lay hold of? Grant that you are a sinner above all the sinners on the face of the earth—still the blood of Christ overmatches the virulence of your guilt; and the open path of access that He has consecrated, you also are welcome to walk upon; and God who waiteth to be gracious, only waiteth for your trust in His mercy through the atonement of the cross, that he may treat you mercifully. And even now may you strike an agreement with the God whom you have offended; and make a final escape from all future vengeance, and from all your present forebodings, by fleeing for refuge unto Christ Jesus and laying hold of His great salvation.

SERMON XVI.

The relation of the Law to the Gospel.

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”—ROMANS. x. 4.
 “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned.”—1 TIMOTHY i. 5.

I. THE law of God may be viewed in a twofold aspect—either as that by which, when we imbibe the virtues that it enjoins, we build up and beautify a personal character; or as that by which, when we satisfy the demands that it prefers, we acquire a title both to the full enjoyment of its rewards and to a full exemption from its penalties. There is a distinction here, which, if steadily kept in view, would, we are persuaded, prove a safeguard, both against the errors of legality, and the equally pernicious errors of antinomianism. The subject is truly an important one; for we reckon, that the whole economy of the gospel is pervaded by it—nor can we think of a likelier expedient for the illustration of the evangelical system, than just to lay hold of

the distinction that we have now announced in its principle, and then follow it out into its legitimate applications.

First then, when the law is viewed in relation to the righteousness which constitutes the title to its rewards; then, when we strive to make this out by our own obedience, the aim is to possess ourselves of a legal right to the kingdom of Heaven. It is our object to render an adequate price for that glorious inheritance; and that the value given in the worth of our performances, shall be equal to the value received, in the worth of that eternal blessedness which we labour to realise. We proceed on the imagination of a contract between God and man—whereof the counterpart terms are a fulfilment of the law's requisitions upon the one side.

and a bestowment of the law's rewards upon the other. The one is the purchase money—the other is the payment. They stand related to each other, as work does to wages. Obedience is the allotted task—Heaven is the stipulated hire. When this is the conception present to the mind, the going about to establish our own righteousness, is just going about to establish our own right to immortal happiness. And like as the servant who hath accomplished his term or his task, can challenge from his master on earth the covenanted recompense—so it is figured by many, that, after the course of virtue in this life is ended, he who hath acquitted himself of its achievements and its toils, may challenge from his Master in Heaven that everlasting life, which under the law of "do this and live," is held out as the reward of obedience.

Now this spirit of legality, as it is called, is nearly the universal spirit of humanity. It is not Judaism alone, it is Nature. They are not the Israelites only who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. The very same thing may be detected among the religionists of all countries and all ages. Their cleaving and constant tendency is to bargain for heaven by their services—nor can they easily rid themselves of this mercantile imagination. When they attempt a career of righteousness, it is to establish a right. It is to win their salvation by merit—just as any labourer wins the remuneration that he has wrought for. It is to constitute a claim, which they might prefer at the court of the Divine Lawgiver, in plea of payment—and which payment is held to consist, in the favour of God; and admission to those realms of bliss, where He reigns and holds unceasing jubilee, among the choirs and companies of the celestial. This is the obstinate tendency of nature, charged in the Apostle's days on the ignorance of the Israelites—but certainly such an ignorance, as mere doctrine or mere information cannot dissipate. There is in fact a legal disposition in the heart, which keeps its ground against all the articles and demonstration of orthodoxy; and, long after that jurisprudence hath made most clear and conclusive argument of the utter shortness of human virtue, yet

will man as if by the bias of a constitutional necessity, recur to the old legal imagination, of this virtue being a thing of desert, and of Heaven being the reward which is due to it.

And certain it is, that for man to establish a right by his righteousness, is in the face of all jurisprudence. When this is the object after which he strives, he indeed spends his labour after that which is nought—wearing and wasting himself on a thing which is impracticable. If there be one character of the law of God more distinct and more declared than another, it is the resolute, the unbending assertion which it makes of its own authority; and, in virtue of which, it will stoop to no compromise with human disobedience. There is in this respect, a high state and sovereignty in the divine government, from which it is impossible that it ever can descend. There might in some other way be acceptance for the sinner; but never by the admission of the sinner's right to the rewards of a law which he hath violated. This is a position, which, whether in the dispensation of the Old or in the dispensation of the New Testament, never once is receded from. Both the law and the gospel alike disown man's legal right to the rewards of eternity; and if he be too proud to disown it himself, he remains both a victim of condemnation by the one, and a helpless a hopeless outcast from the mercy of the other. If man will persist, as nature strongly inclines him, in seeking to make out a title-deed to Heaven by his own obedience, then that obedience must be perfect,—else there is a flaw in the title-deed, which is held to be irreparable. It is thus that the law of Heaven looks down upon Earth, in the firm the unfaltering aspect of its own inflexibility; and that if man seeks, in establishing a righteousness, to establish a right—it forthwith becomes a question of equity; and the principles of strict, absolute, unchanging equity, are brought rigidly and relentlessly to bear upon him. On the moment that the element of a right is introduced into the question between God and man; then man instead of suing for Heaven in the attitude of a petitioner for mercy, is demanding it in the attitude of a claimant

for justice—and the law accepts of his challenge upon his own terms. The two parties are confronted together on the ground of equity and truth; and the matter will be decided on considerations proper to that ground, and upon no other. If man, on the one hand, have presumptuously lifted himself up to a claim, that is above the merits of his obedience—the law, on the other hand, will not, on that account, let itself down beneath the level of its own demands and its own declarations. Man hath braved the combat upon an arena of his own choosing; and it is by the rules of that arena, that his fate must be determined. He hath appealed unto Cæsar, and to Cæsar he must go. He hath made mention of his right; and, by the very term, he hath committed his cause to a tribunal of justice. He hath sisted himself before God as a lawgiver—even the God who says that He will not be mocked; and that the law which hath proceeded out of his mouth, can no more be nullified or brought to shame, than can the truth and righteousness of the Godhead.

It is thus, that, in seeking to establish a right by his righteousness, he finds that even if he have but committed one sin—there is the barrier of what may be called a moral necessity in his way, which it is impossible to force. The God who cannot lie, cannot recall the utterance which Himself hath made against the children of iniquity; and He hath denounced a curse, upon every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of His law to do them. And so it is that every sinner who goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, is either borne down by the misgivings of a conscience which only serves to haunt and paralyze him; or he lives at ease, because living in the delusion of a vain and groundless security. For one of two things must happen. Either with a high and therefore a just conception of the standard of the law, he will be dispirited and sink into despair; or with a low conception of that standard, he, though but grovelling among the mere decencies of civil life or the barren formalities of religious service, will aspire no farther and yet count himself safe.

Now herein lies the grand peculiarity of the gospel. It pronounces on the utter

insignificance of all that man can do for the establishment of his right to the kingdom of Heaven; and yet, he must be somehow or other provided with such a right, ere that he can find admittance there. It holds out eternal life to him, not on the footing of a simple gratuity—but in return for, and on the consideration of a righteousness. His own righteousness it most pointedly and peremptorily refuses to entertain as that consideration; and makes throughout all its pages, the total the unqualified denial of the efficacy of human virtue, when directed to the end of substantiating upon its own merits a title or a legal claim to the rewards of immortality. This no doubt was one great and primary end of the law—even that man, by the fulfilment of its requisitions, might obtain for himself a right to its rewards. But this end of the law, man hath hopelessly frustrated by his own disobedience. He hath entirely forfeited the right; and he cannot re-establish it, with all his strenuousness. And yet he would fain make the trial. It is that to which nature is constantly prompting him. There is an inveteracy in the legal spirit—so that it remains unquelled by the declarations of the gospel from without, however responded to from within, by the depositions of a conscience, that cannot but feel the shortness and the insufficiency of all our obedience. It is in opposition to this legal spirit, that the worthlessness, the absolute nullity of all human virtue, is, in the records of the evangelical dispensation, affirmed so constantly; and that the same doctrine is so zealously repeated, by the faithful and orthodox ministers of that dispensation. That righteousness of his own, where-with man would proudly array and set himself forward as a claimant for Heaven, the Bible, with all honest and fearless expounders of the Bible, pronounces upon as filthy rags; and nothing can exceed the terms of degradation, in which it stigmatizes, nay vilifies all human righteousness, when ought like a right is founded thereupon.

Still without the investiture of a legal right, man obtains no part nor possession in the inheritance above. It is not by an act of mercy alone, that the gate of Heaven is opened to the sinner. With his entry there, there is in some way or

other, a merit associated. It is not enough that he appears with a petition at the bar of mercy. He must be furnished with a plea, which he can state at the bar of justice—not, it would appear, the plea of his own deservings, which we have already found that the gospel holds no terms with, and therefore with a plea, founded solely and exclusively on the deservings of another. Now what we reckon to be the very essence of the gospel, is the report which it brings to a sinful world of a solid and satisfying plea; and that every sinner is welcome to the use of it. In defect of his own righteousness, which he is required to disown, as having any part in his meritorious acceptance with God, he is told of an everlasting righteousness which another has brought in; and which he is invited, nay commanded, to make mention of. It is thus that Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness, that is for justifying righteousness, or for a righteousness which gives a right to him who possesses it. This end of the law we have fallen short of; for we could have only achieved it for ourselves by our perfect and un-failing obedience. Christ therefore hath achieved it for us. He hath for us, by his sacrifice, borne the penalties of the law. He hath for us, by his obedience, won the rewards of the law. And, by the constitution of the gospel, every one who believeth is on this high vantage ground. He is as much exempted from the denounced vengeance of a broken law, as if in his own person he had already borne it. He is as much secured in the stipulated recompense of an observed law, as if in his own person he had rendered a full and faultless observation. He has attained an interest in the righteousness of Christ by faith; and with this he has attained the end of the law for righteousness.

And so this righteousness by faith, is the frequent, the favourite theme, of evangelical ministers. It may indeed be called the Shibboleth of their preaching. They are men who exalt to the uttermost the righteousness by faith. And they are men who degrade to the uttermost the righteousness by works. But let it be distinctly kept in view, that it is in respect of its sufficiency for the establishment of a valid right to Heaven that they exalt

the one—and only in respect of its insufficiency for the establishment of this right, that they so depreciate the other.—And this, not because, as many do imagine, of the low; but truly because of the high estimation in which virtue is held by them. They first look to the law, that pure and perfect exemplar of all righteousness—and there they learn what a noble and elevated and perfect thing, is that morality which it prescribes to us. They then look to the actual state of human obedience; and just in proportion to their lofty estimation of virtue in itself, is their lowly estimation of virtue in man. It is just because so alive to the worth of virtue, that they are so alive to the worthlessness of man; and the higher their regards are cast towards its supreme excellency, the lower must actual humanity appear in their eyes, as beneath the standard from which human virtue has so immeasurably fallen. They have indeed a very humble reckoning of what men are, but only because they have a very exalted reckoning of what men ought to be; and, so far from these advocates for the righteousness of faith having lost all sense of morality or of its importance, they have fled to this righteousness as their only refuge, just because a reverence for morality exists so purely and so sacredly in their bosoms. Why is it, that they prefer that righteousness of Christ which faith trusts in, as their only argument for Heaven, to that righteousness of man which is yielded by the obedience of works, and on which so many would found as their pretention and their plea for the rewards of Heaven's blessedness? It is just because they see perfection in the one righteousness, and pollution in the other—in the one an adequate tribute to the sovereignty of the law, and therefore a full and finished right to its rewards; in the other all the worthlessness of a lame and imperfect offering, and on which therefore no right can be alleged without violence to the law's incensed dignity. These surely are not the men, among whom all sense of morality lies extinct and prostrate in their bosoms. There appears rather to be the very strength and spirit of a moral essence in that doctrine which they hold; and it seems the fruit of their more adequate homage to the law, that, under the

feeling of their own distance and deficiency therefrom, they have laid hold upon Christ as the end of the law for righteousness.

II. But this though one, is not the only end of the law. It had another and a distinct object, from that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a right to its promised rewards—even that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a rightness of character, in the cultivation and the exercise of its bidden virtues. The legal right which obedience confers is one thing. The personal rightness which obedience confers is another. For the first object the law has now become useless; and, having fallen short of personal righteousness ourselves, we must now find our legal right only in the righteousness of Christ. For the latter object, the law still retains all the use and all the importance which it ever had. It is that written tablet, on which are inscribed the virtues of the Godhead; and we, by copying these on the tablet of our own characters, are restored to the image of Him who created us. We utterly mistake the design and economy of the gospel, if we think—that, while the first function of the law has been superseded under the new dispensation, the second has been superseded also; or because the penalties of our old disobedience are now done away, the precepts of our new obedience are therefore dispensed with. Obedience for a legal right is everywhere denounced in the New Testament, as a presumptuous and vain enterprise. Obedience for a personal rightness, is everywhere urged in the New Testament, as an enterprise, the prosecution of which forms the main business of every disciple; and the full achievement of which is that prize of his high calling, to which he must press forward continually. For the one end, the law has altogether lost its efficacy; and we, in our own utter inability to substantiate its claims, must seek to be justified only by the righteousness of Christ. For the other end, the law retains its office as a perfect guide and exemplar of all virtue; and we, empowered by strength from on high to follow its dictates, must seek to be sanctified by the transference of its bidden godliness, and its bidden

charity, and its bidden uprightness, upon our own characters. Human virtue hath ceased, under the economy of grace, to be the price of Heaven—for this power it lost, and lost irrecoverably, by its ceasing to be perfect. But human virtue is still the indispensable preparation for Heaven; and we, helped from the sanctuary above, to struggle with all the imperfections of our corrupt and carnal nature below, must, by a life of prayer and painstaking and all duteous performance, make way through the frailties and temptations of our sinful state in time, to a meetness for the joys of that endless inheritance which is beyond it. It is no longer the purchase-money, by which to buy your right of entry or admittance into the marriage supper of the Lamb. But it is the wedding garment, without which you will never be seated among the beauties of that glorious and immortal festival. To be meet in law, and without violence done to the jurisprudence of Heaven, we must be invested by faith with the righteousness of Christ. To be meet in character, and without offence or violence to the spirit or the taste of Heaven's society, we must be invested with the graces of our own personal righteousness.

But thus it is, that the ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ have been so grievously misunderstood. They strenuously affirm of human virtue, that it has no place in our title-deed to the Jerusalem above. And therefore, they have been charged with denying it that place, which it invariably and essentially has in the hearts and natures of all who enter therein. Because they have disjoined it from the legal claim, the imagination is that they have also disjoined it from the personal character—or because not permitted to be set forth and blazoned in a title-deed, that therefore it needs not by their theology, to have a residence or a being in the souls of believers.

And not only have these faithful expounders of the New Testament been charged with hostility to the cause of personal righteousness; but the New Testament itself has been charged with inconsistency upon this subject. There is a felt puzzle in the minds of men, in consequence of its apparently opposite representations on the importance of good

works, and on the place and consideration which they should be made to occupy in the system of the gospel—denounced at one time as insignificant and worthless, demanded at another as indispensable to all true discipleship. The explanation is, that they are available for one end, but they are unavailable for another. They avail not for justification. They are inseparable from sanctification. They confer no right to the favour of God; but they enter as constituents into that rightness, without which no man shall see His face. They now possess no importance whatever in the covenant between God and man. They still possess a supreme importance in the character of both—the just and beneficent works of the Deity, being the fruits or the emanations of His innate personal righteousness; and our works of the same or a similar kind, being in like manner the fruits of that inborn personal righteousness, which, imprint upon us by the Holy Spirit, renews us after the image, and fits us for the everlasting society of Him who created us. The works of a believer are short of perfection; and therefore short of that end for which the law is now superseded, and Christ is substituted in its place—even the end of making good our right by our righteousness.

But the works of every believer are growing up, and carrying him forward to perfection; and, for this end, the law still retains the office of a guide and of a stimulant—even the end of making good a seemly and a suitable character, for that land of perfect love and perfect sacredness, where the servants of God for ever serve Him. We never can by our most strenuous observation of the law, arrive at a juridical or a forensic right to Heaven. But it is just by our observation of the law, as a law of piety, and purity, and equity, and kindness, that we arrive at that personal righteousness, which makes us meet for Heaven's exercises and Heaven's joys—the exercises of a morality that is then faultless, the joys of a then complete and unsullied virtue. Virtue, when regarded as composing that assemblage of personal qualities which we must carry with us to Heaven, has all the paramount importance which it ever had. And so while

by one passage of the New Testament, the law in reference to the former end is set aside, and Christ put in its room—by another passage, the law in reference to the latter end is retained; and we accordingly read, that “the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”

We have deemed it necessary to say thus much in vindication, for the advocates and expounders of that system which is commonly known by the name of “the evangelical.” They are still much misconceived and misrepresented in general society—as men whose preaching is injurious to the cause of good morals, and whose doctrine sheds a withering mildew over the virtues of our population. Their doctrine is manifestly popular; but the imagination of many is, that this is because impunity and indulgence for sin are popular. Even the semblance of a pure moral indignation does mix itself occasionally with this antipathy to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and so forms part of that subtle delusion, which alienated from evangelical preaching, the respect of many of the most intelligent, as well as the patronage of the most influential in our land.

Let us conclude these remarks with two distinct particulars. First, then, know, that the legal right is what you cannot work for; but that in the gospel of Jesus Christ it is freely offered for your acceptance. The very essence, we apprehend, of the gospel, lies in this offer. We there read of the gift of righteousness; or that gift, by which there is conveyed to you, the privilege of a rightful admittance into Heaven. Be assured that you waste your efforts on a hopeless impracticability, when you labour to win this privilege for yourselves. Receive Christ by faith; and lay a confident hold on the propitiation made by that Saviour, who “became sin for you although he knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

But, secondly—having thus secured what the apostle in one passage calls the end of the law; count it your unceasing business, to labour for what the apostle in another passage calls the end of the

commandment. Though the law has ceased as a covenant, it has not ceased as a rule of life. Though it can no longer be the instrument by which you shall obtain a legal plea for Heaven, it is still the instrument by which you shall obtain that preparation which is as indispensable as a plea—even the preparation of Heaven's character and of Heaven's virtue. Greatly do they mistake the whole design and economy of the gospel, who think that it brings any exemption from the services of righteousness along with it. There is, in truth, a busier and a more abundant service than before; and the only distinction is, that, whereas under the one dispensation you served in the oldness of the letter, under the other dispensation you serve in the newness of the spirit. The obedience now is of a more refined, and pure, and exalted character, than ever was obedience then. It is obedience altogether divested of that mercenary character, which never ceases to adhere to it, so long as viewed legally, it is regarded but as the term of a bargain. Instead of a constrained stipulation, it becomes a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty; and, proceeding as it does from the new taste and desire of a heart now emancipated from the bondage and the terror of a felt condemnation, it is as unlike to what it formerly was as the obedience of a seraph is un-

like to that of a slave. And be assured, that, unless this new obedience is entered on, you have no part nor interest in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel which bringeth salvation, bringeth a present salvation, as well as a future one; and they who are the subjects of it, are under promise of deliverance from the power of sin here, as well as have the assured prospect of deliverance from the punishment of sin hereafter. O let us then do honour to the faith that we profess, by our abounding in those fruits of righteousness which emanate therefrom. And never let gainsayers have to allege of that holy name by which we are called, that it is prostituted by those who wear it, into a license for iniquity. Let the faith of the gospel approve itself in our hearts, to bring along with it the charm and the efficacy of a new moral existence. And, in our individual case, let the mystery be realised of our not boasting in the works of the law as forming our rightful claim for Heaven, and yet of our having become the workmanship of God, and our being created in Christ Jesus unto good works—so as that they form the very business and ornament of our lives. Thus shall our light shine before men, and others seeing our good works shall glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

SERMON XVII.

On Faith and Repentance.

“Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”—ACTS XX. 21.

It has been made a great question among theologians, whether faith or repentance comes first? Now though, practically, faith on the one hand has a great influence upon repentance; and, on the other hand, repentance has also a great influence upon faith—yet we do not hold it indispensable to make a full settlement, or a full statement, in your hearing, of the order of precedency between them. Did we attempt fully to

propound this argument here, we should find that altogether it was a great deal too subtle for the pulpit; and we there fore satisfy ourselves for the present with the following deliverance. No man can begin either the work of faith, or the work of repentance, too soon; and he should not wait for the one, ere the other shall be entered on. There should be no putting off, for the sake of any adjustment of this sort. If told to believe,

he should stir up all that is in him—whether much or little—all that is already in him, that he might flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel. If told to repent, he should also stir up all that is in him, that he might haste and make no delay to keep the commandment. When he hears the tidings of great joy, his duty is to entertain them. When he hears the call of turning unto God, his as instant duty is to cease to do evil and learn to do well. We shall not therefore discuss the order of these two christian graces; but, falling in with the actual order set before us by the apostle in the text, present you, first with our observations on repentance towards God, and secondly with our observations on faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the same apostle, who, in describing how it was that he executed the message wherewith he had been entrusted, tells us of his having showed both to Jews and Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God and do works meet for repentance.

I. To repent of sin, is something more than to grieve for it. It is to turn from it. It is something more than to regret your sins—it is to renounce them. Repentance may begin with sorrow, but it does not end there. Sorrow of itself is not repentance; it only works repentance. And he alone fulfils this work, who gives up the evil of his doings, and enters with full purpose of heart on a life of new obedience.

We have just adverted to the question, whether faith or repentance comes first. And there has been another question stirred—which part of repentance comes first, or which part is it that comes before the other. Does it not first begin with the heart, and then take effect upon the history? Must not the work commence with the desires of the inner man; and then go forth in regular order, so as to tell on the deeds of the outer man?

And is it not preposterous, some have imagined, to urge on our hearers the palpable reformation of their conduct, ere we have made sure that a process of regeneration within has really been entered on? We answer, no; and we think that in this matter a sensitive and mis-

applied orthodoxy has done a great deal of mischief, and that the systems and speculations of theology have been often so conducted as greatly to embarrass and to cast entanglements on the practical work of christianization. What we have said before, we say again. As much as lies in them let every man believe as he can, and let every man also repent as he can. It is not preposterous, it is in the order of nature, and there is nothing contrary to it in the order of grace—that men should be called upon at the very outset of their repentance, and, as if it were the first footstep of their enterprise on which they had embarked, to give up the evil of their ways and the evil of their doings, and to put their palpable iniquities away from them. This plain business ought not to be suspended on any controversy, about what man can do, or what he cannot do. The terrors of the law can restrain a thief from open depredations; and why might he not be adjured by the terrors of the Lord, to give up his secret purloinings or his midnight robberies? The shame of exposure will keep many a transgressor from the indulgence of licentiousness in the face of day; and why might he not be told, on the dread solemnities of that coming judgment when many shall awaken to shame and everlasting contempt, to give up all the abominable works of darkness? If told of poison in the cup, however otherwise alluring to his taste, the most inveterate of drunkards would stay his ravenous appetite, and show he had the power to refrain from it; and why might not the same power be manifested and put forth, when told, that, by every new act of intoxication, he nourisheth within his heart the worm that dieth not—he kindles into greater fierceness that fire which never shall be quenched? If the prospect of the malefactor's cell, and the execution which follows, be that which terrifies many thousands in society from the perpetration of crimes against the state—might not the prospect of that living lake, the lake of agony and vengeance, into which all the children of iniquity will be cast, have the like effect in terrifying men from their disobedience and their daring criminalities against the majesty of Heaven's Lawgiver? In preaching repen-

tance then, let us strike an immediate blow, and sound an immediate alarm against all the deeds of human wickedness. We even now then, and without waiting for any order of precedency, as for principles first and performances afterwards—we even now call for such performances as ye can set your hand to; and that though, at the first shaking of the dry bones, we should behold nothing else than the deeds of an outward reformation. Still we bid, and that too their instant, their peremptory compliance, when we tell the thief to give up his depredations; and the drunkard to give up his riotous excesses; and the impure to give up his secret abominations; and the unfair dealer to give up his dishonesties; and the undutiful son or daughter to give up their contempt and disobedience of parents; and the liar to give up his falsehoods, and his frauds; and the swearer to give up his daring liberties with the name of God; and the sabbath-breaker to give up his no less daring liberties with the day of God—even that God, who, though he dwelleth in heaven, looketh down upon earth, alike jealous of his day and of his name. Against one and all of these iniquities, we would lift the trumpet and spare not. In reference to one and all of them, we say go and sin no more. There must be no delay, no parrying. It must be the speed of an instantaneous flight, like that of men running for their lives from the awful wrath of God, which is upon the soul of every one that doeth evil. If ye will not forsake these evil doings, the vengeance of Him, who is as a consuming fire will overtake you. Repent then even now of all this your wickedness, that is to say, renounce it—else there is not even the beginning of a good change upon you. From this moment cease to do evil, and learn to do works meet for repentance.

We are aware, there is a theology which undervalues these reformations. And the reason is that many are the thousands of human society, who stand in no need of being thus reformed; and yet stand chargeable with all the guilt of nature's enmity, and nature's indifference to God. They are neither fraudulent, nor intemperate, nor profane; but as little, on the other hand, are they godly,

or have they in them aught like the love of God, aught like a sense or a principle of godliness. What signifies, it may be thought, although the thief should give up his stealing, and the drunkard his habits of intoxication—if the whole effect of the change shall be to transform him into one of those decent moral well-living citizens, who still are but citizens of earth, taking no thought, and feeling no care, either about God or about eternity. But mark well a difference here; and if you ponder it aright, it may perhaps lead the orthodox among you, to have a higher respect than heretofore for that practical preaching,—the first note of whose trumpet, as it were, when sounding the proclamation to the workers of iniquity, is that that iniquity must be abandoned. Mark well we say the difference between the conscience-stricken man, who has ceased to be a drunkard, because the preacher spoke effectually to his conscience and to his fears—and the irreligious man who never was a drunkard, because his constitutional propensities never urged him to the habit, or his aversion to all that is disgraceful and unseemly kept him aloof from it. In the one case of sobriety, we admit that there may be nothing which one can hold to be of any religious value, or put to the account of religion at all. But in the other case of sobriety, it is religion and religion alone that has had to do with it. The man became sober, because the minister told him, and told him truly, that all drunkards should be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone—and he was frightened for his soul. There is all the difference in the world, between the man who has been sober all his days though he never thinks of God, and the man who has become sober because he is afraid of God—or between the man, who, constitutionally upright and temperate, never once trembled at the thought of hell; and the man who renounces his dissipations and his dishonesties, because this thought has been infixed into his heart by words uttered from the pulpit, and now pursues and agonises him like an arrow sticking fast.

It is this which makes a total difference between the two cases, between the one man's sobriety and the other man's so-

briety. In deed and in outward description, they form one and the same virtue; but in spirit and character, they are as unlike as possible. There is no religion in the one sobriety. The other sobriety is entered on, under the force of a religious consideration—in the spirit and under the visitation of a religious earnestness. The former is the sobriety of a man who never thinks either of heaven or of hell. The latter is like the first movement of one, who is fleeing from hell and seeking after heaven. It is the first footstep, as it were, of his christian education. God forbid that it should be considered as the whole of it, or that any trembling sinner should have the misfortune to sit under a minister, who can tell him no more than this of the way of salvation. He is but yet at the alphabet of christianity; and let him not learn the alphabet imperfectly, in our hurry to get him onward to the higher lessons of it. He has not yet entered into reconciliation with God; but look to the expression of our text “repentance *towards*”—he is moving towards God, and that is what the man of mere constitutional uprightness, or constitutional sobriety, is not at all thinking of. He is not yet a citizen of Zion; but leave his conscience to its workings, and let it tell in the reformation of its habits; and he is seeking towards Zion and his face is thitherwards. What he is now doing, and this you cannot say for the other, he is doing unto God. He who said, “a cup of cold water given to a disciple for his sake shall have its reward,” will not despise this day of small things. He will not break this bruised reed, nor quench this smoking flax; but at once pities, and is pleased, with this incipient effort of a trembling penitent—this shaking of his dry bones, however proud theology may scowl upon it. The science taught in our halls of divinity may find it a thing of difficult adjustment, and be at a loss what to make of the phenomenon—the external reformation of a man, not yet initiated for aught we know, even in the first principles of orthodoxy; but only, under the impulse of nature’s conscience and nature’s fears, awakening to a sense of his danger and his guilt, and breaking off from the sins and the profligacies of other days. Now what we say is—let

no embarrassment be thrown in that man’s way. Nay leave him alone, rather than that his activities should be overborne under the weight of our ponderous theological systems. Let him not be interrupted in the midst of his doings; nor the dread of legality freeze into a sort of suspended animation, that soul which was awakening in its own way to the reality of eternal things. Let no cabalistic orthodoxy put its restraints upon him—leading him and the world at large, to misapprehend the real character and design of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is to extirpate moral evil from the earth, and substitute in its place the reign of truth and charity and righteousness.

But the matter does not stop here. Though repentance begins thus, it does not end thus. Christianity is not satisfied with a mere work of external reformation; and, what is more, neither will the man’s own conscience be satisfied. Let his be but honest endeavours, and honest fears; and the unavoidable effect will be, that the more he does to obtain peace with his offended God, the more he feels the utter insufficiency of all his doings. The more he rises in his deeds of obedience to the law, the more the law rises in its demands upon him. He may have given up to drink, or to swear, or to speak evil of his neighbour, or to wander abroad in daring profanation on the sabbath; but he is deeply conscious, nay more conscious than ever, that he has not yet compassed the whole length and breadth of the divine commandments. What happened to Paul happens also to him—“But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” The meaning of this is, the commandment came—that is a sense of its purity, of its elevation, of its exceeding height above all the possibilities of human performance, now visited his heart; and this larger view of the commandment, gave him a larger view of his own exceeding distance and deficiency therefrom; and thus sin revived, or a sense of his own exceeding sinfulness was more alive and awake than ever in his bosom; and so he died, or felt more emphatically than ever that the law’s condemnation to death was upon him, and that he could not with all his efforts and all his aspirations, make his escape from it. It is well that he has put

the evil of his outward doings away from him. It is well, that, by the shaking of the dead bones, some larger clods, as it were, of earthliness and corruption, have thus been shaken off, and no longer adhere to him. It is very well that the matter has proceeded thus far; and that we can speak of this one external reformation, of that other literal work of obedience. But with all this, he may be a dead man still. The life of obedience may not be there. The love, without which a willing obedience is impossible, may be altogether wanting. The hand may have been compelled, under the influence of terror, to its reluctant task; but the heart refuses to go along with it. Still it is well, that, when the law, with the voice and authority of a school-master, told him to give up this one and that other disobedience, he obeyed the lesson and gave them up accordingly. But this is not the only lesson which the law gives him. It tells him of the uncanceled guilt of his past life, which he can make no atonement for. It tells him of a curse and of a condemnation, which, under the government of a righteous Sovereign, cannot be recalled. It tells him of its own sacredness—the sacredness of the law, and the dread majesty of the lawgiver. It reveals to him heights of obedience, which, to corrupt man, are inaccessible; and lets him know that, toil as he may beneath these heights, he, with all his pains and all his efforts, is but multiplying his transgressions, and becoming every day a deadlier offender than before. It reveals God to him as an enemy and an avenger; and yet bids him love this God—love the being, whom, with a just sense of his own sinfulness, he cannot but regard, as a strong man armed to destroy him.

We repeat it is well that the first lesson should have been listened to, and in some measure obeyed. It forms a sort of guarantee that the other lessons will be of effect also—that the man's conscience will become every day more tender—that he will see more and more of the perfection of God's law, and of his own guiltiness—that, in proportion as he multiplies his doings, he will be made more clearly to perceive the excess of the law's requirements above all that he can do; so that every new day swells

the account of his debt and of his deficiency; and, in spite of all his efforts, the conviction grows upon him—that he is a helpless and a hopeless outcast from the favour of God, and from the joys of a blissful eternity. And here the question comes, what is to be the end of this? It is clear that every thing the man does, but aggravates his despair. He is sinking deeper and deeper every day, into an abyss of despondency. His prospects become blacker with every attempt he makes to relieve himself—fighting as it were against a barrier through which he cannot make his way, while the penalties of an unfulfilled law rise like a wall of fire in threatening array against him. It is perfectly clear that with but the one lesson of repentance, there is no getting on. Repentance is a return to that law from which we had departed. But when the law wont recall its own threats of vengeance—it wont cancel its own long and fearful account against us—it wont look on and be silent, while we are taking on new debts; and by new delinquencies of thought word and deed, come day after day under a heavier reckoning and responsibility than before. The law is not of that supple pliant accommodating character, not of such a flexible and yielding disposition, so full of complaisance and facility and good-natured conivance—that, for the sake of our convenience, it will let down its own exactions; or become a precarious, nay a polluted thing, by lowering and suiting its precepts to our powers and possibilities of obedience. The law utterly refuses to make any half-way compromise of this sort. It insists, and that most rigidly, on its own terms; and if we have only the law to deal with, we see not how we can fling off the burden and the terror of this lawful deliverance from our own persons—"cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of this book to do them." If we have doings with no other party than the law, or with God viewed as a Lawgiver, we are truly placed in a most inextricable dilemma. If we have no other than one lesson to work at, even the lesson of repentance, which is merely coming back again to the law, we are fairly shut up, and that to endless and unescapable despair.

But, blessed be God, there is another party beside the law, that we are called upon to do with ; and to which the law itself is our conductor and our guide—a school-master for bringing us to Christ, at whose hands we are provided with an outlet and a place of refuge—and we are still shut up no doubt, not to despair however, as heretofore, but shut up by the terrors of the law to the faith of the gospel. And, blessed be God, it is not one lesson only that is prescribed—and that a lesson, to which, if we are confined, and without the light breaking in upon us of any other truth or from any other quarter, then the longer we learn at it the more wretched we shall be ; but, ever blessed be God, there is another lesson : And the two so fitted, so helpful to each other, that the work of both, when they are thus joined together, goes on most prosperously : And so the same apostle who taught and testified repentance towards God, taught and testified also faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. But it is now high time to enter on this second lesson—a lesson of greatest preciousness. We must be brief in our exposition of it ; but let us at the same time be as plain as possible. It is not a lesson that can be set forth advantageously in the wisdom of man's words ; nor is it the way of securing its acceptance, that it should be garnished with human eloquence, or made the subject of any tasteful and high-wrought description for the entertainment of the human fancy—when the weight of its own eternal importance should be enough to recommend it, to the attention and the consciences of men. Let us speak to your experience. If laden with debt so enormous and so overwhelming, that the industry of a whole life could work out no sensible abatement of it—if the wages of the day did not even suffice for the expenditure of the day, so that the longer you lived, the claims which justice had against you became every day heavier than before—if thus crushed under a load of accumulating obligations, with no prospect of relief or of escape from them—We ask you to conceive, with what heart or what alacrity, you could address yourself to the labours of your daily occupation ? What an unhappy doom, the doom of a weary, heartless,

heavy laden existence—overtasked—overtaxed—pressed above strength and beyond measure, and yet every day becoming a poorer man than before—the spirit sunken under the consciousness of increasing debt, and the body exhausted by ceaseless and sore drudgery—the whole proceeds of his industry torn from his hands by the gripe of creditors, who, in spite of all their exactions, can yet exhibit at every week or every month's end a deadlier count and reckoning than before. How vain to tell that man, to put forth more strength, or give more time or more diligence to the business of his calling—with such a mountain weighing upon him. There is positively no encouragement in any of these circumstances to industry at all. The heart is made heavy ; the hand is slackened ; and the whole man powerless and paralysed, gives himself up to the apathy and indolence of despair. And yet there is a method by which this wretched and undone being, might be charmed and evoked into a life of activity ; and an inspiring energy be put into his heart, that would absolutely make a new creature of him. If that debt were but cleared away—if a kind and able friend were to take it upon himself, and pay the last farthing of it—if a full and free discharge were put into his hand ; and he, over and above, were gifted with the means of entering on a walk of sure profit, where, with care and industry on his part, he could make certain of a competency to himself and a rich inheritance to his family—Who does not see that, on the moment of being restored to hope, the man is restored to willing and active exertion also ? Who does not see, that when this weight is lifted off, the man goes forth in all the vigour and alacrity of his now emancipated powers—reanimated to industry, because now unshackled from all his encumbrances, and with the prospect of a sufficiency and an independence now set before him ?

And thus, (God grant that you may not only understand but believe what we say, for we now speak of the matters which belong to the very turning point of a man's salvation) and thus is the debt between us and our lawgiver in Heaven cleared away. The great surety for sinners took it all upon Himself. God laid

on Him the iniquities of us all; and He became sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That we might be freed from the curse of the law, did the only beloved Son of God become a curse for us; and on the accursed tree, did He bear the full weight of the condemnation and the penalty, that we else should have borne. He was stricken for our iniquities. He was smitten for our transgressions. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him; and, in bowing Himself down to the burden of a world's atonement, did He pour out his soul even unto the death for us. In that hour of darkness and mystery, when the great lawgiver wakened the sword of vengeance against His fellow—then it was that our debt was paid to the last farthing; for then it was, that the Captain of our salvation, drunk to its last dregs that cup which the Father had put into His hands. Then it was, that our discharge was fully made out; and, hearken to us—if ye believe not these tidings of great joy, you remain listless or alienated or heavy laden as before; but oh the power and victory of faith! what a mountain is lifted off by it, and how the sinner's soul breaks forth as if into a land of light and love and liberty, when, enabled to lay hold on Christ, the discharge is put into his hands, and he now rests in the assurance that all is clear with God. And there is a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt; for He not only made an end of transgression but He brought in an everlasting righteousness. Mark the distinctness of these two parts of salvation.—The mere blotting out of your sins might have rescued you from Hell; but, alone and of itself and without something more, it would have given you no part of the inheritance that has been purchased for you in Heaven. It might have shut against you the gate of Hell, because ransomed from that awful and everlasting prison house; but it would not have opened the gate of Heaven, that the ransomed of the Lord might enter in. But, blessed be God's eternal Son, He has finished the work which was given Him to do. He has not been satisfied with doing it by halves. He has made out for us a complete salvation. He has not only

suffered, but He has served for us; and, instead of leaving us midway between Hell and Heaven, He has done more than redeem us from the one, by His own full endurance of the penalties of that law which we had broken—He has earned for us the reward of a sure and blissful inheritance in the other, by His own perfect obedience to all the precepts of that Law, which He has magnified and made honourable. Now, observe the whole extent of that relief and that enlargement which He has procured, for all who accept of Him as He is offered in the gospel. There is not only put into their hands, a discharge from that debt which He has paid for them; but there is put into their hands, a title-deed of entry into that glorious and everlasting inheritance, which He has won for them. It were not enough, that, disburdened from debt, you were then left as if to start fair and work out for yourselves the rewards of eternity. Who does not see, that, ere one day rolled over your heads, you would again fall short of the commandment—again dishonour that law, which utterly refuses to dishonour itself, by letting down the standard of its own absolute perfection—again run a new score, as it were, of debt and of deficiency—again become a wretched outcast of condemnation; haunted as before by the perpetual consciousness of your own imperfection; and having no rest to the soles of your feet, because still without any solid foundation of peace or confidence in God. And be assured that you never will know what it is to be fully and firmly at rest—all, as heretofore, will be misgiving and perplexity and despair, till relieved from the task of establishing a righteousness of your own. That was the old stumbling-block of the Jews; and it will prove a stumbling-block to you also, if you set out on the imagination, now that Christ has delivered you from Hell by His sufferings, you will earn a right to Heaven by your own services. You must look to Christ for both. You have as much need of the services of Christ for the one, as you have of the sufferings of Christ for the other. You can no more work out a righteousness for yourselves, than you can work out a redemption for yourselves; and accordingly we read of Christ being made unto us right-

cousness as well as redemption. If you obtain a discharge from Hell, it is not because you have paid the debt; but because Christ hath paid it for you—if you obtain a right of entry into Heaven, it is not because you have performed the requisite obedience; but because Christ hath performed it for you. In a word, you must look for Heaven, not as the wages of your own righteousness, but, alone and altogether, as the wages of the righteousness of Christ. For your deliverance from the coming wrath, trust to the sufficiency of His atonement—for your participation in that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, trust to the sufficiency of His righteousness.—And, in answer to the frequent question of the ignorant or the half-informed in the nature of the gospel, who, after the matter is explained thus far are often heard to ask, have we no further concern then with a work of righteousness ourselves; or have we no more to do with the law of God? No more to do with it, as a covenant of works. Nothing whatever to do with it, on the old footing, and under the old legal economy of Do this and live. Absolutely nothing at all to do with it, in the way of building up a plea, a meritorious plea, on which you might challenge a place in the kingdom of Heaven, or put in a claim for it that shall avail against the judgment of a righteous God. Nothing to do with it, in the purpose and on the principle of deserving Heaven for yourselves; but, mark us well, every thing to do with it in the purpose and on the principle of pleasing Him who has deserved Heaven for you.

Christ now stands in the place of the law; and, to use the image of the apostle, you, dissevered from the law, your old husband, are married to another, even Christ; but for what end?—that you may bring forth fruit unto God. Your obedience is as indispensable as before; but then it fulfils a different office from what it should have done before. The purpose of your obedience now, is, not to make you meet in law—Christ has settled all its accounts for you—but the purpose of your obedience now, is, to make you meet in person, or meet in character, for Heaven; that you may become like-minded with those who are

already there—with God the Father—with Christ, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—with the unfallen angels, who still retain that resemblance to their Maker in which they were created—with the spirits of just men made perfect, who had lost this resemblance, and were again renewed in righteousness and holiness. And this renewal we must all undergo also. To become the members of Heaven's family, we must acquire the family likeness of Heaven. It is said of Heaven, that it is the land of uprightness; and to be admitted there, you must become upright. It is said of Heaven, there thy servants serve thee; to be admitted there, you must become the servants of God. It is said of Heaven, that nothing which defileth can enter there; and you to be qualified for that entrance, must cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and your holiness must be perfected. It is said of Heaven, that its rejoicing inhabitants cease not day nor night to glorify the Father and the Son, insomuch, that the high arches of the upper sanctuary ring with jubilee, and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions; and you, to participate in the joys and the exercises of that blissful land, must have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and learn in spirit and in truth to worship Him.—Finally, it is said of Heaven, that there charity never faileth; and you, to be qualified for sitting down in its celestial company, must know what it is to have a heart that feels for all, and a hand in readiness to succour and to serve all. Justification, so far from being the whole of your Christianity, is but the beginning of it; and so far from Christianity having nothing to do with Sanctification, which is the entire conformity of your heart and life to the law, this sanctification is the great design, the great end of Christianity—the main purpose for which Christ died, even to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. For this object you put yourselves into the hand of the Saviour, and he puts into your hands a busy work of obedience, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." You do not renounce service in passing from the law to the gospel. You only change the principle

of the service; and serve now, not with the oldness of the letter, but with the newness of the spirit. The difference is as great, as between the reluctant submission of a slave, and the prompt and cheerful obedience of a friend and of a freeman. There is a felt security which you had not before; for now you know that the all-powerful Mediator is upon your side. There is a strength which you had not before; for now there is a spirit given to help your infirmities, on which you cannot too certainly depend, and which you cannot too confidently pray for. There is a love which you had not before; for now faith has opened a fountain of gratitude in the heart; and you, believing the love that God has to you,

love Him back again. There is an alacrity and a good-will that you had not before; for now God makes you willing in the day of His power—working in you to will, as well as to do of His good pleasure. There is a delight, a spontaneous and Heaven-born delight in the service of God which you had not before; for now He puts the law into your inward part, or, in other words, He enlists your affections and your taste on the side of obedience—so that what before was a weariness, or a drudgery, or a galling bondage, becomes your meat and drink, a congenial and much-loved employment. You serve God because you love Him. You do His will because you delight to do Him honour.

SERMON XVIII.

The immediate Reward of Obedience

“In keeping of them there is great reward.”—PSALM XIX. 11.

You will observe the Psalmist does not say in these words, that *after* the keeping of the commandments there is great reward—but that *in* the keeping of them there is great reward; and the lesson which we mean to urge from this is, that, altogether beside any future recompense which may be annexed to obedience, there is in the very work of obedience a present recreation. The reward spoken of in the text, is the pleasure which lies in the service of God now; and not in the payment which is judicially made for it afterwards. It is the instantaneous delight which springs up in the heart, at the moment of well-doing; and not any subsequent delight which may have been affixed to it, under the existing economy of nature or Providence. And whether this be sustained as the meaning or not in the verse that is before us—it is at least a meaning which fully accords both with experience and the doctrine of scripture. “O how I love thy law,” marks a present gratification in the keeping of it; and so does the passage, that, “I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have

loved.” The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of such testimonies; and so, indeed, in the one from which our text is taken, there is most distinct affirmation, not of a future reward from our observation of God’s will, but of an immediate joy. The statutes of the Lord are spoken of not merely as right, but as rejoicing the heart, as more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold; and sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb—all marking a sweetness and a satisfaction in the work of virtue itself, apart from any coming good that may accrue from the performance of it—a current, and not a consequent gratification, wherewith the spirit is regaled in the very midst of the deeds and desires of righteousness: just as the eye is regaled on the instant by sights of beauty, or the ear by that melody which falls upon it.

In the prosecution of this discourse we shall first endeavour, shortly to state what the ingredients are of the present reward, which there is in the keeping of the commandments: And secondly, to state the nature of that future reward

which cometh after the keeping of the commandments; and of what importance it is to the real worth and character of our obedience, that we should have right apprehensions of this. We shall then, in a very few words of practical application, advert to the way in which the economy of the gospel bears upon this whole question.

This immediate joy which there is in the keeping of God's law, might be resolved, we think, into two leading ingredients. The first is the happiness that flows direct, from the sense of doing or having done what is right. It proceeds from the testimony of an approving conscience. It lies in the satisfaction wherewith the ear of the inner man listens to the inward voice, when it speaks in the accents of complacency. This was ground of rejoicing to the mind of an apostle, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." It is not a rejoicing that springs altogether from the hope of reward; or because, on the recollection of a past integrity or a past charity or a past self-denial, there is founded the anticipation of a future blessedness. There is a blessing in the recollection itself. It is precious on its own account. It drops as it were an immediate elixir upon the soul. A good conscience is a present as well as a perpetual feast; and there is a felt and present solace, in the taste and flavour of that hidden manna which it administers. It affords something more than a clear medium, through which we might see a coming reward on the distance that lies before us. In the very clearness itself, there is the enjoyment even now, of sweetest sunshine; and the pleasure of a good conscience no more consists alone in the hope of a future remuneration, than the pain of a bad or an accusing conscience consists alone in the dread of a future vengeance. There is in remorse a present agony, that is distinct from fear. There is in the answer of a good conscience a present satisfaction, that is distinct from hope; and this forms one ingredient of that reward, which lies even now in the keeping of the commandments.

But there is still another ingredient. Though the acts of the hand be the outward expressions of virtue, yet they are

the affections of the heart which constitute its real and primary essence. Inasmuch that the love of God is said to be the first and greatest of the commandments; and all those commandments that have for their object the good of our fellow-men, are said by the apostle to be briefly comprehended in this saying—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now in the play and exercise of love, there is instantaneous joy. Love is not merely acted on as a principle—it is felt as an emotion; and, save when it strays from duty or is checked by disappointment, it is a pleasurable emotion. More especially is it so, and that in greatest pureness and ecstacy, when it goes forth in rejoicing confidence towards God—when the heart of the creature rises to the Creator, in trust and in tenderness—when it can look to the Being who made it as a Friend; and throw back the willing regards of gratitude upon Him, for those kind and fatherly regards that He ever casts on His acceptable worshippers—when from gratitude it rises to esteem, and eyes with delighted admiration the gracefulness and the glory which sit on His revealed countenance—when on the aspect of the Divinity, seen without disturbance and without dread, are beheld both the mildness and the majesty of worth—and above all when He stands forth in the charms of His unspotted holiness; and at once transports and solemnizes the soul of him, whom, whether by the eye of Faith or the eye of vision, He admits to see the moral radiance that encircles His throne. There is in all this a beautitude of which no adequate utterance can be given. It is, in truth, the very beautitude of Heaven above; and may be realised, though in fainter degree and at broken intervals, upon earth below. There be a saintly and a select few, who, at times, even on this side of the grave, have attained to such mysterious elevation; and who also, after they have ascended from the heights of a more ethereal sacredness, feel, in the perennial sense of God's reconciled presence, a gladness which is also perennial. If there be not at all times a seraphic ecstacy, there is at most times a seraphic calmness in their spirits. They have a peace which the world knoweth not; and are not troubled as other men, in

their midway passage between them and Eternity. There is at least a foretaste of the coming joy; and if love to God be indeed shed abroad in their hearts, it is even now the experience of their hearts, that, in the keeping of the first and greatest commandment, there is indeed a very great reward.

But we shall speak more to the intelligence of the general world, if we exemplify the truth of the text, by the second great affection that is required of us in the gospel, even the love of our neighbour. In the keeping of this commandment too, there is a great reward. We do not insist on the constitutional delight which many have in the mere activities of benevolence, or on the gratification that is thereby afforded even to our taste for employment; or on that enjoyment which is felt by every philanthropist, when made hopeful or happy by the success which has attended his prosperous management of human nature. This last is rather a reward that cometh after our plans and performances of well-doing, than one which intermixes with the prosecution of them. But what is more to the truth of our principle, is the pleasure which is lighted up in the heart on the first instant of its felt kindness towards any creature that breathes—that no sooner does the play of cordiality begin there, than there commences along with it a play of purest and most satisfying enjoyment—that there is delight in the original conceptions of Benevolence, and delight also in all its out-goings—that whereas malignity and envy and anger do rankle the bosom, gratitude and goodwill and all the benign affections of our nature do rejoice it, being fraught with a double blessing, and demonstrating the lesson of our text by that ample share of it, which cometh to the giver, and which consists in the happiness that redounds to himself from the wish and the effort to make others happy. When the heart is thus attuned, it is then that it tastes of the very truth and substance of enjoyment—it is then that the mechanism of our sentient nature moves sweetly; and that, in the mere concord of its feelings and faculties, there is unutterable joy. It is then that the soul is in its wholesome and well-conditioned frame; and indeed, from the very beaming that

plays on the human countenance, we may gather how when there is kindness within there is comfort within. The inner man feels, that when breathing in the element of love, he is breathing in an element of light and cheerfulness; and that the happiest mood of the spirit, is when it blandly and bounteously devotes for another's welfare. The selfishness by which it of old was actuated, is now felt to have been a weight and a confinement upon its energies—from which when released, it seems as if it had just gotten its native elasticity; and so could forthwith expatiate on a field, where there was room and liberty and a genial atmosphere. It is almost as if a stricture upon its faculties had been taken off—and it was now restored to alacrity, because its own proper force and freedom had been restored to it. Certain it is, that, both in the feelings and the outflowings of human sympathy, there is a satisfaction which not only blesses our companionships on earth, but which we shall bear with us to the choirs of Paradise; and that, beside the goodwill which radiates from Heaven's throne and is reflected back again to Him who sitteth thereon, there is a goodwill which passes and repasses in busy circulation among all the members of Heaven's family. Now of this we have a present foretaste, of which even the most unsaintly and unregenerate of this world can be made to understand. For God, hath not only, to bind together a perpetual society in Heaven, established there the charity that never faileth—but, even for the temporary purposes of our frail and fleeting society on earth, hath spread the many thousand charities of home and of neighbourhood even among the men of our ungodly generation. And even to them we can confidently appeal for the truth, that, in the grovelling pursuits whether of sense or avarice, they never experienced so true a delight, as in those moments when their spirit was touched into sympathy with other spirits than their own. There is many a scene of domestic tenderness on which this principle is fully manifested; and whence we may gather what that is, in which, after all, the real happiness of our nature lies. It is most certainly more in the play of kindness to others, than in the secret

or securing or any animal enjoyment to ourselves. In the walks of merchandise men are to be found, who, among the noblest specimens of all that virtue which mere nature has to boast of, can, upon their own remembrance of their own feelings, give the same testimony—who perhaps recollect a time, when, on the sad occasion of a neighbour's bankruptcy, the principle on which we now insist was brought to the trial of their own observation—who as they sat in judgment over the fortunes of a fallen family, were visited with the kindlings of a mercy that rejoiced against judgment and prevailed above it—who could have exacted all, but, in a moment of relenting generosity, there was a gentle force upon their spirits which would not let them; and, in virtue of which, they felt and they forgave.—We ask, if, in the tenderness and in the triumph of that moment, there was not ample compensation made for all which they surrendered; or if all the money which they made over with their hands, could have purchased one fraction of the delight that they had from the mercy which then glowed in their bosoms?

But we can no longer afford to multiply these illustrations; and we trust that it will now appear abundantly manifest, how, in the exercise of love to our fellows there is a moral, even as, in the exercise of Love to our God, there is a spiritual gladness; and how likely it is therefore, that when the one is blended with the other, or rather when the one either originates or issues from the other, there is in the keeping of the second, as well as of the first law, a very precious and withal a present reward.

There is not a single virtue, when looked to in its own independent aspect, of which the same thing might not be affirmed. They one and all of them yield an immediate satisfaction to the wearer. There is a certain untroubled serenity in truth and in justice—there is a felt and native dignity in honour—in perfect keeping with this, there is a quiet and secure resting-place to the inner man in gentleness and humility—there is, we shall not say a proud, but at least a triumphant complacency in all the virtues of self-command—there is a cheerfulness to the spirit in the temperance of the body—there is in purity such

a peace as well as transparent beauty and loveliness, that it is like breathing in the third Heavens instead of this world's gross and troubled atmosphere, when, under the guardianship of strictest delicacy, the heart becomes that hallowed abode, in which no wrong or tainted imagination is permitted to dwell. These and all the other moralities of the human character, are what make up the true health and harmony of the soul. They are the very streams or materials of that well, which is struck out in the bosom of regenerated man, and which springeth up there unto life everlasting. They are those fruits of the spirit which are sweet unto the taste, and which constitute the food and the sustenance of eternity. The crown that is given in paradise to the possessor of these, is neither of gold nor of silver; for these in truth are the very graces, of which the crown and all its glory is composed. It is a moral splendour that is lighted up there. It is virtue which blooms and is immortal there. It is the felt pleasure that they have in goodness here, though with a sad mixture and mitigation of earthliness—this is the very feeling which is transported along with the spirits of the good to Heaven, and constitutes the very essence of Heaven's blessedness. Nevertheless, and amid all the obscurations of our earthly nature, we have the feeling even on this side of death; and, such as it is, it forms that present reward which there is in the keeping of the commandments.

II. Now, instead of the reward which there is *in* the keeping of the commandments, let us conceive that there had been a reward *after* the keeping of the commandments, and not only so, but that it is quite distinct from that enjoyment of which we have now spoken and which lies directly and essentially in the obedience itself. Instead of a happiness that resides natively, or that comes forth immediately, out of the holiness—let it be thought of for a moment, as a happiness that has been arbitrarily and by divine appointment annexed to holiness. This can easily be imagined—a Heaven in which there may be the delight that belongs to virtue, but which is also peopled with other charms—where there

are sights of loveliness, and sounds of sweetest harmony—where beside the recreation that there is to the glorified spirit, there is also a recreation to the glorified senses; and the pleasures even of taste and intellect are superadded, to the ecstasies of a saintly and seraphic devotion—a Heaven of space and splendour and full security from ought that can pain or can annoy; and whose very exemption from the sufferings of a hideous and everlasting hell, is enough to call out the desires of all men towards it. Now we can well suppose, that the one ingredient of its sacredness may be lost sight of, in the multitude of those other ingredients which compose the felicity of such a Paradise as this—or, at all events, that it is not the sacredness but something else, which gives the practical urgency to our efforts and desires after such a habitation. And, so if it still is obedience by which we earn Heaven, while its blessedness is fancied to consist of things which are distinct from the gratification that lies in the obedience itself—then virtue becomes the work, and a something which is not virtue forms the wages. The candidates of immortality are so many labourers for hire; and Heaven is not looked to, or at least not aspired after, as a place of holiness—but as the price that is given for it.

Now this is a consideration which you do well to ponder, for it really does affect the whole spirit and character of your Christianity. It goes to the very root of the principle by which you are actuated—and will perhaps lay bare to the eye of conscience, how utterly devoid you are of that which may be deemed the very essence of religion. It is no evidence at all of the love which you have for a work, that you may have a love to its wages. Let two men go forth, upon the labour that is prescribed to them by their divine lawgiver; and it makes all the difference in the world between the one man and the other—if I shall see the first busied with the labour because of his liking it, and the second because of his looking to the remuneration that comes afterwards. A taste for the employment, is a wholly different thing from a taste for its distinct and subsequent reward. They may

lie as wide of each other, as do the two elements of sordidness and sacredness; and those services, which, had they proceeded from willingness and taste, would have argued a holy creature, may in fact be nothing better than the services of a drivelling and reluctant mercenary.

We might appeal on this subject to the understanding of an ordinary workman. He knows well the distinction, between a love of the work, and a love of the payment which is made for it; and it is very possible that he has none whatever for the one, while all the regards of his heart are set upon the other. He would rather have the payment without the work, to which at the same time he submits only because he must, as to any hard and hateful necessity. He would feel it a strange proposal, should work be offered to him, and, on inquiring about the reward, should be told, that it was just more work; and that the better he did his allotted service, so much the larger would be the supply and imposition of that same service in all time coming. Were this all the encouragement a master had to give, he would soon desert the employment; or if compelled thereto, would at least feel the revolt of all his inclinations to be against it. And what we have to ask is, whether with all the compliances of your outer man, there be not the very same revolt of your inward man from the service of God—whether, as in ordinary labour the wages are given as a compensation for the weariness, so with you a deliverance from hell and an entrance upon some vague and fancied heaven, be not counted upon as the after-wages of a labour which at present and in itself you feel to be a weariness—whether the service of religion be indeed your taste, or only your task, at which now you slavishly and assiduously ply, not for its own sake, but for the sake of a something else that lies in the distance before you—whether the exercises of your practical Christianity be exercises unto godliness, or in the hope to make a gain of godliness—whether it be a thing of delight or a thing of drudgery, extorted by a fear from without or excited by a feeling from within—a generous homage to the glory of the supreme lawgiver and the worth of His commandments or

but the worthless policy of a creeping and ignoble selfishness?

These are questions which go to the very soul of our religion; and by which we are now attempting to probe and to scrutinize among those hidden things of the heart, that shall at length be brought out and fully manifested in the day of reckoning. They are the questions by which the sterling and the counterfeit in Christianity may be determined. The true religiousness of a man does not hinge upon what the things be to which he is driven, but upon what the things be in which he natively and spontaneously delights. An inferior animal can be operated upon by pain and terror as well as he. It can tremble under the rod of authority, when backed with the power of enforcement, as well as he. Or it can be lured by the gratifications that are suited to its nature, as well as he. These are motives, that can be addressed with effect, to the mere element of earthliness; and, under their influence, many are the formalities of religion which might be gone through, and many are its severe and servile exactions which might be rendered, and much of its seemingly exterior might be put on—as much certainly as might sustain the appearance of a goodly profession. But still the question is in reserve, if you delight in the law of God after the inward man—if the homage you give be that of willing and affectionate loyalty—if the walk you tread upon be that of a disinterested rectitude—if you have been lured into holiness by the beauty of its graces, and not by the bribery of its gains—For surely there is nought in him of the pure or the exalted or the heavenly, who labours only for the reward that cometh after the commandment, and neither feels nor understands how in the commandment there should be a great reward.

III. We may now perhaps be able to perceive, how the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in and adapts itself to the question that is now before you. It in the first instance then, releases you altogether from the law as a covenant. It tells you that you are not to work for Heaven, because that Heaven is secured to you in another way. Instead of coming forth with the stipulation of do this and live, it

comes forth with the offer of eternal life to you as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. One reason of this is, that God's jurisprudence requires a higher homage to be rendered to it, than can possibly be rendered by the obedience of man; and therefore it will not consent so far to honour that obedience, as to bestow upon it the rewards of eternity, on the footing of these being a due and a rightful acknowledgment. The law of God refuses to let itself down in this way to the degraded standard of human virtue; and, therefore, instead of holding out eternal life to us as the payment of our righteousness it holds out to us for the sake of the righteousness of Christ—if we will consent to receive it on this footing. It is thus that the dignity of Heaven's government is secured; and the character of God as a Sovereign is not at all compromised, by the terms of acceptance which He holds out to the guilty who have offended Him.

But this gospel economy is not more for the character of God as a Sovereign than it is for the character of man as the subject of God's will. The truth is that if you waken up the old economy of do this and live, you waken up that very spirit of bondage and of low mercenary bargaining between the two parties, which we have already endeavoured to stigmatize. Along with the fears of legality, the sordidness of legality is sure to make entrance again into the heart; and we do not see how under such a dispensation, the pursuit of holiness can be disencumbered from the mixture of such ignoble motives, as would make the pursuit a selfish and an unholy one. There is no access, in such very peculiar circumstances as these—there is no access to a sinner's heart for the love of holiness in itself, but by making him the free offer of Heaven as an unconditional gift; and at the same time making him understand, that it is in truth holiness and nothing else, which forms the very essence of Heaven's blessedness.

On this footing let there be a will come on the part of men, and there is a welcome on the part of God. There is no let or hindrance whatever, between the sinner and the mercy-seat. You have not to work for acceptance, but the signal of acceptance is even now held

out to you ; and, instead of winning the favour of God by your holiness, this favour smiles upon you now, and if you will only put yourself in its way, it will, as its first and very greatest expression, put the principle of holiness within you. O! then be persuaded to close with this free and transforming gospel. "Turn unto me now," says God, "and I will pour out my spirit upon you." That law, which you are now so afraid of, you will be made to love ; and from a service of jealousy and constraint, it will become a service of willingness. Of that splendid Heaven whereof you

have the promise, you will have a present and a most precious sample, in the new tastes and new enjoyments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. This will be in fact the beginning of Heaven to your souls—the morning twilight of your happy and good eternity. In the moral gladness of your renovated nature, you will have the earnest of what is coming ; and, on your way through the world, will demonstrate how great the difference is between the low crouching and fearful spirit of the legal, and the liberal and generous style of the evangelical obedience.

SERMON XIX.

The necessity of a Personal meetness for Heaven.

"Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—COLOSSIANS i. 12.

To any man who reads a few of these verses in connection, it must be obvious that the apostle points to something more than a judicial meetness for the kingdom of Heaven—though without that redemption which is through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sin, we could never have been admitted into heaven. But to walk worthy of the Lord, and to be fruitful in every good work, and to be strengthened with all might—these also are so many ingredients of the meetness. There is a personal, as well as a judicial meetness, indispensable to our becoming partakers of the inheritance of the saints ; and while there is nothing more true, than that it is by faith alone that we are justified—it is just as true, that, ere we can obtain as the fruit of our justification a place in the blessed family above, we must be sanctified by faith.

We often, in the matters of the divine administration, separate, in idea, the judicial from the personal meetness of heaven ; and we lay an inferior stress upon the latter, while we count the former to be indispensable. What helps us to do this, is the arbitrary connection which obtains between a punishment and a crime in civil society. A violent

temper, for example, is its own punishment ; and the misery which it inflicts by its own working, may be regarded as the natural and necessary effect of the temper itself. But it may further urge the man who is under its power to the transgression of an assault upon his neighbour, for which by the law of his country he is put into confinement. By being thus detached from society, he is certainly restrained for the time from a similar act of violence against another ; and even when sent back from his imprisonment, the fear of its recurrence may restrain him, from giving vent in extravagant conduct at least to the outrageous feelings which swell and tumultuate in his bosom. The object of peace and protection to the community is gained by this proceeding. But there is nothing done by it to mollify the man's temper. There may be something done to repress the outbreaks of mischief, but nothing done to purify or to dry up the source. The man may still continue to fester, and to be agitated, and to sustain all the miseries of a fierce internal war. So that even though the civil punishment were remitted ; though by the payment of a ransom on the part of another,

we obtained a full discharge from the penalties of the law—there are other penalties annexed by nature to the moral infirmities of his character, from which the law can obtain for him no deliverance whatever. It may take off the sufferings which itself put on; but from the sufferings which essentially attach to the constitution of his heart, it cannot save him. It cannot save him from the misery of his own boisterous and ungovernable temper. It cannot save him from the wretchedness of being driven, and pursued, and agonised, by the fury and the disorder of his own passions. After it has done its uttermost in the way of relieving him from the burden of every legal chastisement—after it has reversed its sentence, and made it pass into a sentence of justification—after it has pronounced on him in such a way, that, forensically and in the eye of the law, he is a righteous person—after it has snatched him from the hand of its own executioners—There may be the vengeance of an executioner within, who never ceases from the cruelty of his applications. The factitious distress which the law lays on, the law also can lift off. But there is a natural and necessary distress appended by a law of our moral constitution to the character, and which will remain so long as the character remains. And in the heat and violence of an anger, which restraint may confine, but which restraint can never extinguish—in the conflict and fermentation of passions, which live and burn and fluctuate within the brooding chambers of his own heart—in the affronted pride, and the unquelled resentment, which are at all times ready to burst forth on the fancied provocation of his fellow men—May this unhappy criminal, assoilzied and justified and set free from the arbitrary impositions of the law, still feel the burden of a curse from which there is no escaping—and of a punishment, that, in the language of Cain, is heavier than he can bear.

There is we have every reason to believe both an arbitrary and a natural ingredient in the punishment of hell. We are apt to look only to the former, and to overlook the latter. There is no natural connection between moral guilt and the application of intense heat to the material

part of our constitution. But still it is the heat, the flame, the fire and brimstone, the everlasting burnings—which chiefly appal the fancy, and engross the fears of the inner man, when he thinks of the place of condemnation. Now it is very true, that, by a bare act of justification, we may be delivered from all that is gross and corporeal in these torments.—The fire may cease to burn, and the body may cease to be agonised. But if the character remain, the misery it entails on the moral constitution will also remain. A mere deed of acquittal will never work out a deliverance from this misery. There is no new arrangement made known to us in the gospel, by which God has dissolved the alliance between love and enjoyment on the one hand, or between hatred and wretchedness on the other. He has made no change, either on the character or on the tendency of what is right and wrong.—Virtue is as inseparable from happiness as before; and vice as inseparable from misery as before. The economy of grace, made known to us in the New Testament, has no more broken up the connection between benevolence and pleasure, or between malignity and pain in a man's heart—than it has broken up the connection between the sight of beauty and an emotion of pleasure, or between the sight of deformity and an emotion of disgust. So that, if, by a solitary deed of justification, a believer could be delivered from the fire of hell, and at the same time were to remain in character and affection just what he was—a portion of the feeling of hell would still adhere to him. His body may be at ease from all that is painful, in respect of physical sensation; but his mind, in respect of all that is painful in moral sensation, may be the seat of a torment as unrelenting as ever. All that is mainly and essentially hell may still be attached to his person, without respite and without mitigation.—Let pride come into collision with contempt; and disdain meet with equal disdain; and hatred exchange its mutual glances, from one unregenerated being to another; and remorse shoot its arrows across this dark scene of moral turbulence and disorder; and suspicion and envy and discontent rankle in the hearts of creatures, fired with hostility towards

God and against each other—these, though not one sensation of agony were permitted to reach their bodies, are enough to make a hell, out of any habitation of assembled criminals. These form the sharpest inflictions of the worm that dieth not, and the fiercest materials of the fire that is not quenched. The man who has these unsanctified feelings in his heart, carries the elements of hell about with him. He has only to die, and to descend with his unrenewed passions into that place, where all who have not been born again have gone before him. It is then that he enters into hell. In respect of the material ingredients of the torture, it is certainly conceivable that he may be saved by being justified. But in respect of the moral ingredients of the torture, the passions themselves must be extricated from his bosom, and to be saved he must be sanctified.

So it is not enough, you will perceive, to obtain a man's translation from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven, in order to translate him from the misery of the one abode to the happiness of the other. A great part of the misery of the former, consists in the sufferings, which, by the unrepealed law of moral and sentient nature, are attached to vicious and unholy propensities. And a great part of the happiness of the latter, consists in the enjoyments, which, by the same law are attached to kind and good and holy affections. So that to have the full advantage of an inheritance among the saints, there must be a meetness of character; and for this purpose, to have the sinner turned into a saint, is just as essential as to have a deed of acquittal made out—or a sentence of justification passed upon him.

Let us first direct your attention for a little longer to the first of those receptacles; and, however painful the imagery associated with such a contemplation may be, the importance of the lesson must be held as our apology. We are not to overlook the penal character of those sufferings, which are endured in the prison-house of the damned; and we have every reason to believe, that intense bodily pain forms one ingredient of this bitter and ever-during agony. But there are other ingredients; and, to prove how

these of themselves are enough to bring a heavy load of wretchedness on the accursed, we ask you to think of the horrors of an unregulated jail—where bodily pain may be conceived to have no place—where, if you choose, there is no disease, and the wretched inmates are restrained by the terrors of the discipline from acts of violence on each other. Let corporeal suffering be detached from this abode of criminals, as an element of wretchedness altogether. Still there are other elements, which, working in their hearts with unchastened violence, may beget such a mental wretchedness—as to make it the most expressive way of characterising this scene of confinement, to call it a hell upon earth. There may be mutual rage and mutual revilings.—There may be the misery of revenge unsatiated, or of revenge venting itself in keenest execrations. There may be the uproar of bacchanalian levity, mingled with all that is blasphemous in language, and all that is fierce or unhallowed in desire. There may be passion, whether sordid or malicious, raising a tempest in the soul before its gratification; or leaving after it the bitterness of remorse.—There may be the unbridled selfishness of beings—each clamouring for his own object, and only uniting in one cry of daring and desperate rebellion against heaven's law. You have only to stamp immortality on these creatures, in order to have a hell; and though you were to open the prison door and loose them from confinement, each would carry away with him his own portion of hell. You may travel them from one end of the world to the other—yet would not these accursed beings, thereby escape the sufferings of what is mainly and essentially hell. You may even transport their persons into what is locally heaven; and yet, recoiling as they would from what that is which forms the enjoyment of its indwellers, they would still continue to be haunted by the substantial wretchedness of hell. These are miseries from which no change of place, and no sentence of justification, can deliver them. These are ills from which they cannot be saved, by a mere act of transference from one abode to another.—There must be an act of transformation

from one character to another; or, in other words, if faith be to save them from these, they must be sanctified by faith.

But, without going for illustration to the outcasts of exile and imprisonment, the very same thing may be exemplified in the bosom of families. It is not necessary that pain be inflicted on bodies by actions of violence, in order to make up a wretched family. It is enough that pain be made to rankle within every heart, by means of the affections of violence. Out of the elements of malignity, and suspicion, and hatred, and unfaithfulness, and disgust—an abode of enjoyment may be turned into an abode of intensest suffering. A house upon earth, from the mere operation of moral causes, may be turned into hell. The fiercest ingredients of the place of torment, may brood and break out in the dwelling-places of the unregenerate in the world. So that though the material element of fire were altogether expunged from the future arrangements of nature and of providence—yet God has other elements, which he can wield to the eternal wretchedness of those who disobey him. There are other agonies which share the work of vengeance in that lake, that is represented as burning with fire and brimstone. Our own passions will be to Him the ministers of hottest indignation; and to be saved from these, it is not enough that we be justified in our persons—there must be a meetness impressed on our characters, and to be saved we must be sanctified.

It is true, at the same time, of many a worldly man—that he may be comparatively a stranger to the fiercer malignities of our nature; and that he may not, therefore, carry to the place of his destination the torture which these are calculated to inflict upon him. But it is at least true of every man, who is not born of the Spirit of God—that he loves the creature more than the Creator. Let him carry this unsanctified affection with him to his grave. Let the desires of flesh and blood remain unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, at that period when death lays him prostrate like a fallen tree upon the ground. Let it be true, that as the tree falleth so it lies; and that when he rises again, he rises with this idolatrous affection in the full vigour of carnal

and unsubdued nature. On the great day of manifestation, let the utter worthlessness of such a propensity, be laid open to his now awakened conscience; and let the shame and everlasting contempt of a preference so sordid, follow him to his assigned habitation. Let him be made to see that there adheres to his character, the guilt of having cast his God away from him; and the folly of having forsaken the fountain of unperishable good, and chosen for his eternity the wretched employment of feeding upon ashes. Let the eye of infinite rectitude be felt to be turned upon him as an eye of rebuke; and let him know himself to be a worthless outcast from the great family of holiness. These are sufficient of themselves to make out the sting of an undying worm, whether a weight of corporeal agony be added or not to the weight of these agonising reflections. In these, there is enough of the elements of disquietude to give to hell an unsupportable bitterness; and to be saved from these, it will not suffice that his name be expunged from the book of condemnation. It will not suffice that a sentence of justification be attached to his name. A real process of crucifying him unto the world, and making him alive unto God, must be attached to his person. Or, in other words—in virtue of an eternal ordination by which misery of feeling is ever attached to worthlessness of character, there is a misery attached to every depraved creature, to be saved from which, his depravity must be done away, and he must be sanctified.

This might be rendered still more evident, by our directing your attention, in the second place, to heaven, and to the essential character of that blessedness which is found in it. But enough that we distinguish between that part of the punishment of hell, which is arbitrarily attached to sin, and that part of it which is necessarily and naturally attached to sin. It may be seen from this how little a mere unaccompanied deed of justification can do for us—if it only deliver us from the material fire of the place of condemnation. It will be seen, that, even were the fire extinguished, there would, in every unregenerate bosom, be moral elements at work, to constitute an undying worm, which would never cease to

torment us by its corrosions—that, to be delivered from the torture and the fury of these elements, the elements themselves must be extinguished; or, in other words, we must be delivered from all the passions and all the propensities of ungodliness. We must be delivered from the whole train of dark, and malignant, and worldly affections, which the apostle denominates the works of the flesh. We must be delivered from all that is opposite either to the first or to the second

commandment of the law. God, in fact, must make that new covenant with us, by which He gives us clean hearts, and creates within us right spirits. In other words, it is not enough that there be a forensic deed of justification. There must be a personal transformation of character; and faith cannot save us from that which forms the mighty burden of a sinner's curse—but through the sinner being sanctified by faith.

SERMON XX.

The connection between Singleness of Aim and Spiritual Discernment.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”—MATTHEW vi. 22.

THERE is a great demand among certain religionists, for clear and simple views of the gospel. And, to make this good, they often fasten upon some one truth or object in the field of revelation, to which they look singly and exclusively; and as if it alone were representative of all Christianity, or comprehensive of all. They seem to have confounded singleness of eye, with the singleness of the object which the eye fastens upon; and to have understood our Saviour as if He meant to describe the state of the object, when He was describing the state of the organ. Now it is with the mental as it is with the corporeal eye. In a pure and right state of the latter, it is not one thing only which is seen, but all the things which are on the field of vision—the trees, and the houses, and the various objects, which make up a complex and extended landscape. It would mark a disease, and not a perfection, in this organ—were its power of beholding restricted to one thing only. And the same is true of the spiritual landscape—of the Bible that tablet of revelation, on which are spread out the doctrines and the informations of a voluminous record. It would argue no perfection in the seeing faculty of the mind, were it awake only to one of these doctrines while blind or undiscerning to all the rest. Did its

singleness consist in the oneness of the thing which it saw, so that all the other things both new and old of scripture were unheeded or unobserved by it—this surely were an impotency or a defect, instead of an excellency in the mental eye. Instead of the whole body being full of light, there would be a partial and distorted view of Christian truth; and for the largeness and variety of heaven's own communication, we should be wholly taken up with some shibboleth of a party, some solitary principle or point of narrow sectarianism.

We may be sure then that the singleness of eye, in our text, is something different from any straitening of this sort; and by which, in fact, illumination were obstructed, rather than let forth in all its fulness and expanse upon the understanding. This singleness of eye refers not to the number of truths which might be presented to the contemplation of the intellect; nor does it signify that we should but entertain one truth, or one topic, in opposition to a multiplicity. It refers to the number of pursuits in which, for various objects of desire or affection, we might be practically engaged; and it signifies that we should give ourselves to one such pursuit to the exclusion of every other, or at least to the entire subordination of every other. It is called single-

ness of eye, not because the eye sees but one thing; but, more properly, because it looks in one direction—having one great object after which the mind predominantly aims; and to which therefore it looks steadfastly, and constantly, and so singly. Singleness of eye in this place, denotes, not the simplicity of our intellectual regards as bestowed on some one object of theoretical contemplation, but the simplicity of our moral regards towards some one object of practical attainment. It marks the unity, and along with it, the energy of a ruling passion—for which every other passion is pressed into subserviency, or gives way altogether. It follows not because the mind hath fixed and concentrated all its faculties on some one acquisition, that it must all the while confine its regards to but one truth in science or one article in theology. The navigator may have set his heart on the realizing of a discovery in some remote quarter of the globe; and with this, as his supreme or rather single ambition, he may repel every lateral temptation that would divert him on his way; and suffer neither the beauty and luxury of one region to detain him, nor the gainful merchandise of another to draw him from his course. There is here singleness of eye—yet of an eye filled and exercised with many objects of contemplation notwithstanding; and busied in the work of perpetual observation, both on the depths of the earth beneath and on the courses of the firmament above, on the compass by which he steers, on the chart by which he measures and ascertains his progress. The voyage may be said to have but one object—yet, for its proper guidance and equipment, there might be a manifold attention required, and light not from one but from many sciences. And so of the voyage to eternity, and the steadfast or singlehearted prosecution of it. The object is one; and he who is resolved upon its attainment, may evince both the strength and the simplicity of his purpose, by his universal resistance to the various solicitations, that would draw him by a thousand devious ways from the path to heaven. Yet we are not to suppose, that, because the object is one, it is but the light of one truth or one proposition which leads the way to it. To the

expediting of this journey, there is use for the whole fulness and furniture of the Bible. And as its objects are various, so the mind is variously exercised—at one time with the doctrine of the sacrifice, whence it obtaineth peace—at another with the doctrine of the Spirit, whence it obtaineth strength—at a third with the doctrine of the law as a rule of life to believers, whence it obtaineth direction. In short, instead of but one truth singled out perhaps by some hair-splitting or metaphysic nicety, the manifold lights of scripture and experience conspire to shine upon his way. His eye is single, not because it looks to but one point in theology—but because intent upon the one object of a blissful immortality, or upon the one path which leads to it.

Now though, beside the single pursuit of religion, there may be specified a thousand other pursuits distinct from it and opposed to it—as the pursuit of fame, the pursuit of fortune, the pursuit of ambition, the pursuit of pleasure—yet, in the Bible, all these are generally classed together and comprehended, under the one characteristic of enmity to God and a life of godliness, of rivalry with the interests of eternity.

It is thus that the children of light and the children of this world are contrasted with each other—the meat that perisheth, with the meat that endureth—the temptations of the present evil world, with the powers of the world to come—the broad way of destruction, with the narrow path of life everlasting—the slavery of Satan, with the service of the living and true God. Man is looked upon as being under the rivalry of two great forces, of but two great conflicting elements. Our text, where singleness of eye is recommended lies between one passage in which we are told to lay not up for ourselves treasures on earth but treasures in heaven, and another passage in which we are told that no man serve two masters and that he cannot serve God and mammon. This singleness stands opposed in scripture, not to multiplicity, but to doubleness. It is true that there are manifold earthly affections, any one of which might prevail to the destruction of our hopes and interests in eternity; yet they may all be regarded, in their one generic character of earthliness.

"Love not the world," says the apostle John, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

It is by wavering between these two, between the will of God on the one hand, and some worldly affection whatever that may be upon the other—that we neglect the injunction of the text, like the double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways. It is because the eye most looks to what the heart most likes, that singleness of eye is made to denote the singleness of a heart, set upon heaven and its treasures. It is because the regards of the mind are solely fixed upon that which is solely aimed after, that, by the same term, we may express that full purpose of heart, wherewith we cleave to the one master, and utterly refuse the bribes or service of the other. It is because when bent on some great pursuit, we turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, but persevere in our onward course, unseduced by any object that would lure us into by-ways—that by the singleness of eye in our text, we understand the habit of him, who, actuated by the one perpetual will to be what he ought and do what he ought, resists the very sollicitation that might tempt him away from this great and unchanging principle. Singleness of eye is held equivalent to singleness of heart or of purpose—because when the regards of the heart are solely directed to the one thing needful, then the regards of the understanding are solely directed to its contemplation, and to the means of securing it. And what we have now to evince is how, such being the moral state of the purposes and affections, the intellectual state of the whole body being full of light follows from it—just as an effect does from its cause, or a consequent from the antecedent that went before it. We should like, if possible, to manifest the connection between the one and the other; and to show by what transition it is, that the man whose whole determination and desire is to make good his eternity in heaven, and who, in pursuit of this, is ready to shun or to sacrifice every object of desire that would enter into competition with it—how he comes, and in virtue of this very attitude, to move forward in an element of clearness, and to be free from the doubts and uncertainties which harass the spirits and hinder the progress of other men.

I. Now the first reason for this is very obvious, and in harmony with all experience. That which we most desire to have, we most desire to know about; or at least, to know the means of obtaining it. It is not in nature, that we should vehemently wish to possess an object, and yet be at no pains to inquire the way to it. Let a man be actuated by a strong and unceasing desire after salvation; and he will never cease to search after the way of salvation, even till he has found it. He will hearken diligently, and, as the fruit of this, his soul will at length be satisfied. The desire of his heart will set to work the faculties of his mind; and, just as in all other busy scholarship, the learning is in proportion to the labour—so will he find it the way to light and learning in the scholarship of Christianity. The more sharply set we are upon any attainment, the more surely will we give all our wits to the investigation of the process by which it may be reached; and just as skill and intelligence are all the greater in a favourite service, than in one to which we are indifferent—so the more favourite any object of ambition is, the more exercised and awake will our attention be to all the methods by which it may be realized. Just conceive this object to be the friendship of God. Let it be the unquenchable desire of the creature, going forth in quest of the Creator. Let it be such a thirst after the living God, as to make it the supreme and most urgent appetite of his nature—Then, under its impulse, he, in the strong language of scripture, will stir himself up that he may lay hold of his Maker; he will search after Him as for hidden treasure; he will seek for Him if haply he may find Him. He will eagerly pursue after every trace and indication of the Godhead. He will seek for Him in the Bible. He will seek for Him in meditation. He will seek for

Him in prayer. He will grope as it were in every direction for the way of access; nor will he take rest to his soul, while the deeply interesting question is unsettled, wherewithal shall a sinner appear before God? It is evident that the more intense this desire, the more intense and diligent also will his search be after the object of it. And should the one become the engrossing desire of his heart, the other will become the paramount business of his life. It will be his supreme and unremitting earnestness, to seek after God. Should he at length find Him and find Him fully, there is nothing at least to surprise us in the result. It is in keeping with a law, which, in every department of attainable knowledge, holds universally. Generally speaking, in proportion to the laboriousness of the search, is the largeness of the discovery. There is nothing mysterious in this. It seems to follow in the way of natural consequence; nor should we wonder, when the heart or the eye is thus so strongly, nay so singly set on a blissful eternity, as that the whole concern is to explore the avenue which leads to it—that the fruit of such singleness of eye is the whole body becoming full of light.

Before we pass on to the next reason of this connection between the one thing and the other, let us appeal to the consciences of those who are now present on the subject of the reason which we have just given. If they hold it to be an invalid reason, can they say so on their own experience? Have they given all diligence to this great inquiry, and find that they remain in darkness notwithstanding? Have they striven with all their might after a knowledge of the things which belong to their peace, and yet abide as far from peace and from satisfying light as before? Can they appeal to the fatiguing yet fruitless toils of a most laborious and long-sustained inquiry, that has yet terminated in nothing? What have been their readings, what their importunate and persevering supplications at the door of heaven's sanctuary? How long have they kept by the attitude, or how frequently have they been found in it—of the Bible in their hands, and a prayer in their hearts that in the light of God's own revelation

they may clearly see light? He holds Himself out as the rewarder of those who seek Him diligently—what we ask has been their diligence in seeking God? Do they expect to find Him without diligence; and while they are indulging in spiritual sloth, or are diligent about other even temporal things, the light of His countenance and His ways is at once to break forth upon them? They have never found; but in good truth it is because they have never sought. At least their seeking has never amounted to striving. It has been nothing like the strenuous and sustained effort of one singly bent on the good of his eternity; and giving himself, with perfect singleness of heart and of eye, to this great consummation. Day after day, the question has been postponed; and they have put off to a more convenient season the labour of its full and serious entertainment; and, in reference to the peculiar business of their eternity, to the good and the interest of their unperishable souls, their habit all their lives long has been that of a dull and languid procrastination—with now and then perhaps some fruitless sighs, some heaving yet transient and wholly unproductive aspirations. But never all the while a real taking up of the question—a real and substantial and industrious prosecution of it. They do not make a business of this inquiry at all. They do not go about it, with the plain and practical object of bringing it to a settlement. On the subject of their eternity, they acquiesce in the most vague and unsubstantial generalities; and are at no pains that it should be otherwise. Yet they complain of darkness. We tell them that they have not bestirred themselves to the search. They distrust the efficacy of a search. We tell them that they are no judges, they have never tried.

II. Our next reason, however difficult to propound, we hold to be one of main efficacy in this process. He who hath singled out and set his heart or his eye upon eternity, proves himself to be rightly impressed by the worth of eternity. He begins by a just estimate of the relation between eternity and time.

The effect of this is incalculable. It rectifies, just because it reverses all the

imaginings of nature. There is on this subject a grand practical delusion, the bane and bewilderment of our species. To our optics, time stands forth in the characters of eternity; and eternity has the insignificance of time. All our ideas of magnitude are inverted. The substance appears the shadow, and the shadow the substance. The correction of this would wholly change our mental panorama, and throw a new light over it. Let eternity and time be but seen in their just proportions; and by this alone the scenery of the future, if we may so express it, would be completely transformed. What is now the foreground, and occupies the whole field of vision, would shrink into nothing; and the new dim and shadowy ulterior would brighten into vivid interest, and expand into magnificence before us. The single rectification would introduce justness and order into the whole perspective of our being—just as the assumption of a great and true principle in science, might bring order out of confusion, and light up as it were a whole chaos of phenomena. It is only by this reference to eternity, that we can make a right survey of human existence—just as a map in geography is rightly constructed, by the references of a correct and comprehensive scale. And what a different representation do we attain of life, when we thus proceed on the high scale of eternity, to measure off all and to subordinate all—giving to each event or interest its right place, and its right proportion in reference to the whole. It would give us a similar command over a prospect in time, that the loftiest summit in the landscape gives over a prospect in space. Among the localities of the every-day world, or among the urgencies of every day life, we are alike lost in the nearness, and multitude of besetting objects; and are strangely insensible to the comparative littleness of present things, whether in space or in duration. It is by an enlargement of the view that this error is corrected—in the one case by an extended vision, in the other by an exalted faith. It is this which reduces to their proper size and importance, all temporal things. The universal error would be met by a universal correction. Could we now see to be little all that we falsely imagined to

be great, and see to be great all that we falsely disregarded as little—this of itself would dissipate a world of illusions, and on this single change in the habit and perception of the mental eye, the whole body would become full of light.

And let us here make another appeal to the consciences of men. What are objects of greatest significance and moment in their eyes? Let their eyes declare it. Let the whole drift of their thoughts and affections declare it. Does not the business of every day proceed on a constant exaggeration of things present, and as constant an extenuation of things future and eternal? It is thus that there runs a great practical illusion, through the whole system of their affairs. It may well be called a perpetual error, that has the dominion over them; and by acting perpetually upon it, their darkness thickens the more as they grow older—just like any other infatuation, which becomes the more powerful the longer it is persisted in. In the very wisdom of the secular man, there is throughout a radical fallacy—proceeding as it does on the fancied worth of that which is insignificant, on the magnitude of that which is paltry, on the endurance of that which is evanescent and perishable. The light which is in him is darkness, and how great therefore is that darkness! It envelops every thing. It distorts every thing. He sees, but it is through a false medium—so false, that even infinity is reversed into its opposite—the infinitely great Being regarded as nothing; the infinitely small absorbing every desire of the heart, and monopolising the whole field of vision. It is obvious that by the simple dispersion of this medium, the whole aspect and character of things would be changed. It would give rise to another and an opposite manifestation. It were more than the overthrow of an error. It were the subversion of a system of error—the removal of a false light, which tinged every thing and discoloured every thing. As by the hold of one right principle, we are enabled to rectify a thousand wrong conclusions—so, with but a right sense of eternity, those multiplied errors would vanish away, by which the whole of human existence is hourly and habitually infested. The grand deception of life

would be cleared away ; and on this one simple change in the objects of the mind, the whole body would become full of light.

It is in things of sacredness as in things of science. There is often a virtue in one principle to cast a pervading illumination and glory over the whole field of contemplation. The subordination of the thing that is formed, to Him who formed it is such a principle—it being one of universal application, and that leaves nothing untouched, as comprehensive of all that exists, of the Creator who made all of the creature who received his all. It is therefore well said, that the fear of God is the beginning, or the first principle of wisdom. The overpassing greatness of Eternity to Time, is another such principle—it being one that affixes its character of magnitude or minuteness to every object, of wisdom or folly to every pursuit. The two, we believe, are never apart—each being implicated with the other, so that the inlet of either to the mind, were the admission of a light that should overspread the whole of its perspective. And the man who looked singly to the interest of his Eternity, laying up all his treasure there ; or who looked singly to the will of his God, cleaving to him as the alone Master of his services—will experience the fulfilment of our text, the guidance of a celestial wisdom in all his doings, a glory from above shining on all his paths.

But there may be a singleness of eye either in the direction of Earth, or in the direction of Heaven ; and we hold it the special aim of our text, to warn against the vacillations of those, who look at both and strive to effect a compromise between them. They would fain unite the interests of both worlds ; and it will generally be found of such, that they look habitually to the one, and but occasionally to the other. Whenever the pursuit

of an everlasting good is superseded by the pursuit of a merely temporal good, it has something more than a distracting, it has a darkening effect also. The mind is not only divided between an object of sense and an object of faith ; but a deeper shade of concealment is thrown over the remote and unseen object. Immortality, viewed as a dogma, may be as zealously asserted as ever ; but immortality, viewed as a living and substantial reality, is sadly bedimmed by every act of practical devotion to the power of things present and things sensible. It may retain its place as an article of the creed, yet without being credited—for, be the profession what it may, to the man whose affections grovel among the things of earth, heaven is but a nonentity and a name. The very desire of any worldly thing, is an homage done to the worth and magnitude of that which is temporal ; and is fitted to disturb the estimate we should otherwise have formed, of the overpassing magnitude of that which is eternal. It lays us open to that most bewildering of all sophistry—the sophistry of the affections. When the choice and the judgment draw opposite ways, the judgment is at length perverted in the conflict and counteraction of the two adverse influences. The light of the understanding is, as it were, smothered under that perversity of the will by which it is constantly thwarted and overborne. The superior worth of eternity may, on occasions, be feebly recognized ; but the superior worth of time is always the principle that is fully acted on. In this war of contradiction, where the conduct perpetually belies the creed, and the creed as perpetually reclaims, but without effect against the conduct, there is an augmenting and aggravating darkness—till both the power and light of conscience are extinguished, and life settles down into a system of obstinate, often irrecoverable delusion.

SERMON XXI.

The Second Coming of Christ.

“Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.”—ACTS i. 11.

THERE are certain great steps, or successive periods, in the divine administration—each of which forms an era in the history of our world. The first scriptural era is from the Creation to the Flood. The second from the Flood to the call of Abraham. The third from the call of Abraham to the promulgation of the law in mount Sinai. The fourth is from the promulgation of the law to the end of the Jewish economy. And the last, within whose limits ours forms one of the many generations, is distinctly marked both by its epoch and by its close—the former by Christ's ascension from our world—the latter by His appearance in the sky, when the same Jesus who was taken up into Heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven.

It is good to connect our brief, our little day, with the roll and succession of these great changes in the spiritual jurisprudence of our species. It is elevating to look at the place which belongs to ourselves, in this magnificent progression; and it tends to sublime, to solemnize human life, as it were, above the vulgarity of its daily and familiar concerns—when thus enabled to assign the point which we occupy in the march or evolution of that great drama, which commences with the birth, and terminates with the dissolution of our world. But it does more than exalt the imagination. It serves both to inform, and powerfully to impress the conscience. It teaches what the attitude and the preparation are, which correspond to the high position that we fill, and to the high expectations that await us. Altogether its effect, or rather, perhaps, its tendency, is to abstract and to lift the soul above the dust of that earthliness in which it so habitually grovels; and, when thus mingling the calls of duty with the contemplation of the earlier and the later stages in the history of our

race, we as place ourselves at the side of the saints and the righteous men of other days, and rise to a sort of kindred elevation with the ancients of inspired writ—with the holy patriarchs who have gone before us.

At none of the periods which we have now specified, did God leave Himself without a witness, or ever abandon the care and government of our species. Often as the world may have lost sight of Him, He kept by the world, and made it the busy scene both of His purposes and fulfilments. Even when the world in its blindness thought least of God, God was not sitting in the state and distance of lofty unconcern to the world; but, intent on great designs, was He directing all the springs, and presiding over all the movements of its history. And so at each term of this mighty series of changes, we behold a demonstration of the Godhead. It was so, when, moved by the wickedness that was upon the earth, He by the waters of the flood, swept off all its living generations, and left but one memorial of our race in the preservation of one family. It was so again, when mankind were again lapsing into their old forgetfulness of Himself; and He, to keep up His name and His remembrance in the midst of them, singled out another family, and threw a wall of separation around them. It was most visibly so, when He made his descent upon Sinai; and the voice of the Eternal was heard by the thousands of Israel; and the flame, and the smoke, and the thunder, gave manifest tokens of a present Deity; and the law which issued from His lips, bespoke Him to be still the Governor of men, and still the asserting Lord of His own Creation. But most of all, among these evolutions of the Supreme which are already past, have we to regard that age of miracle when the Saviour lived,

and that event of deepest mystery when He died—when, the old economy waxing away like a temporary apparatus for some greater and more enduring consummation, and a new economy emerging out of the ruins and the tremendous overthrow of the one that had gone before it, gave distinct evidence of a new and a more advanced era in the government of our world. And this brings us downward to ourselves, upon whom the latter ends of the world have come. The era in which we live has had its striking outset, and it will have its awful termination. The ascent of our Saviour begun the era—the descent of our Saviour will finish it. There is a peculiar character which such a beginning and such an ending of our dispensation give to the dispensation itself; and the question is, what are our responding duties and responding expectations?

But we must first advert to the purpose, for which Christ came into the world. You are aware of God as its Moral Governor. You are aware both of a law written on the tablet of an express revelation, and of a law written upon our hearts. You know that Law and Government and Authority are words without meaning, if not accompanied by securities and sanctions; and, more particularly, if disobedience is not to be challenged and not to be reckoned with. With these undoubted principles, and the equally undoubted fact that all had fallen short of the commandments of God—in what other light can we regard mankind, than as a revolted family? and responsible for their defection, at the bar of that rightful sovereign whose authority they had set at naught? The question at issue, was one which affected the dignity of the Lawgiver; and there were an end of all jurisdiction, if God might enact and yet not enforce, or if man might disobey and yet not incur the condemnation and the penalty. Behold then the state to which we had reduced ourselves—a state of controversy with our Maker; and on the settlement of which, His attributes and the unchangeable principles of His government were at stake. It was indeed a fearful thing for our species, when there appeared no other way of deliverance from ruin, but that which would bring dishonour on the throne of Heaven, and

lay a reflection on the truth and majesty of Him who sitteth thereon. And hence the peculiar errand on which our Saviour came. It was to open wide the portals of mercy for a guilty world—yet to open them so, as to cast not an obscurity but a heightened lustre on all the other perfections of the Godhead. It was to resolve that mystery which angels desired to look into—to reconcile the honour of the law with the forgiveness of those who had broken it—and at once to heap blessings upon the head of the sinner, and to magnify all the prerogatives of the commandment that he had violated.—This was the knot of difficulty which had to be united. This was the wall of partition which had to be broken down. Or this the impassable gulph, over which there had to be thrown a high-way of communication between the rebels of our exiled world, and their offended Sovereign.

And we know, or at least we know in part, what our Saviour did and suffered to achieve this enterprise—of the descent that He made from Heaven; of the sojourn that He had on earth; of the incarnation by which He veiled the glories of His divinity, under the likeness of a man; of the preternatural conflicts, and temptations, and agonies, that He had to undergo; of His mysterious warfare with the powers of darkness; and the season of deep endurance that He had to travel through ere that victory was won, and His own arm had brought to Him salvation. A contest this, where were many spectators. The eminences of Heaven were crowned; and the darkness, and the earthquake, and the opening of graves, and the coming forth of their dead, all gave token to the big and busy importance of what was going on. It was amid these symptoms of distress in nature, that our Saviour expired; and the soul which He poured out an offering for sin, after the unknown history of a few days, re-entered the body from which it had departed; and, coming again into familiar converse with men, did He now manifest the new and the living way of access, that Himself had opened, and by which the farthest off in guilt and depravity amongst us might draw nigh unto God. And thus, having both finished the work of our reconcilia-

tion and proclaimed it, did He leave the world to the hopes and the appropriate duties of that new economy which Himself had instituted—of that new era which Himself had ushered in.

But, to complete our grounds for a practical application—let us further think of the relationship in which He now stands to the world; and of the regard which He now casts towards it; and of the interest wherewith He is now looking down, to see whether there be any consequent movement on our part, by which we might accord to the movement made upon His. When He returned to the place which He now occupies, He would be hailed by the hosts of Paradise as the Finisher of a great enterprise. It behoved to be a re-entrance of triumph, after the toils and the sufferings of an arduous undertaking; and loud and high must have been the gratulations of welcome to Him, who, travelling in the greatness of His strength over all obstacles, established a reunion, and reared a pathway of communication between Earth and Heaven. And let us only conceive, by what other and by what opposite feelings, must those of rapture and benevolent triumph have been succeeded—if, on looking to this pathway so laboriously reared, it had been found without a traveller—if, unmoved by all the signals of invitation and by all the facilities of a now provided access, the regardless world had remained as sluggish and alienated as before—if it had been found that the door of acceptance was opened in vain, and a highway of approach over the else dreary and untrodden interval was constructed in vain—and if, after the victory had been gotten, and the toil and the contest and the hazard of the great mediatorship been ended, unthankful man, in whose behalf it was all undertaken, should set it utterly at naught; and, cleaving to that world from which neither the threats of a coming judgment nor the offers of a present salvation could disengage him, he should, heedless alike of the punishment and of the pardon, stamp a nullity on all the wonders of redeeming love, and trample the Redeemer's work into utter and most affronting insignificance.

There are three distinct proprieties

which belong to the condition of those who live in our present era—the era that has begun with the ascent, and that is to terminate with the descent of the Saviour. The first is a high sense of the worth of that salvation which Christ hath achieved, and which He now offers to the children of men. The second is that change of desire and affection, which is induced by our acceptance of it. And the third is that abundant righteousness of life by which the profession of Christianity is adorned, and its Author and Finisher is well pleased.

I. What an outrage is cast on the Saviour's enterprise, when, instead of being prized and sought after as a thing of worth, it is slighted, and by those too, for whom it was designed and executed, as a thing of worthlessness. The likeliest case to it which we can imagine, is that of a physician, who announces himself as the inventor of a sovereign remedy; and circulates at large his gratuitous offers; and rears the magnificent office, to which in crowds his suffering patients might repair; and inscribes upon its front both the freeness and the efficacy of his great specific, and in such flaming characters as might be seen and read of all men. We ask you to think of the felt mortification, if, after this parade and expectancy, not one individual should be found, who responds to the big and the blazoned overtures—if, after weeks and months of idle tarrying, no single applicant should come to the door; and all the pomp, and all the promise of this enterprise, should be utterly put to shame by the neglect of a contemptuous and unbelieving public. Is it not grievous to think, that such is the very scorn, and such the very outrage now inflicted by the world upon the Saviour!—that He, the minister of the true sanctuary, and whose office it is to wait at the tabernacle of Heaven for the approaches of all who are weary and heavy-laden, is just so put to shame!—that in lightly esteeming Christ, we virtually treat Him and all His biddings and proclamations of welcome with the cruellest derision, even the derision of our indifference and distrust?—that thus we mock the enterprise on which He came, and cause His attendant angels to blush at the sight cast by the world upon Him,

who is so oft announced in the hearing of men, as the exalted Prince and the mighty Saviour? O, let us cease to marvel, when told, that the thunders of a violated law are but as soft and feeble whispers, when compared with the vengeance of a rejected gospel; and that in the day when Jesus shall so come from heaven, in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven, that on that day, the foulest profligacy of heathen lands, shall be more mildly dealt with, than the decent ungodliness of those who have heard of mercy and have despised it.

So, we need be at no loss to comprehend the principles which are now at work in Heaven, and which will at length break forth upon the world in that awful manifestation—the wrath of the Lamb. It really need not be marvelled at, that they, who do now slumber in the depths of spiritual lethargy and unconcern, shall then be overtaken with saddest fearfulness. The provocation is quite intelligible, which will then cause the insulted dignity of Heaven to look out in characters of menace on a despairing world. We might learn from the workings of our moral nature, how it is, that, simply by living as many of you do in neglect of the Saviour, and thus despising the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, you treasure up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. You have only to look to the distinctive character of our era. The Saviour hath gone up into Heaven, and hath there taken His place as a High Priest for sinners at the right hand of God. He is there waiting on. He is marking as it were the fruit and the efficacy of his own far-sounded achievement. He is observing how the world now replies to it, and is in earnest watch for the fruit of the travail of His own soul. Like the king who hath departed into a far country, and who is afterwards to return, he hath gone to some place of absence and mystery away from our world—whence He will come again, and take account of the affairs of His government. And meanwhile He eyes from afar, how it is that His overtures have sped, and how it fares with the gospel which He left behind Him. And the unavoidable result of such a state is,

that if you have received all this grace in vain—if, listless and lawless as ever, the offers of the gospel have failed to attract, even as the terrors of the broken commandment had failed to arouse you—if, sunk in profoundest apathy, you think not, and care not, of the dread alternative, that he who hath the Son hath life, and he who hath not the Son hath not life,—if the preaching of His Cross be foolishness in your ears, or at least so unproductive of influence, as to have brought no hope of Heaven into your hearts, and to have imprinted none of the character of Heaven upon your walk and conversation—if, in the busy prosecution of your own entire and unbroken earthliness, you still live at a distance from God; and, while He, by His Son, is stretching forth His hand you are disregarding—Be assured, as you would of any moral necessity, that He who went up to Heaven the gracious and inviting Saviour, will come down from Heaven the indignant judge; and, that if the intermediate season in which you now live and have your opportunity be not improved by you into the season of your redemption—it will be declared by Him on that day to have been the season in which you have sealed, with your own hands, the sentence of a final and everlasting reprobation.

One very palpable mark of your indifference to what Christ hath done, is that the report of it falls so heavily and so bluntly upon your hearing. Though proclaimed Sabbath after Sabbath—this brings no such relief, as that which captives feel when told of their coming liberty. The only exercise to which you seem at all moved by the utterance of a gospel truth, is that you recognise its orthodoxy, and so approve of it; and that without any visitation upon the soul, of the gladness and the hope and the triumph, which irradiated the walk of the primitive Christians. This is insulting to the Saviour, because it proves his salvation to be unbelieved and undervalued. It is a mortifying return for His services. He now looketh down from the eminence to which He had ascended; and it was at least a natural expectation, that the reopening of Heaven's gate upon the world, and the lifting away of those obstructions which had blocked the entrance there-

unto, would have set all in motion—that men would have testified their homage to this great enterprise, by the readiness and the rapture wherewith they accorded to it; and that thus it would have been responded to by earth's sinful families. Our pleasure in the offered redemption, would have been to the Redeemer the most pleasing of all acknowledgments. And what must be His opposite feeling, when, instead of this, the tidings, which ought to have lighted up an ecstacy in every bosom, are heard by this world's vast majority with perfect unconcern; and when, in reference to the mass and multitude of our species, the labour of His wondrous achievement has been wholly thrown away. That the gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus is treated by many as a useless thing, may be seen from the listlessness of many a Christian auditory, when the transaction is expounded; and from those intervals of many a day and many a week in the private history of individuals, throughout which, amid the urgency of life's ordinary cares, it is never thought of. It is the unimportance which they hereby put upon the Saviour—it is the cold and sullen apathy wherewith his overtures are received by them—it is the pre-engagement of their hearts with the frivolities of life, and the utter powerlessness even of the largest offers and the largest hopes of an inheritance above to do it away—it is that thankless lethargy, out of which the message of pardon and of the price wherewith it was obtained, is unable to move them—it is their insensibility, both to the great privilege which is held forth to sinners, and to the great expense of suffering and degradation and labour at which it was earned for them by the Saviour—These form the constituents of a provocation, which is now accumulating every day in the breast of the offended High Priest, and which, on that day when He shall come down from Heaven, even as He was seen go into Heaven, will fall with one overwhelming discharge upon them.

You may be enabled to conceive from this, why God has so much complacency, in the trust and in the rejoicing confidence, which a believer feels in the promises of the gospel. It is setting on the work of His own Son its proper estima-

tion. Our joy is a right acknowledgment, just as our indifference is a grievous and a highly displeasing affront. And thus it is, that when His disciples persisted in sluggishness and sorrow, Christ was grieved for it; and that God resents, as He would the imputation of a lie, when they to whom salvation is preached, will not lay their confiding hold upon it; and that the peace, and the joy, and the glorying of Faith, are all so acceptable in His sight; and that the dread and the distrust and the despondency, all of them sensations opposite to these, are felt by Him to be so injurious, that, among those who shall have part in the second death, are ranked the fearful and the unbelieving. Thus are we bidden to rejoice in the Lord; and when, in the face of all that our Saviour hath done, we remain in the bondage either of earthly griefs or of earthly affections, He is entitled to feel the indignation of slighted and underrated services.

II. But secondly, this acceptance of Christ involves in it something more than the admission of a new hope. It involves the acquisition of a new character; and this cannot be accomplished without what is painful to nature—the surrender of old desires and affections to the mastery of new desires and affections, which are substituted in their room. There is not merely the translation into a new hope. There is the translation into a new practical habit. The hope in fact will induce the habit. The man who looks with a delighted eye on the open gate of Heaven, and the now unobstructed path which leads to it—that man must, at the same time, be aspiring after Heaven's graces; and must have entered on those moralities both of heart and life, which give to Heaven all its gladness. A man could no more rejoice in the prospect of the real Heaven of Eternity, without a taste and a desire towards its spiritual excellence—than he could rejoice in the prospect of entering for life upon a foreign land, whose government and customs and people were every way hateful to him. It is thus that the faith of the gospel induces, or brings in sure and speedy train after it, the character of the gospel. The very entrance upon its hope implies a turning of the soul. By

it, there is not only a looking of the inner man after another portion—but there is a choice of that portion. The man who believes, takes up with Heaven as his eternal habitation; and this he cannot do without a transference of the heart to other things, than those whereby it wont to be occupied. Now, it is the aversion of men to this transference, which forms the great obstacle to their acceptance of the gospel. They do not believe, because they love the darkness rather than the light. Their heart is engaged with things present, and agreeably engaged; and hence their disinclination to things future. They have no other wish than to be as they are. The gravitation of their souls is towards earth; and they want not this to be thwarted or disturbed by any cause, that would impress an aspiring tendency in the opposite direction. This is the real secret of their indisposition to the overtures of the gospel. Their mind is darkened, just because their fond and foolish heart is darkened. They labour under a blindness, no doubt—but it is because they labour under a moral unwillingness. They do not see the evidence which would give them faith; but it is because they shut their eyes, or, which is the same thing, they will not attend to the evidence. This world contents them; and they are utterly indisposed for any overtures at all about another world. It is vain to tell them that Christ makes a free offer of happiness to them all—if it be not happiness, or be not pleasure, in the way they like it. They will not part with the earthly for the heavenly. They will not give up their carnal preferences, to which they are urged by nature—for those spiritual delights which are held out to every believer, for his recreation in time, for his full and satisfying enjoyment through eternity. They do not breathe with any kindredness of feeling in a spiritual atmosphere; and, children as they are of sense and secularity, they refuse to turn from their own way. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life; and He, looking down upon them from the mediatorial throne to which He has been exalted, sees, that, after all He has done to roll away the obstacles between earth and heaven—that after the toil and the agony of the great propitia-

tion have all been expended—that after barriers have been levelled, and crooked places been made straight, and rough places plain, and a highway for sinners has been thrown across the dark and dreary infinite which separated them from God—that after by the strength of His own right arm he had forced this mysterious passage, and planted upon it the flag of invitation—He now sees, after He has thus brought eternity within their reach, that, fastened in the thralldom of their own base and inglorious affections, they remain immoveable; that they continue to grovel as before, and it matters not to them what facilities have been struck out or what the avenues that are now opened to the paradise above—because earth is dearer to them than Heaven; and the delights of this sensible though passing world far more enchanting to their spirits, than all the splendid honours and all the offered joys of immortality.

And it is just because this rejection of the gospel is a thing of will upon our side, that it is a thing of provocation upon His side. Had our unbelief been the blindness of those who could not see, there would have been no room for wrath on the part of the Saviour. But it is the blindness of those who will not see; and it is this which gives its moral force to the remonstrance—"Ye will not come—or rather ye are not willing to come that ye may have life." We can be at no loss to perceive, how the Saviour must stand affected by this treatment on man's part of that economy over which He now presides, and which He Himself hath so laboriously instituted. The scorn, or at least the apathy, wherewith man puts the glories of the purchased inheritance away from him—the choice that he still makes of time, after immortality has been thus brought near to him—the inefficiency of the gospel with all its encouragements, to lure him from the world and bring him to reconciliation with God—the sinful and the sordid appetency for earth, which not even the now accessible Heaven with its pure and perpetual joys can overcome—the inert and invincible sluggishness, wherewith he still adheres to the carnalities of the old man, and from which all the proclamations of grace cannot move him—the busy rounds of

pleasure or of gain or of ambition, at which he keeps plying as assiduously, as if earth were the platform on which he was to expiate for ever—All these mark such an obstinate affinity to sense, such a rooted dislike and diversity of his taste from all sacredness, as will go most effectually on the day of judgment to characterize and to condemn him. The free gospel hath acted as a criterion, for fixing on which side of the question between earth and Heaven it is that his affections lie. And He who sees him from the place of ascension which He now occupies—He who hath consecrated for him, by His own blood, a path by which the sinner if he will might return unto God—if in the face of this the sinner will not, might not He the Saviour, on the day in which He comes down and takes account of the world, fill his mouth with an overwhelming argument? Will not that be a clear justice, which shuts out from the high and the holy abode, him who all life long hath persisted in the earthliness which he loved, and from which even the open gate of Heaven and the voice of welcome that issued therefrom could not disengage him? In going up unto Heaven Christ is said to have arisen there for our justification. But in coming down from Heaven, He will come for the enhanced condemnation of those who have declined His grace, and so have kept by their own guiltiness. They shall be made to eat the fruit of their own ways; and as they chose to walk in their own counsels, by these counsels they shall fall.

That prisoner is not to blame, who makes no attempt to escape from the dungeon whose gates are impregably shut against him. But should he refuse the guidance of the benefactor who has thrown open these gates, and who offers to conduct him to a place of enlargement, where he shall have air and light and liberty—he verily is the author of his own undoing, if he pine and perish among the noxious damps of his prison-house. And it is thus that Christ now offers to set the spiritual captive free. He hath cleared away all legal obstructions. He hath provided an open door of access unto God. He hath opened a clear exit for us all from the place of condemnation, and now invites us to that

glorious liberty which consists in the service of love and willingness. It is not easy to conceive the physical preference of a dark and dismal confinement, to a free range on the domain of nature; but we see exemplified every day, the moral preference of a continued thralldom amongst the idolatries of sense and of the world, to an outlet or emancipation of the soul into the regions of sacredness and of spiritual health and of spiritual harmony. Ours is the era of a great embassy from heaven to earth; and men are beseeched to make good that escape from slavery which has been provided in the gospel; and Christ, from the eminence on which He now stands, is watching and witnessing how His messengers are received and what is the effect of their solicitations. This is the character of our interesting period; and our doom for eternity hangs upon it. It is fixed by our own choice. Should we love to breathe in the atmosphere of spiritual death, it is the only atmosphere that we shall breathe in for ever. And if now that Christ hath gone up into Heaven, we follow Him not in faith and by upward aspirations there—when He again comes down from Heaven, He will recognise us to be still carnal—He will deal with us as enemies.

III. But Christianity implies something more than one great and initial surrender of affection on the part of the inner man. There are daily and hourly services, which come historically after this. There is something more than one great revolution from the old habit of nature. We do not merely pass into another state. We enter upon another path; and, in so doing, launch forth among all the activities of a sustained and unremitting progress. It is not enough that there be in our heart the desires of righteousness—there must be upon our history the deeds of righteousness. Christ becomes the master of our services, as well as of our affections; and it is not only the heart which responds to Him in gratitude, but the hand moves, and is obedient at the bidding of his voice. The one, in fact, is the test of the other. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." To complete the relation between Christ and His disciples, He must be throned

in authority over them, as well as the supreme object of their regards; and then it is that His doctrine, instead of a controversial speculation, becomes the efficient principle both of a new character and of a new life. The ultimate design of His economy, in fact, is not to justify but to sanctify men. It is to evolve a new moral harmony out of the chaos of our present world—and then only do His word and doctrine prosper unto that for which they have been sent, when the disciples thereof emerge into virtue, and become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is when He succeeds in making you holy and obedient creatures, that He sees in you of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. The same eye which gazed with delight on the lilies of the field, perceives with a higher delight the efflorescence of Heaven's graces upon your person. The great object of His administration, is to build up and beautify a moral landscape, in the midst of which He might everlastingly rejoice. And for this purpose, He who judgeth by your fruits, would train and transform you into trees of righteousness, which, though rooted in the soil and sediment of the world, may, under the cultivation of His own spiritual husbandry, be at length meet for being transplanted into the paradise of God. Now, it is by acts of Heavenly obedience, that you promote this heavenly vegetation. It is by the doings of the hand on the side of virtue, that you strengthen and confirm still more the desires of the heart after it. It is by the busy conduct of the disciple, that a reflex influence is sent back upon his soul; and all those principles are fixed more tenaciously than before, which enter into the formation of the disciple's character. And so by the readier humanity, and the godlier watchfulness, and soberness, and fear of every day, do you rise from one degree of grace unto another; and carry onward that great object of sanctification, which the heart of your Redeemer is, if not solely, yet supremely set upon.

Thus it is, that, by the deeds done in the body, you will be judged in the great day of reckoning. It is upon these that our Saviour will demonstrate you to be His own. As the tree is known by its fruits, so He will make known by your

deeds to the august assembly of men and of angels, that you are of His husbandry, and fit for being removed into His Father's vineyard in Heaven. It is worthy of observation, that, on the sentence being declared, it will be said that you are His—not inasmuch as you have believed, nor inasmuch as you have desired, but inasmuch as you have done. Your destiny will be made to hang direct upon your doings—as being in truth the best vouchers, both for the feelings of your heart, and the faith of your understanding. And we bid you think therefore, of the busy interest and regard wherewith your judge in Heaven is now looking on; and of the book of record and remembrance which is now before Him; and of the materials which He is now gathering from your each day's history, for the examinations and the judgments of a future day. He is now on that post of observation, whither He has ascended for a season, and whence he descends the whole line of your history in the world. But that season will come to its close; and then there will ensue another great movement in God's administration. He who was seen go into Heaven, will again come down from Heaven; and will be met in living array by the men of all generations. He will come fraught with the archives of your present history; and, now your vigilant and unerring witness, will He then be your impartial judge. Do you live under an affecting sense of these plain but all important realities? Do you ever once think of Christ's eye being upon you? Do you ever once think of His judgment awaiting you? Do these enter at all as elements into your deliberation? And we would ask whether it is possible that you can stand then with acceptance before him—if now, the general habit of your mind be that of listless unconcern, either to the cognizance which He takes of you at present, or to the reckoning which He will have with you in future—braving alike the omniscience of His present regards, the justice and the certainty of His coming retributions?

And now would we have you to lay it upon your consciences, whether you indeed lie under a real and practical sense of the economy which has been

set up at this period of the world—whether you conform to the spirit and the character of God's existing administration—whether, while the Judge at His right hand is impending over you and marking all your ways, you at the same time feel and move as if an eye from Heaven were looking on—or whether, as if disjoined from all relationship with aught that is above, or as if the planet that you occupy had drifted away beyond the cognizance of the upper world, is the whole style of your history upon earth just what it would have been, though the ascended Jesus had taken His eternal leave; and, on quitting the abodes of humanity, had quitted all superintendence of our concerns? But he causes us to know in the text, that He has not so quitted us—that He still keeps a hold of our species—that, instead of having left us for ever, He is to come again and to have a visible meeting with each and all of the members of the human family—that, however now He may stand concealed from mortal view in the remoteness and mystery of the place to which He has gone, the time is coming when every eye shall behold Him; and the gaze of a universal world shall be turned towards Him, as He approaches the judgment-seat fraught with the materials of a solemn examination; and which materials He is now gathering from the doings of your present day, and of your past yesterday, and of your future morrow—thereby stamping an eternal importance on all the passages of your familiar history, and giving to the hourly details of your business in life a bearing on your destiny for ever. And tell me, ye men who from Sabbath to Sabbath breathe in no other air than that of irreligion, and who if you do come to church receive but a passing emotion, that, like the glow of sentiment or poetry, soon vanishes away—tell me how it is possible that you can escape the frown and the condemnation and the lawful penalty, when thus the whole habit of your existence is at utter variance with the realities of your state; and you shall have passed from your infancy to your grave as recklessly along, as if there were to be no resurrection, no trial, no fearfulness beyond death, no life that can

feel or suffer or be the subject of wrath and anguish and tribulation through eternity.

We may conclude with stating what appears to us one great distinction between a religionist and an ordinary man. There is a pervading unity and greatness of object in the life of the former. In that of the latter there is a fitful and fluctuating waywardness. The one is like a voyage, where the drift of every movement is towards a certain quarter of the heavens, and with the view to a fixed place of arrival. The other is like the random, the ever-varying course of a vessel, that has been abandoned and is at the mercy of a thousand capricious impulses. The one, in selecting his end, has shot ahead as it were of all that is intermediate between him and the grave; and so his high and habitual reference is ever towards that place in the history of his being, which forms the exit of his time—the entrance of his eternity. The other may have selected his ends also; but lying a short way in the distance before him, they are ever shifting and shaping anew among the mutabilities of life, with the deceptions of human fancy, with the disappointments of human foresight. The one familiarly conversant with the great elements of death and judgment and life everlasting, moves along the path which bears him onward with the lofty consciousness of one, the simplicity yet comprehensive grandeur of whose aim sublimates his spirit above the cares and the passions of commonplace humanity. The other, heedless and perhaps unseeing of the remote but ever-during interest of his existence, vacillates and is lost in the countless multitude of those lesser influences, each of which gains one little hour of ascendancy, and then passes fruitless and forgotten away from him. His journey is like the aimless ramble of a schoolboy, when compared to the high bearing of him who walks through life with the gait of an immortal creature—who knows that every footstep brings him nearer to Heaven, and whose daily advances in sanctification are the stepping-stones by which he is conducted to Heaven's glory.

The advice of that wise moralist, Dr. Johnson, to a friend, under the discomfort of some sore annoyance—was to be-

think himself of what a trifle it should appear that day twelvemonth. And thus it is that human life is dissipated in a series of trifles. On looking back to that busy alternation of cares, and wishes, and anxieties, each of which has in its turn been the short-lived tenant of man's restless and ever-brooding spirit, we cannot miss the reflection—what a waste both of comfort and energy on topics which, after all, have been productive of nothing. It is high time to recall ourselves from these fugitive vanities—to strike a nobler aim, and seek a more enduring interest—and, for this purpose, to cast a further anticipation on the futurity which lies before us. And along the whole of this perspective, there seems no event, the contemplation of which is more fitted to still the spirit into seriousness, or bring it up to the high resolves of Christianity, than the coming advent of the Saviour—an event on one side of which lie all the recollections of time, and on the other side all the retributions of eternity. Meanwhile, and ere He take the decisive movement from the mercy-seat which

He now fills in Heaven, to the judgment-seat which He then will occupy on earth, He bids you all flee from the coming wrath—He holds out even to the guiltiest of you all the sceptre of an offered reconciliation—He plies you alike with the overtures of pardon and the calls of repentance; a pardon sealed by the blood of a satisfying atonement, in which He invites you to trust, and a repentance achieved through the aids of a strengthening spirit, for which he invites you to pray. This is the season of your full and welcome opportunity. That will be the day of your trial. Now you are urged by the entreaties of a free gospel, and by compliance therewith, you propitiate the wrath of the offended Saviour. Then, should you have withheld compliance, will you be judged by the requisitions of a fiery law; and the unaverted, the aggravated wrath of Heaven, will descend in judgment upon your heads. “O kiss the Son, then, lest He be angry, and while He is in the way—for blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him.”

SERMON XXII.

God is Love.

“God is love.”—**JOHN** iv. 16.

DID we only give credit to the text, did we but view God as love—on this simple translation into another belief, would there be the translation into another character. We should feel differently of God, the moment that we thought of Him differently; and with the establishment of this new faith, there would instantly emerge a new heart and a new nature.

For, let us attend, in the first place, to the original conception of Humanity, placed and constituted as it now is, in reference to this great and invisible Being—secondly, let us adduce the likeliest considerations, the likeliest arguments, by which to overcome this conception, and to find lodgement in the human breast for another and an opposite con-

ception in its place—And, thirdly, let us stop to contemplate the effect of such a change in the state of man's understanding as to God, on the whole system of his feelings and conduct.

I. Under the first general head, then, let it be observed—that there are two reasons why we should conceive God to be so actuated as to inspire us with terror, or at least with distrust; instead of conceiving Him to be actuated by that love which the text ascribes to Him; and which were no sooner believed than it would set us at ease, and inspire us with delightful confidence.

1. The first of these reasons, which we shall allege, admits of being illustrated by a very general experience of

human nature. It may be shortly stated thus—Whenever placed within the reach of any Being, of imagined power, but without of unknown purpose—that Being is the object of our dismay. It is not necessary for this, that we should be positively assured of His hostility. It is enough, that, for aught we know, He may be hostile; and that, for aught we know, He has strength enough for the execution of His displeasure. Uncertainty alone will beget terror; and the fancies of mere ignorance, are ever found to be images of fear. It is thus, that a certain recoil of dread and aversion, would be felt in the presence of a strange animal, whatever the gentleness of its nature—if simply its nature were unknown. And hence, too, the fear of a child for strangers, who must first make demonstration of their love by their gifts, or their caresses—ere they can woo it into confidence. And so also the consternation of savages, on the first approach of a mighty vessel to their shores—more especially if in smoke, and thunder, and feats of marvellous exhibition, it hath given the evidence of its power. It may be a voyage of benevolence; but this they as yet know not. They only behold the power; and power beheld singly is tremendous. And many often are the vain attempts at approximation, the fruitless demonstrations and signals of good-will, ere they can conquer their distrust; or recall them to free and fearless intercourse, from the woods or the lurking-places to which they had fled for safety. Such, then, is the universal bias of nature, whenever the power is known and the purpose is unknown. Men give way to the visions of terror, to the dark misgivings of a troubled imagination. The quick and instant suggestion, on all these occasions, is that of fear; and the difficulty, an exceeding difficulty, for it is as if working against a constitutional law or tendency of the heart, is to reassure it into confidence.

If such then be the effect on human feelings of a power that is known, associated with purposes that are unknown—we are not to wonder that the great and invisible God is invested to our eyes with the imagery of terror. It is verily because great, and at the same time invisible, that we so invest Him. It is precisely

because the Being who hath all the energies of nature at command, is at the same time shrouded in mystery impenetrable—that we view Him as tremendous. All regarding Him is inscrutable—the depths of His past eternity—the mighty and unknown extent of his creation—the secret policy or end of His government, a government that embraces an infinity of worlds, and reaches forward to an infinity of ages—All these leave a being so circumscribed in his faculties as man, so limited in his duration and therefore in his experience, in profoundest ignorance of God and of His ways. And then the inaccessible retirement in which He hides himself from the observation of His creatures here below—the clouds and darkness which are about the pavilion of His residence—the utter impotency of man, to pierce his way beyond the confines of that materialism which hems and incloses him, so as at all to fathom the essence of the Godhead, or to obtain any distinct apprehension of His personality and His Being—the silence, the deep unbroken silence of many centuries, insomuch that nature, however distinctly it may tell of His existence, is to our senses a screen of interception in the way of nature's God. There is a mighty gulph of separation—an interval, a mysterious and untrodden interval, between the spirituality of the Godhead on the one hand, and all that the eye of man can see or the ear of man can hear upon the other—a barrier, which man with all his powers of curious and searching inspection cannot force; and across which God, at least for many ages, hath sent forth no direct or visible manifestation of His own person or His own character. And so, whatever the confidence or the manifested kindness may have been in those primeval days, when God walked with man in the bowers of his earthly paradise and among the smiling beauties of its garden—certain it is, that now, exiled from the divine presence, all his confidence has fled. Now that the divinity is withdrawn from mortal view, man trembles at the thought of Him; and the dread imagination, whether of a present wrath or a coming vengeance, is the only homage which nature renders to an unknown God.

And there is nothing in the varying

aspects of Creation, or in the varying fortunes of human life, which can at all alleviate our perplexity, in regard to the final designs or character of God. For if, on the one hand, the smile and the sunshine and the softer beauties of the landscape, would seem to picture forth the milder virtues of the Divinity—these are alternated by other and opposite expressions, in the sweeping flood, and the angry tempest, and that dread thunder from the skies wherewith the mysterious Being who rules in the firmament above overawes a prostrate world. And if, on the one hand, the shelter and abundance and natural affection and unnumbered sweets of many a cottage home, might serve to indicate the profuse benevolence of Him who is the great, the universal Parent of the human family—on the other, the cares; the heart-burnings; the moral discomforts; often the pining sickness, or cold and cheerless poverty; more largely and palpably still the fierce contests unto blood and mutual destruction, even among civilized men; and lastly, as if to crown and consummate all, the death, the unsparing and relentless death, which sweeps off generation after generation, and, in like ghastly triumph, whether among the abodes of the prosperous or unhappy, after the brief subsistence of a few little years, lays all the varieties of human fortune in the dust—These, on the other hand, bespeak, if not a malignant, at least an offended Deity. It is in the midst of such contradictory appearances, that the question of the divine administration becomes a profound, a hopeless enigma—at once to exercise and baffle all spirits; and the lofty, the unapproachable Being, who presides over it, is the object of our dread because to us mantled in deepest obscurity, is terrible because unknown.

We have only explained one of the two reasons, why nature's conception of God, is such as to inspire terror rather than our grateful or rejoicing confidence; and, ere we proceed to the consideration of the second, we feel strongly inclined, though we should thereby anticipate the next head of discourse, to state, even now, and in immediate sequence to our first reason for thinking hardly and adversely of God, to state, and as far as we

are able, enforce the appropriate counter-part argument, by which that reason may be met and ought to be overcome.

The argument then that we are in quest of, is not to be found in the whole range or within the whole compass of visible nature. It is only to be found in one of the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A certain distrust, nay a certain terror, will still continue to haunt and to disquiet us—so long as any ambiguity continues to rest on the character of God. But there is such an ambiguity; and which no observation of nature, or no experience of human life can dissipate. Whatever of the falsely or the superstitiously fearful imagination conjures up, because of God being at a distance, can only be dispelled by God, brought nigh unto us. The spiritual must become sensible. The vail which hides the unseen God from the eye of mortals, must be somehow withdrawn. Now all this has been done once, and done only, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ—He being the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. The Godhead became palpable to human senses; and man could behold, as in a picture or in distinct personification, the very characteristics of the Being who made him. Then truly did men hold converse with Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. They saw His glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and the very characteristics of the Divinity Himself may be said to have appeared in authentic representation before them, when God manifest in the flesh descended on Judea and sojourned amongst its earthly tabernacles. By this mysterious movement from Heaven to Earth, the dark the untrodden interval, which separates the Corporeal from the Spiritual, was at length overcome. The King eternal and invisible was then placed within the ken of mortals. They saw the Son, and in Him saw the Father also—so that while contemplating the person and the history of a man, they could make a study of the Godhead.

And it is thus the unequivocal demonstration has been given, that God is love. We could not scale the heights of that mysterious ascent, which might bring us within view of the Godhead. It is by

the descent of the Godhead unto us, that this great manifestation has been given; and we learn and know of God, from the wondrous history of Him who went about doing good continually. We could not go in search of the viewless Deity, through the depths and the vastnesses of Infinitude; or discover the secret, the untold purposes, that were brooding there. But in no way could a more palpable exhibition have been made, than when the eternal Son shined in humanity stepped forth on the platform of visible things, and on the proclaimed errand to seek and to save us. We can now read the character of God, in the human looks and in the human language of Him, who is the very image and visible representation of the Deity. We see it in the tears of sympathy which He shed. We hear it in the accents of tenderness which fell from Him. Even His very remonstrances were those of a meek and gentle nature; for they are remonstrances of deepest pathos, the complaints of a longing and affectionate spirit, against the sad perversity of men bent on their own undoing. When visited with the fear that God looks hardly and adversely towards us, let us think of Him who had compassion on the famishing multitudes; of Him who mourned with the sisters of Lazarus; of Him who, when He approached the city of Jerusalem wept over it, at the thought of its coming desolation. And knowing that the Son is like unto the Father, let us re-assure our hopes with the certainty that God is love.

2. But there is still another reason, why, instead of viewing God as love, we should apprehend Him to be a God of severity and of stern displeasure. And it is not, like the former, but a fearful imagination, a mere product of uncertainty—or resulting from a headlong bias, on the part of the human mind, to the superstitiously dark and terrific, when employed in contemplating what is vast and at the same time unknown. It has a firmer basis to rest upon—not conjured up by fancy from a distant land of shadows; but drawn from the intimacies of one's own consciousness, and suggested by one of the surest facts or findings in the homestead of man's moral nature. The truth is that, by the constitution of humanity, there is a law of right and wrong in

every heart; and which each possessor of that heart knows himself to have habitually violated. But more than this. Along with the felt certainty of such a law, there is the resistless apprehension of a Lawgiver; of a God offended by the disobedience of His creatures; of a Judge, and so of a judgment that awaits us; of a governor, or king in Heaven, between whom and ourselves there is a yet unsettled controversy, and because of which we are disquieted with the thought of a reckoning and a vengeance that are to come. We cannot view God as Love, at the very time that conscience so powerfully tells us to view Him as an enemy. Even though the lights of Nature and Christianity should conspire to inform us that love is a general characteristic of the Divinity, we cannot feel the personal or practical influence of such a contemplation, so long as we are sensible of His special and merited displeasure; and that the truth and the justice and the high and holy attributes of a nature which is unchangeable, seem imperiously to require that this displeasure shall be executed.—While haunted by the misgivings of a guilty nature, which tells us of our own danger and our own insecurity, we could no more delight ourselves with the general benevolence of God—than we could luxuriate in tasteful contemplation over the beauties, which, far and wide, even to the most distant horizon, surrounded the mountain's base, if ourselves exposed to the menaces of a bursting volcano that was above our head. It is thus that we lose all sense of God, so long as we view God through the medium of our own troubled consciences. Even though reasoning alone were to establish this beautiful property in God, as an article of calm and philosophical conviction, the agitations of terror grounded on the consciousness of our self-deservings, would disturb this conviction or displace it altogether. This is not a mere spectral alarm as the former, but has both a definite object and definite cause; and, instead of an airy imagination, is grounded on the universal sense, which nature has of its own actual and ascertained guiltiness.

And this apprehension is not more general than it is strong, and not to be overcome by a mere eloquent or sentimental representation of the Deity—as if

He possessed but the one characteristic of tenderness; or as if this were the single excellence of a moral nature, signalized by all that is high and all that is holy.—There is a meagre theology that would fain resolve the entire character of God into the one attribute of kindness; but there is a theology of conscience that maintains the ascendancy notwithstanding, and keeps its ground against this frail imagination. To Him who is seated on the throne of the universe, we, in spite of ourselves, ascribe the virtues of the Sovereign as well as the virtues of the parent; and, however much it might have suited our convenience and our wishes, that we could at all times have taken refuge in the general and indefinite placability of God, there are certain immutabilities of truth and nature that cannot thus be disposed of. For, attempt it as we will, we cannot find repose in the imagination of a law without enforcements, of a lawgiver without authority, of a government without sanctions, of a sentence without effect, and so of guilt without the execution of its proclaimed and threatened penalty. And thus the ever-meddling conscience within, as irrepressible as it is importunate, keeps man in perpetual fear of God; and tells him, with felt authority too, that it is a well-grounded fear. We cannot rid from our apprehension a jurisprudence, a strict and guarded and awful jurisprudence, which enters into the relationship between Heaven and earth; and the honours of which cannot be let down, without despoiling the sanctuary of God of all that is great and all that is venerable.—We cannot think of God with confidence or hope, whilst we think of ourselves as delinquents at the bar of that august and unviolable tribunal where He sitteth in judgment over us. We cannot even see Him to be love, through the troubled medium of remorse and fear; and far less rejoice or take comfort in it as a love directed to ourselves.

Now, as in counteraction to our first reason for viewing God with apprehension and thus losing sight of Him as a God of love, we adduced one peculiar doctrine of Christianity—so, in counteraction to our second reason, we now adduce another peculiar doctrine of Christianity; and that by far the noblest

and most precious of its articles. The one was the doctrine of the Incarnation. The other is the doctrine of the Atonement. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins.” By the former, a conquest has been made over the imaginations of ignorance. By the latter, a conquest has been made over, not the imaginations, but the solid and well-grounded fears of guilt. By the one, or through means of a divine incarnation, we are told of the Deity embodied; and thus the love of God has been made the subject, as it were, of ocular demonstration. By the other, or through means of a divine Sacrifice, we are told of the Deity propitiated; and thus the love of God has been made to shine forth, in midst of the law’s sustained and vindicated honours. It is this conjunction of mercy with truth and righteousness; it is this harmony of all the divine attributes in the scheme of reconciliation; it is this skilful congruity established in the gospel, between the salvation of the sinner and the authority as well as justice of the Sovereign—which so adapts the mediatorial economy under which we sit, to all the wants and exigencies of our fallen nature. A naked proclamation of mercy could not have set the conscience at rest, could never have effectually hushed those perpetual misgivings wherewith the heart of the sinner is haunted,—who, by the very constitution of his moral nature, must, when he does think of God, think and tremble before him as a God of justice. This it is which letteth; and, ere peace and confidence can be fully or firmly restored to the sinner’s distempered bosom, that which letteth must be taken out of the way. And it has been taken out of the way—for now nailed to the cross of Christ. In this glorious spectacle do we see the mystery resolved; and the compassion of the parent meeting in fullest harmony, with the now asserted, the now vindicated prerogatives of the lawgiver. We there behold justice satisfied and mercy made sure. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a halo of all the attributes; and yet the pre-eminent manifestation there is of God as love—for it is love, not only rejoicing over all the works, but shrined in full consent while

shedding enhanced lustre amidst all the perfections of the divine nature.

And here it should be especially noticed, that the atonement made for the sins of the world, though its direct and primary object be to vindicate the truth and justice of the Godhead—instead of casting obscurity over His love, only gives more emphatic demonstration of it. For instead of love, simple, and spontaneous, and finding its unimpeded way, without obstruction and without difficulty to the happiness of its objects—it was a love, which, ere it could reach the guilty millions whom it longed after, had to face the barrier of a moral necessity, that to all but infinite strength and infinite wisdom was insuperable. It was a love which had to force aside the mountain of those iniquities that separated us from God. The high and holy characteristics of a Being who is unchangeable stood in its way; and the mystery which angels desired to look unto, was how the King Eternal who sitteth on heaven's throne could at once be a just God and a Saviour. The love of God, in conflict with such an obstacle and triumphing over it, is a higher exhibition of the attribute, than all the love which radiates from His throne on the sinless families of the unfallen. And then we are taught, that, for the achievement of this mighty deliverance, not only had the Captain of our salvation to travel in the greatness of His strength, but to sustain a deep and dreadful endurance. The redemption of mankind was wrought out, in the midst of agonies and cries and all the symptoms of a sore and bitter humiliation. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; on Him the chastisement of our peace was laid; and when bowing down His head unto the sacrifice, He had to bear the full burden of a world's expiation. The affirmation that God loveth the world is inconceivably heightened in significance and strength of evidence, to him who owns the authority of Scripture, and has treasured up these sayings—that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; or, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; or, that herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent His Son into the world, to be

the propitiation for our sins. There is a moral, a depth and intensity of meaning, a richness of sentiment that the Bible calls unsearchable, in the cross of Christ. It tells a sinful world that God is righteousness; and it as clearly and emphatically tells us that God is love.

But, for the purpose of making this doctrine available to ourselves personally, we must view the love of God, not as a vague and inapplicable generality, but as specially directed, nay actually proffered, and that pointedly and individually to each of us. It is not sufficiently adverted to by inquirers, nor sufficiently urged by ministers, that the constitution of the gospel warrants this appropriation of its blessings by each man for himself.

This all-important truth, so apt to be lost sight of in lax and hazy speculation, may be elicited from the very terms in which the gospel is propounded to us, from the very phraseology in which its overtures are couched. It is a message of good news unto *all people*—to me therefore as one of the people, for where is the scripture which tells that I am an outcast? Christ is set forth as a propitiation for the sins of the *world*; and God so loved the *world* as to send His Son into it. Let me therefore, who beyond all doubt am in the world, take the comfort of these gracious promulgations—for it is only if out of the world, or away from the world, that they do not belong to me. The delusive imagination in the hearts of many, and by which the gospel is with them bereft of all significance and effect, is, that they cannot take any general announcement or general invitation that is therein to themselves, unless in virtue of some certain mark or certain designation, by which they are specially included in it. Now, in real truth, it is all the other way. It would require a certain mark, or certain designation, specially to exclude them; and without some such mark which might expressly signalize them, they should not refuse a part in the announcements or invitations of the gospel. If the gospel have made no exception of them, they either misunderstand that gospel, or by their unbelief make the author of it a liar, if they except themselves. They demand a particular warrant, for believing that they

are comprehended within the limits of the gospel call to reconciliation with God. Now the call is universal; and it would rather need a particular warrant, to justify their own dark and distrustful imagination of being without its limits.

When in the spirit of a perverse or obstinate melancholy, they ask their Christian minister—what is the ground on which he would bid them in to the household of God's reconciled family?—well may he ask, what is the ground on which they would keep themselves out? He stands on a triumphant vantage-footing for his own vindication. His commission is to preach the gospel to *every* creature under heaven, and that takes them in—or to say that *whosoever* cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out, and that takes them in—or behold I stand at the door and knock, if *any* man will open I shall enter into friendship and peace with him, that also takes them in—or look unto me *all* ye ends of the earth and be saved; there is no outcast spoken of here, and that too takes them in—or, *every* man who asketh receiveth; and surely, if language have a meaning, that takes them in—or Christ came into the world to save *sinners*; and, unless they deny themselves to be sinners, that takes them in. In a word, although they may cast themselves out, the primary overtures of the gospel recognise no outcast. They are not forbidden by God—they are only forbidden by themselves. There is no straitening with Him. The straitening is only in their own narrow and suspicious and ungenerous bosoms. It is true they may abide in spiritual darkness if they will—even as a man can, at his own pleasure, immure himself in a dungeon, or obstinately shut his eyes. Still it holds good, notwithstanding, that the light of the Sun in the Firmament is not more open to all eyes, than the light of the Sun of Righteousness is for the rejoicing of the spirits of all flesh. The blessings of the gospel are as accessible to all who will, as are the water or the air or any of the cheap and common bounties of nature. The element of Heaven's love is in as universal diffusion among the dwelling-places of men, as is the atmosphere they breathe in. It solicits admittance at every door; and the ignorance or unbelief of man are the only ob-

stacles which it has to struggle with. It is commensurate with the species; and may be tendered, urgently and honestly tendered, to each individual of the human family.

III. Let us now suppose, in any instance, that to the tender on the one side there is an acceptance upon the other; that God is taken at His word; and, instead of being regarded with jealousy or terror as a distant and inaccessible lawgiver, that He is beheld as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ our Lord; that the dark and before impenetrable veil, which hitherto had mantled the benign aspect of the divinity is withdrawn; that the mercy-seat is seen in Heaven, not the less to be relied on in its being mercy met with truth; that disclosure is made of the love with its smiles of welcome which beams and beckons there, not the less but the more to be trusted and rejoiced in, that it is a love in full conjunction with righteousness—a love consecrated with the blood of an everlasting covenant, and shrined conspicuous and triumphant amid the honours of a vindicated law. Only imagine a translation of this sort, a translation truly out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and do you not perceive, that, with the light of the gospel in the mind, the love of the gospel in the heart will follow in its train? and that the love of goodwill in God, when once seen and recognised by us, will surely draw our love of gratitude back again? If we had but the perception, the emotion would come unbidden, or, in the words of the apostle, if we knew and believed the love which God hath to us, we should love God because He first loved us.

And here we may understand the regenerating power of Faith. One of its functions is to justify. But its higher and greater function is to sanctify men. Let but the cold obstruction of unbelief be removed; and from that moment, the emancipated heart, as if by the operation of a charm, will beat freely and willingly in love to God, and love for all His services. This new faith were the turning-point of a new character; and in the difference between God viewed as an object of terror, and God viewed as an object of confidence—on that single differ-

ence, a complete moral revolution is suspended. Let me be made to know and to believe that God loves me; and, by a law of my mental constitution, I shall be made to love Him back again. The intellectual precedes the moral change. It is doctrine, an article of doctrine, not in the place which it occupies as the dogma of a theological system, but as actually seated in the heart and the article there of a substantial and living creed—it is this which subdues the whole man into a new creature. The executive power of working this great transformation lies in the truth. In other words, let the faith of the gospel enter the breast of any individual, and it will renovate the man. Let the faith be universal, and we shall have a renovated world.

We might here indulge in the brilliant perspective of a regenerated species, and that through the practicable stepping-stone, of a declared gospel—seeing that if its doctrine of God loving the world were as generally accepted as it might be heralded through all our pulpits, a nation would be born in a day. But let us rather at present urge a lesson, which each of you might carry personally and practically home; and tell how it is, that one might animate his own heart with the love of God, and keep this sacred affection glowing there. It is not to be summoned into being or activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effect, that you can bid it into operation within you. You can say to the hand, do this, and it doeth. But we have no such mastery over

the intractable heart—nor can any of its movements be thus subjected to a volition or to a voice. We cannot, by a mere inward and undirected plunge among the recesses of our mental constitution, conjure up any of the emotions at our pleasure. The true way of bidding an emotion into being, is to bid into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up resentment in my heart, let me think of the injury which provokes it—or to be moved with compassion, let me dwell, whether by recollection or fancy, on some picture of wretchedness—or to be regaled with a sense of beauty, let me look objectively and out of myself on the glories of a summer landscape—or to stir up within me a grateful affection, let me call to remembrance some friendly demonstration of a kind and trusty benefactor—or to rekindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let God's love to me be the theme of my believing meditations. I shall never evoke this affection by looking inwardly upon myself; but by looking upwardly to the gospel manifestations of the divine character, I may bring it down from the sanctuary that is above me. In other words it is the faith which elicits and calls out the feeling; and thus both the lessons of the Bible, and the findings of the experimental Christian, are at one with the strict philosophy of the process—when they attest that the way to keep our hearts in the love of God, is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith.

SERMON XXIII.

Fear of Terror and fear of Reverence.

“Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”—1 PETER i. 17.

IN the high and hidden walk of Christian experience, there are mental processes, of which the world at large does not know, and cannot sympathize with. There are even certain apparent contrarieties of feeling, that are fitted to perplex those who never realized them—just because they have never betaken themselves

in good earnest, to the business of their salvation. What more inexplicable for instance, than that a disciple should grow in humility, just as he grows in holiness—that he should have a deeper sense of abasement upon his spirit, just as he should have made a loftier ascent in the path of spiritual excellence—that in pro-

portion as his advancement in virtue is obvious to all other men, in that very proportion he should become the viler in the sight of his own eyes. This however is not so mysterious perhaps, as certain other paradoxes in the life of a gospel pilgrim—which wear an air of more puzzling inconsistency still, to the general understanding. What for example can be made of this finding on the part of the apostle, that when he was weak then he was strong—or that when he gloried in his infirmities, then he had power to prevail over them—or that when he had no confidence in himself, then he rejoiced the most, and had the greatest success in the whole work and warfare of obedience. This mingling of incompatibilities in the heart and history of believers, goes to stamp upon them the character of a very peculiar people. It is true, the Bible expressly tells us that they are so, and that the peculiarity lies in their being zealous of good works. But it aggravates the peculiarity yet more, when we behold these same people having the utmost zeal for the performance of good works, and yet the utmost zeal against placing their reliance on them; the most accomplished in all the graces of personal righteousness, and yet the least confident of its effect in purchasing for them the rewards of Eternity; the most eminent of all their fellows in the virtues of society as well as in the virtues of sacredness, yet the most forward to disclaim them as articles of merit by which they have earned a sufficient title to the glories and the enjoyments of Heaven. If Christianity be true there must be a solution for all these difficulties; a clue by which to guide our way, through the intricacies both of Christian doctrine and of Christian experience; a light, that, to every honest and patient inquirer, must at length be struck out between the truths of Scripture and the trials of his own heart—and in quest of which, each of us should betake himself to a more diligent study than before of the Bible, to a more busy process than before of moral and spiritual cultivation.

The reason why the verse before us has suggested these general observations, is, because that in regard to the affection which it enjoins, the Scripture hath offered

to us another of its seeming contrarities. We are, in one place, led by the apostle to regard it as the privilege of Christians, that God had not given them the spirit of fear—and yet it is the prayer of the same apostle in behalf both of himself and of his fellow Christians, that they might have grace whereby to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. We are taught by another apostle to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Whereas Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, rejoices in it as a privilege of the new dispensation, that under it we should serve God without fear. The apostle Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and yet the apostle John says, that perfect love casteth out fear, and he that feareth is not perfect. We hope by a further attention to this subject—not merely to vindicate the wisdom and consistency of the Bible in regard to it—but through the divine blessing, so to unfold certain processes in the work of sanctification, as might serve in some degree for the practical guidance of those who now hear us.

It may happen from the poverty of human language, that the same term should be employed to express two affections, which, although they possess a common resemblance, have also such distinct modifications, as really to differ, and that considerably from each other. Nay, so wide may be the difference between them, that while it is the privilege of Christians to be exempted from the one, it is their duty to cherish the other to the uttermost. This may give rise to at least a verbal inconsistency between many passages of the Bible—which, when cleared away, not only delivers this book from a charge which might be alleged against it, but may also elicit an impressive argument in its favour, by manifesting its delicate adaptations to the peculiarities of our chequered and complex Nature.

In the prosecution of this discourse, we shall only remark on that fear whereof God is the object—and not on that fear which is excited in the heart of an earnest and desirous Christian, by the consideration of those hazards to which his final salvation is exposed.

There is a fear towards God that might

be denominated the fear of terror. It is the affection of one who is afraid of Him. There is in it the alarm of selfishness. God is regarded as in a state of displeasure, and as afterwards to wreak that displeasure on the person of him who is the object of it. There is in this fear a dread of God's vengeance. It is at all times connected with a view of one's own personal suffering; and the dire imagery of pain, and tribulation, and perhaps endless and irreversible wretchedness, is perhaps that which chiefly gives dismay and disturbance to his soul. There is an impression of wrath in the breast of an incensed Deity against him; but there is, furthermore, the prospect of some fell and fearful infliction from His uplifted hand. The fear of the sinner is not lest God should be displeased—for were it only to stop here, he should feel no care, and have no disquietude about the matter. But the fear is, lest himself should be destroyed. It is altogether an affection of absorbed and concentrated selfishness. It terminates upon his own person. It is not in the least a moral, but entirely an animal feeling—the same with that, in virtue of which any inferior creature would struggle back from the precipice over which it was to be cast; or eye with trembling recoil the weapon that was brandished for its extermination. Such is the fear of terror. It carries it in no homage to the sacredness of the Divinity—yet is aggravated by a sense of that sacredness, because then God, regarded as a God of unappeasable jealousy, is deemed to be intolerant of all evil; and the guilt-stricken soul, in looking upward to the holiness of the lawgiver, looks forward to its own destruction in that hideous and everlasting hell, where the transgressors of the law find their doom and their landing-place.

Now it is obvious, that, while haunted by a fear of this sort, there can be no free, or willing, or generous obedience. There might be a service of drudgery, but not a service of delight—such obedience as is extorted from a slave by the whip of his overseer—but not a free-will offering of love or of loyalty. It makes all the difference between a slavish and a spontaneous obedience—the one rendered in the oldness of the letter, the other in the newness of the spirit—the

one brought about by compulsion of the hand, the other by consent of the heart. And yet, how shall this translation be effected from the spirit of bondage to that of liberty? How shall we get quit of that overwhelming terror, wherewith it is impossible that either affection or confidence can dwell?—and which so long, therefore, as it subsists, must cause the religion of a man upon earth, to be wholly dissimilar from that of an angel in Heaven? For this purpose, and to appease the terror of our own spirits, shall we shut our eyes to what is really terrible in the character of God? Shall we view Him otherwise than as a God of holiness? Shall we dismantle His character of its justice, and righteousness, and truth? Shall we conceive of Him as descending to a compromise with sin, and as relenting in aught from His hatred and hostility against it? To soften the Divinity into an object of our possible tenderness and trust, shall we strip Him of all His moral attributes but one; and, in the midst of all this wild and wasteful anarchy, shall mercy abide as the only surviving perfection of that God whom we deemed to be unchangeable? O, we fear, that the constitution of the Godhead cannot be so tampered with; and that the principles of His everlasting government can never be set aside, nor make way to suit the wishes or the convenience of sinful man. And the question remains, how shall man ever be divested of that terror which is inspired by the sense of an angry God; and which, at the same time, strikes an impotency upon all the efforts of Nature to love God, or to impregnate with a right spirit any part of the obedience which it renders to Him?

It is reserved for the gospel of Jesus Christ to do away this terror from the heart of man, and yet to leave untarnished the holiness of God. It is the atonement that was made by Him which resolves this mystery—providing at once for the deliverance of the sinner, and for the dignity of the Sovereign. That wrath, which had else been poured forth upon the guilty, has all been discharged upon the head of their accepted Substitute; and He, in bowing Himself down unto the sacrifice, has both established in full authority the law, and purchased full

indemnity for those who had put that authority to scorn. This is the great transaction, by which the broken fellowship of earth and Heaven is readjusted; and through this as a free and open medium of communication, can God rejoice as before in all kindness over man, and man again place his rejoicing confidence in God. On doing so, he is disburdened from the terror that had enslaved him, and that had given him the spirit of a crouching pusillanimity to all his obedience. He from this moment enters into liberty. He is no longer haunted by degrading apprehensions about self and about safety. He sees God to be at peace with him, but in such a way as to enhance the sacredness of His now vindicated character; and in the very act of receiving his forgiveness through the hand of a Mediator, he beholds, throughout the whole of the august ceremonial, the heightened lustre that is thrown over the truth, and the justice, and the majesty of the Godhead.

But while this view of God in Christ extinguishes one fear—the fear of terror; it awakens another and an altogether distinct fear—the fear of reverence. God is no longer regarded as the enemy of the sinner; but in the cross of the Redeemer, where this enmity was slain, there is full demonstration of a moral nature that is in utter repugnancy to sin. He does not appear against us in the aspect of a Judge; nor do we hear from His lips the voice of condemnation for sins that are past. But still there is distinctly heard from the mercy-seat the voice of a Father, who, along with the utterance of our pardon, bids us go and sin no more. Now that we have entered into reconciliation, we hear not the upbraidings of the lawgiver, for the despite which in former days we have done unto His will. But the office of the gospel is to regenerate as well as reconcile; and every disciple who embraces it is met with the saying—“This is the will of God even your sanctification.” The truth is, that, having found out a way by which to ward off the vengeance of sin from your persons—it is the intent and object of this His new administration to root out its existence from your hearts. With the sinner He has entered into a league of amity; but against sin, and all its serpent

brood of abominations, He carries on the same unsparing and implacable warfare as before. Among all the myriads of the redeemed, there is not one individual the guilt of whose sins has been pardoned, the power and the being of whose sins shall not be utterly destroyed. Within the entire compass of our Redeemer's kingdom, not one subject to the end of time ever shall be found, who, ransomed from the condemnation of sin, has not been reclaimed from sin unto Holiness. The great and ultimate design of that new economy under which we sit, is to restore and to perfect in fallen man the lost virtues of the Godhead; and we only conform to this economy, when, after having accepted of its offered forgiveness and so entered into peace, we look unto the venerable image of Him to whom we have been brought nigh, that brightening unto His resemblance every day, we may at length attain to His character and be filled with His fullness.

It will now be understood of all those who have been translated into this new economy, or, to use the language of the apostle, whom God hath translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, it will be understood what the fear is which they are relieved from, and what the fear is which they retain—or how they, conformably to one passage of the New Testament, can serve God without fear; and at the same time, conformably to another passage, can serve Him with reverence and with godly fear. The one is that fear which hath torment, and which perfect love casteth out. The other is that in which the early churches are said to have walked, at the time when they had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. The one is that which belongs to those fearful and unbelieving, of whom it is said that they shall have part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. The other is that which belongs to those of whom it is said, that the mercy of the Lord is unto them who fear Him. Such is the difference of estimation in which these two affections are held; and such the difference, in point of treatment, which they severally shall experience. And it does vin-

dicating the wisdom or discrimination of Scripture, it does mark an intelligent view both of our nature and of the bearings which the evangelical system of revelation has upon it, when it appears, that, confounded though they be under one denomination, there is a like difference in the properties and characteristics of each of them. The one, as we said before, is the fear of terror. The other is the fear of reverence. When under the one, we are looking unto self; and the apprehension is, lest a creature so sentient should be agonised by sufferings that are to come. When under the other, we are looking unto God; and the apprehension is, lest a Being so sacred should look with distaste and dissatisfaction towards us because of our present remaining sinfulness. When the one is awakened by a sense of God's displeasure, it is because of the vengeance which follows in its train. To the other there is a moral force in the displeasure, although there should be no vengeance. To conceive the distinction, might we imagine an earthly superior, whom we hold in reverence both for his rank and for his virtues. It might be a reverence wholly unaccompanied with terror. It might be a fear into which there enters no apprehension whatever of pains or of penalties. The loss simply of his good opinion were enough to awaken it—although there should be no physical loss or physical suffering incurred by it. A mere look of disapprobation from him, of whose respectability and worth we had the high imagination, like the look of Christ upon Peter, would, of itself, be felt to agonise all the better sensibilities of our nature.

It is not even necessary for this, that we should incur his displeasure by a violation of his legal rights. It were simply enough to have incurred his disesteem by a violation of moral rightness. It is not necessary that he should be offended with us, because we have robbed him of his dues. It were enough that he thought of us unfavourably, because we had fallen short of our own duties. Even though we had nothing to fear from his anger, still we should fear his disapprobation. A mere adverse judgment, although not followed up by any execution, would in itself be grievous to us.

And such is the feeling of a Christian towards God. He stands not in the terror of any vengeance from His hands—yet he would feel an awe in the rebuke of His countenance. He trembles not under the uplifted arm of an injured Deity. Yet the disapproval of His omniscient eye, would in itself be dreadful to him. He is not frightened at the thought of any coming penalties—yet he is solemnized by the notice that God takes of him. In other words, the fear of terror is done away, but the fear of reverence survives it. A sense of God's mercy, as exhibited in the work of our redemption, has expelled the one. A sense of His holiness, also exhibited there, has enhanced and perpetuated the other. The two fears are distinct and dissimilar to the uttermost. The one is an animal—the other is a moral affection. The one, the fear of terror, will descend with the accursed into Hell, and have fulfilment there in the cries and agonies of the place of torment. The other, the fear of reverence, will be borne upward by the redeemed in Heaven, and will there pour a deeper and a graver melody into the adorations that compass the throne of the Eternal. Let us cease to wonder then, that the disciples of the New Testament are called upon to banish from their hearts the first affection, and to retain the second—that in one place, they should be reproached because of their fearfulness; and, in another, should be admonished to live all their days in the fear of God. The faith of the gospel harmonizes both these sentiments. It displaces terror. It heightens reverence.

This, so far from an unintelligible mystery, is exemplified in one of the most frequent and familiar relations of human life. Let the wife, says the apostle Paul, reverence her husband; but, while in subjection to him, says the apostle Peter, let her not be afraid with any amazement—or, as it means, with any terror or consternation. If ever you esteemed a man from whom you had nothing personally to fear—if ever the presence of a superior drew an homage of profoundest deference from your bosom, although you had nought of harm and nought of hostility to apprehend from him—if you have ever known what it was to have an awe cast upon your spi-

rits, when the dignity, whether of virtuous or intellectual greatness, stood before you, even though it beamed in placidness upon yourself—then you have had experimental proof in your own feelings of the distinction that we now labour to impress; and you have found how possible it is to be utterly free of all terror towards God, and yet to hold Him in deepest reverence.

Such is the wide difference between these two affections; and, corresponding to this, there is a difference equally wide between the legal and the evangelical dispensations. Under the former economy, the alternative to do this and live, is, that if you fail in doing this, you will perish everlastingly. Now let this be the great stimulus to the performance of virtue; and then think of the spirit and of the inward character, wherewith they are impregnated. It is in fact a character of the most intense selfishness. It is the fear of terror which goads him on to all his obedience, and compels him to act religiously—to walk the servile round of many outward conformities, and forcibly to refrain his hands from all outward and literal transgression. For such a religion as this, it is not needed, that he should have any capacity of moral principle. It is enough if he have the capacity of animal pain. He is driven along, not by the feelings of his spiritual, but by those of his sentient nature; and, instead of liberal or spontaneous piety, we behold, in the multitude of his operose but unwilling drudgeries, all the baseness of a sordid and superstitious devoteeship. That obedience which is given with a view to purchase, either the enjoyments of Heaven or exemption from the agonies of hell, may evince a taste for happiness; but this is altogether distinct from a taste for holiness—or it may evince a distaste for suffering, but this is not a distaste for sin. It is thus that we hold the legal economy to be not more adverse to the comfort, than it is to the character of man. It taints and vitiates the morality which it professes to idolize. It puts the alloy of an ignoble quality into all its services. Its constant demand is for virtue—on which however it inflicts the utmost degradation—causing principle to sink into prudence; and transforming him who might else have been a gene-

rous aspirant after the excellence that is godlike, into a morose and mercenary hireling.—So that, instead of loving righteousness for itself, or of hating iniquity for itself, he wretchedly drivels at the services of the one, and only for the promised reward; and represses his desires towards the other, only because of the threatened vengeance.

Now it is not so with the economy of the gospel. The gate of Heaven is thrown open at the outset to its disciples; and they were invited with confident step to walk towards it. God holds Himself forth not as a Judge who reckons, but as a Father who is reconciled to them. A deed of remission for the sins that are past is put into their hands; and whereas before, they, under a sense of guilt, may have been troubled at the sight of God's offended sacredness, they have now beneath the covert of an ample and to them freely extended mediatorship, taken their secure refuge from the storm. The fear of terror ought now to have no place in hearts, occupied by a grateful and rejoicing love, that should cast it away from them; but there is nothing in this transition from Nature to Grace, nothing in this renouncing of our own righteousness and relying on Christ as our alone Saviour, nothing in this change of the legal for the evangelical, that is fitted to extinguish—there is every thing to enhance within us the fear of reverence. When God is seen by us in the face of Christ, He is seen in the brightness of His mercy to the sinful; but it is a mercy so accompanied with holiness and truth, so enshrined as it were in the high honours of a vindicated law, as to throw over the character of the Godhead a deeper sacredness than before. In that halo which is over the mercy-seat of Christianity, there is a radiance of all the attributes. Along with the love which gladdens every believer's heart, there is an august and awful majesty to solemnize it, and while in this wondrous spectacle, we behold peace to the sinner—yet, seen as it is through the mystery of a world's atonement, we there too behold the evil of sin in most full and appalling demonstration. While the sinner looked upon all this as the fire of Heaven's jealousy, directed against himself, to burn up and fiercely to destroy, there was but room

in his heart for the one affection of single and overwhelming terror. But when seen as it is, averted from us because discharged upon Him who for our sake sustained the agonies of the garden and of the cross, he can look on without the fear of terror—yet it is impossible to look intelligently on without the fear of deepest reverence. It is a like difference with that which obtains between the sight of a volcano from a place of exposure, and from a place of safety. In the one there are the emotions of an absorbing terror, in a mind occupied with self. In the other there are the emotions of an admiring taste, in a mind occupied with the scene of contemplation. But for the full enjoyment of this scene, a degree of conscious security is indispensable. A sense of danger would disturb, and despair would utterly destroy it; and not without a certain belief of personal safety, would the fine sensibilities of taste have their play in the spectator's bosom. His soul must be in a state of repose, ere it can reflect those characters of grandeur or of gracefulness which lie on the panorama before it; nor could it take on a true impression of its varied imagery, if ruffled by apprehension, or, still more, if tempest-driven among the hazards of the fiery torrent and of the earthquake. There would be one engrossing sensibility that dispossessed all others; and, till it was hushed by a sense of protection and of safety, neither the graces nor the sublimities of a perspective so marvellous could have any charm for his imagination—alike insensible to the gorgeonsness that blazed upon the mountain-top, or to the verdant beauty that smiled around its base.

It is just so in reference to God—more terrible as He is to the sinner's eye, than the fiercest and most menacing volcano, when viewed only in the light of an incensed lawgiver. The sinner is at that time otherwise employed, than in an admiring survey of the beauty or the nobleness of the Divine character. His great concern is about himself. His overwhelming anxiety is about his own prospects. He has not time, or at least he has not tranquillity, among the agitations of a perturbed spirit, for what may be called a contemplative study of the Godhead. And as in our case of illus-

tration, all the tasteful sensibilities were in abeyance, while death and destruction were conceived to be at hand—so all the moral sensibilities towards God are equally in abeyance, when the mind is engrossed with the dread of his vengeance, or looks onward to that frightful eternity which is in reserve for the children of ungodliness.

It is by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by it alone, that this check on the moral sensibilities of our heart towards God is removed. It assures safety and peace to the sinner; and he, looking to the atonement of the cross, can at once rejoice in the fulness of the divine mercy, and do profoundest reverence to the unabated dignity of the Sovereign. The grace and the greatness of the Divinity are alike open to his view; and whereas before, the terrors of a guilty selfishness had within him their sole occupation, rescued from these, he can now look calmly and intelligently on; and it is when so employed, that the susceptibilities of his moral nature are awakened to one and all of the perfections of the Godhead. It is when he thus looks unto God, that he becomes like unto God—even by the moral radiance of Him who is adored, now calling back a kindred reflection from the serene and steadfast countenance of him who is the adorer. It is thus that that assimilating process which shall be perfected in Heaven, where we shall be altogether like unto God, for there we shall see Him as He is, has its commencement and its progress upon earth—for even now, beholding as with open face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Let us now conclude this part of our argument with two practical reflections.

First, we doubt that there may be some here present, who are alike strangers both to the one fear and the other—as little struck by the terror of God's wrath, as they are solemnized into reverence by the worth and the moral excellence which belong to Him. This we hold to be the general habit of men in the world. They stand in no need of a gospel to soothe them, and just because the law never scared them. They are listless, in truth, and most profoundly asleep to both terms of this' big alternative; and, if not ani-

mated into hope by any sense of reality in the offers of mercy, neither can they sink into despondency by any sense of reality in the coming vengeance. The present existence is their all; and as to its issues in a yet unknown and untravelled scene, they think not at all and they care not at all. The Bible declaration that by nature they are the children of wrath, does not move them. The testimony of their own conscience that they are living without God in the world, does not awaken them. The daily remembrancers which meet them on their way, and speak to them with a force of animation which there is no evading, of the death that is so surely and so speedily awaiting them, carry not forward their thoughts to the judgment that is also awaiting them. Meanwhile time runs on with unaltered footsteps; and the cycles of Heaven, as they roll overhead, witness the follies and the heedlessness of each successive day, to be as inveterate as of the day that went before it; and not more steadfastly than these perform their wonted revolutions in the firmament above, does many a poor child of infatuation below persist in the courses of a deep and determined worldliness. And so with thousands and thousands more, there is never so much as one fearful anticipation in time, of that which has its dread fulfilment in eternity. For God is not to be mocked. The unchanging principles of His moral administration are not to be tampered with. The sanctions of His outraged law are not to be nullified, but must have their emphatic vindication—for sooner shall nature expire than the high jurisprudence of God shall be trampled on—Heaven and Earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of His law shall fail.

Secondly—Let us hope that there are some here present, who have known what it was to be practically in earnest because of these things; and who feeling a significancy both in the threats of that law which they have violated, and in the

invitations of that gospel which has held out to them a sanctuary and a hiding-place from the storm, have there cast the anchor of their hope, and now rejoice that they are safe. Theirs is in no way the joy of those who feel that they can sin with impunity. It is true that they count upon forgiveness, but not forgiveness in such a way as marks the indifference of the Godhead to sin, but forgiveness in such a way as manifests His entire and unbroken sacredness. In that atonement by which the vengeance of a broken law has been averted from themselves, they still behold the demonstration of God's antipathy to evil; and if not actuated as heretofore by the terror of His power, still they are actuated by the deepest reverence for the perfections of His moral nature. They are not exempted from service under the economy of the gospel. Only it is service, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit. Still it is service; and it should be no longer a mystery, that they, who, in one sense of the term are called upon to serve God without fear, are, in another sense of it, called upon to perfect their holiness in the fear of the Lord. You will perceive by this, how much more pure and generous and noble, the evangelical is than the legal virtue—the one in fact being rendered, in truckling exchange for the remuneration which it aims after; the other, already in possession of that ample remuneration which has been won by the Mediator for all who believe, rendered as a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty. It is thus that faith, of all principles the most maligned and misunderstood by the world, not only pacifies the conscience of the sinner, but purifies all the springs of his obedience—so that, instead of a drivelling servility towards the Master of whom he is in dread, it is the willing homage of his duteous and delighted subordination towards the Father whom he holds in utmost reverence.

SERMON XXIV.

Immortality brought to light by the Gospel.

“Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.”—2 TIM. i. 10.

THE men of the earth carry on their designs and their doings, just as if on earth they were to live for ever. Each is so intent upon his own earthly object—every mind is so occupied with its own earthly scheme—every countenance speaks such deep and eager anxiety after some favourite yet earthly ambition—each individual is so decidedly embarked, with all his powers of attention and perseverance, on some earthly undertaking—That surely one might think, it can be nought of a trifling or temporary nature, which either creates or keeps up so mighty a stir among our species. And yet it is not the less true, that all the busy activities of all these people have their upshot in forgetfulness. It is not the greatness or the durability of the objects, which has called forth the effort and the strenuousness of men. It is the folly of men, which urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our few little years, and has invested time with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify; and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations from the face of our world, reigns with unabated strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever.

Death is a theme of mighty import; and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted, upon the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate together, that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give forth the lesson of their mortality. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and with rude hand tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year death breaks up its families; and the society of our early days is fast melting

away from us. Is it a market place? Death works among the people at short and rapid intervals; and though at the end of twenty years, I see a crowd as busy and as numerous as before—these are new faces which meet my eye, and new names which fall upon my ear. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them. Is it the country at large? On every side we see a shifting population—another set of occupiers to the farms, and other names or other men annexed to the properties.

But this is viewing the subject at a distance. Every assemblage of objects is composed of individuals; and think of the numbers that must have suffered, to accomplish the changes which we have now set before you. Think that each of these individuals carried in his bosom a living principle, and that that principle is now to all appearance extinguished—that each felt as warm and as alive to the world as perhaps any who now hears me, and that this world the stern severity of death forced him to abandon for ever—that each was as feelingly open to pain and to terror, and that the forebodings and the reluctance and the agonies of death came upon all of them—that each had hopes and plans and wishes to accomplish, but that death carried him away; and they are all buried in forgetfulness along with him.

All is vanity, says the preacher; and it is death which stamps this character on the affairs of the world. It throws a mockery on all that is human. It frustrates the wisest plans, and absolutely converts them into nothingness. All the ecstasies of pleasure, all the splendours of fame, all the triumphs of ambition, all the joys of domestic tenderness, all the eye can look for or the heart aspire

after—this, this is their affecting termination. Death absorbs all—it annihilates all. Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and as noisy as we. The loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings; and in the busy occupation of their callings, they had their days of labour, and their nights of thoughtful anxiety. The world carried on it then the same face of activity as now; and where are the men who kept it up in their allotted generation? They are where we shall soon follow them. They have gone to sleep; but it is the sleep of death. Their bed is a coffin in which they are mouldering. The garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life; but is now lying in loose and scattered fragments, among the earth of their grave.

And it does aggravate our hopelessness of escape from death, when we look to the wide extent and universality of its ravages. We see no exception. It scatters its desolations with unsparing cruelty among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It perhaps adds to our despair, when we see it extending to the other animals. Every thing that has life dies; and even the lovely forms of the vegetable creation dissolve into nothing. It appears to be the condition of every organic being; and so looks as if it were some tremendous necessity, under which we have nothing for it but helplessly to acquiesce. It carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law. Man can look for no mitigation to the big and incurable distress. He cannot reverse the processes of Nature, nor bid her mighty elements obey him.

Is there no power then superior to Nature, and which can control her? To us a law of the universe carries the idea of some fixed and inalienable necessity along with it; and none more certain, more unvarying and more widely extended in its operation, than the law of death. In the wide circuit of things, does there exist no high authority which can abolish this law?—no power which can overthrow death, and spoil him of his principality?—no being travelling in the greatness of his strength, who can grapple this mighty monarch and break

his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that Being. But the records of past ages have come down to us; and we there read of an extraordinary visitor who lighted on these realms, where death has reigned so long in all the triumphs of undivided empire. Wonderful enterprise, He came to destroy death. Vast undertaking, He came to depose Nature from her conceived immutability. He came to shift her processes—and a law that embraced in its wide grasp all which lives and moves on the face of the world, he came to overturn it. And He soon gave tokens of a power commensurate to the mighty undertaking. That Nature, to whose operations we are so apt to ascribe some stubborn and invincible necessity, gave way at His coming. She felt His authority through all her elements, and she obeyed it. Wonderful period, when the constancy of Nature was broke in upon by Him who established it—when the Deity vindicated His honours; and the miracles of a single age, committed to authentic history, gave evidence to all futurity that there is a Power above Nature and beyond it. What more unchanging than the aspect of the starry Heavens; in what quarter of her dominions does Nature maintain a more silent and solemn inflexibility, than in the orbs which roll around us? Yet at the coming of the mighty Saviour, these Heavens broke silence. Music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a concord of living voices, which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language upon human ears. After this, who can call Nature unalterable? Jesus Christ while he tarried on earth made perpetual invasions upon her constancy; and she never in a single instance, resisted the word of His power. What manner of man is this, said his disciples, who can make the wind and the seas obey him? Philosophers love to expatiate; and they tell us of the laws of the animal and the vegetable kingdom. These laws may prove an impassable barrier to us, but in the hand of the omnipotent Saviour they were nothing. He reversed or suspended them at pleasure. He blasted the fig tree by a single word; and, what to us was the dawn of some high anticipation, He made man the subject of His

miracles. He restored sight to the blind. He restored speech to the dumb. He restored motion to the palsied. And to crown His triumph over Nature and her process, He restored life to the dead. He laid down His own life, and He took it up again. The disciples gave up all for lost, when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of that very mortality, which He promised to destroy. It was like the revenge and the victory of Nature, over Him who had so often prevailed against her. But it was only to make His triumph more illustrious. He died and was buried; but He rose again. He re-entered that mysterious bourne, from which it has been said that no traveller ever returns; but He did. He burst asunder the mighty barriers of the grave. He re-entered and reanimated that body which expired on the cross; and by that most striking of all testimonies, His own unaltered form emerging from the tomb, He has given us to know, that He fought against the law of death and He carried it.

But man not only wants power to achieve his own immortality, He also wants light to discover it. If such, in spite of every appalling exhibition to the contrary, is really to be the ultimate state of man, this doctrine is not brought to light by reason. The text indeed says as much, in saying that it is brought to light by the gospel. It represents this great truth as dark by Nature, and only made clear by Revelation. It seems to cast discredit on all the arguments of science in behalf of a future state; and, just for want of a sufficient basis in the evidence of Philosophy on which to rear this noble anticipation, it would rest and establish it chiefly on the evidence of faith.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first advert to what may be called the physical state, and then to the moral state of the mind; and under each head, let us endeavour to contrast the insufficiency of the light of nature, with the sufficiency and fulness of the light of the gospel.

I. An argument for its immortality has been drawn from the consideration of what we should term the physics of the mind—that is, from the consideration of

its properties, when it is regarded as having a separate or substantive being of its own. For example it has been said that spirit is not matter, and therefore must be imperishable. We confess that we see not the force of this reasoning. We are not sure by nature of the premises; and neither do we apprehend how the conclusion flows from it. We think ourselves familiar with the subtleties and the scholastics that have been uttered upon the subject. To us they are far from satisfactory; nor can we perceive aught of that evidence, on which we rest our belief in any coming event or coming state of the futurity which lies before us—we can perceive no such force of practical evidence in those abstract or metaphysic generalities, which are employed to demonstrate the endurance or rather the indestructibility of the thinking principle—so as to be persuaded, that it shall indeed survive the dissolution of the body, and shall separately maintain its consciousness and its powers on the other side of the grave.

Now, in the recorded fact of our Saviour's resurrection, we see what many would call a more popular; but what we should deem a far more substantial and satisfactory argument for the soul's immortality, than any that is furnished by the speculation which we have now alluded to. To us the one appears as much superior to the other, as History is more solid than Hypothesis, or as Experience is of a texture more firm than Imagination, or as the Philosophy of our modern Bacon, is of a surer and sounder character than the Philosophy of the old schoolmen. Now it is upon the fact of His own resurrection that Christ rests the hope and the promise of resurrection to all of us. If He be not risen from the dead, says one of His apostles, we are of all men the most miserable. It is to this fact, that he appeals as the foundation and the hope of immortality. To every cavil and to every difficulty he opposes the emphatic argument, that Christ has risen. This was Paul's argument; and it has descended by inheritance to us. We have received the testimony. We have access to the documents. We can take a view of the unexampled evidence, which has been carried down to us upon the vehicles of history; and in opposition

to all which fancy or speculation can muster against us, we can appeal to the fact. It is not a doctrine excogitated by the ingenuities of human reasoning. It is a doctrine submitted to the observation of the human senses. It is not an untried experiment. While Jesus Christ lived, He made it repeatedly, and with unvaried success, upon others; and, in giving up His body to the cross, He made it upon Himself. One who could carry an experiment such as this to a successful termination, has a claim to be listened to; and He tells by the mouth of an apostle, that the fact of Himself having risen, bears most decisively upon the doctrine that we shall rise also. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Let it be remarked, before we conclude this head of discourse, that the word which we render "abolished," signifies also, "made of no effect." The latter interpretation of the word is certainly more applicable to our first or our temporal death. He has not abolished temporal death. It still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off its successive generations with as great sureness and rapidity as ever. This part of the sentence is not abolished, but it is rendered ineffectual. Death still lays us in the grave; but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness. It puts its cold hand upon every one of us; but a power mightier than death will lift it off, and these frames be again reanimated with all the warmth of life and of sentiment. The church-yard has been called the land of silence; and silent it is indeed to those who occupy it. The Sabbath bell is no longer heard; nor yet the tread of the living population above them. But though removed from the hearing of every earthly sound, yet shall they hear the sound of the last trumpet. It shall enter the loneliness of their dwellings, and be heard through Death's remotest caverns. When we open the sepulchres of the men of other times, the fragments of skeletons and the mouldering of bones form indeed a humiliating spectacle. But the working of the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, shall raise corruption to a comelier form, and invest it in all the bloom and vigour

of immortality. So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

II. But another argument for the immortality of man, has been drawn by philosophers from the moral state of his mind; and more especially from that progressive expansion, which they affirm it to have undergone, in respect of its virtues as well as of its powers. Still we fear, that, in respect of this argument too, the flowery description of the moralists has no proof, and more particularly no experience to support it. There is a beauty we do confess in many of their representations; but beauty is only for them who sit at ease. It is a cruel mockery to the man who is surrounded by the agonies of a death-bed; and has in his immediate view, the dread images of annihilation or vengeance. Yes! we have heard them talk, and with eloquence too, of the good man and of his prospects—of his progress in life being a splendid career of virtue, and of his death being a gentle transition to another and a better world—of its being the goal where he reaps the honourable reward that is due to his accomplishments, or being little more than a step in his proud march to eternity. This is all very fine, but it is the fineness of poetry. Where is the evidence of its being any better than a deceitful imagination?

We might believe that there was something real in this stately progression to eternity, if we saw it; but we see it not. Why so cruel an interruption to the progress? What means this awful and mysterious death? Why is the good man not suffered to carry on in his triumphant progress; and how comes this dark and inexplicable event, to be interposed between him and the full accomplishment of his destiny? You may

choose to call it a step; but there is no virtue in a name to quell our suspicion. It bears in every circumstance all the marks of a termination. We see the gradual decay of those faculties, which you tell us, but tell us falsely, are ripening and expanding. We see those virtues which you have represented as in a state of constant perseverance—we see them giving way to the power of disease—we see them withering into feebleness; and, instead of that which confers grace or dignity on man, we see the peevishness, the discontent, the fretfulness of age. We see the body bending to the dust. We see it extended in all the agony of helplessness and pain. To call this a triumphant procession to eternity—or to disguise those actual horrors which the ear hears and the eye witnesses, by the gildings of a flimsy imagination! We observe the emission of the last breath; and, whether the spirit is extinguished or fled to another residence, Nature tells us not—but when the academic declaimer talks of his fancied career of perfection, we should lift the honest front of experience against him, and call upon him to reveal to us the mystery of death. How comes an event so unseemly to meet the hero of immortality, on the path he was treading with such security and triumph? What the purpose of such an interruption at all? Why has the being, whom they would proudly assimilate to angels, such an ordeal to undergo? Why like them does he not flourish in perpetual vigour? And how shall we explain that mighty change, with all its affecting accompaniments of reluctance and agony and despair?

Death gives the lie to all the speculations of all the moralists; but it only gives evidence and consistency to the statements of the gospel. The doctrines of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with the rough and vigorous lessons of experience. They attempt no ornament and no palliation. They give the truth in all its severity—nor do they attempt to strew flowers around the sepulchre, or pour a deceitful perfume into the rottenness of the grave. Were a physician to take up my case, and speak lightly of my ailments, while I knew that a consuming disease was working and making progress within me, I should

have no confidence in him, or in his remedies. I should like him to see the mischief in its full extent, that the medicine applied may be such as to meet and to combat with it. Now Christ the Physician of souls has taken up their disease in all its malignity. There is no softening, no disguise, in the representation of His messengers. Their account of death accords with our experience of it. What they tell us of death, is what we feel it to be—not that thing of triumph, which out of Christianity and beyond the circle of its influence it never is; but a thing of distress, and horror, and unnatural violence. He who is weak enough to be carried along by the false and the flimsy eloquence of sentimental moralists, might be led to believe that the man who dies is only sinking gently to repose, or winging his way to a triumphant eternity. But the Bible tells us differently—that out of Christ there is no triumph and no gentleness about it. It talks of the sting, and of the pains, and of the fear of death; and what we feel and know of the shrinkings of nature, proves that it has experience on its side. And the book which characterizes so truly death in itself, is worthy at least of our attention, when it treats of death in its moral or spiritual bearings.

Death then, as it appears to the eye of the senses, is but the extinction of that life which we now live in the world; but death, as revealed to us in Scripture, is the effect and the sentence of sin. Sin is the root of the mischief; and it is a mischief which Scripture represents as stretching in malignity and duration, far beyond the ken of the senses. Had we no other guide than our senses, we might conceive death to be a mere annihilation; and the utter destruction of their being, to be the whole amount of the calamity inflicted upon sinners. But distinct from this death of the body, there is what may be termed the death of the soul—not a death which consists in the extinction of its consciousness, for the conscience of guilt will keep by it for ever—not a death which implies the cessation of feeling, for to feeling it will continue to be all alive, though the feeling of intense suffering—not a death by which all sense of God will be expunged, for the sense of God's offended countenance will abide by it and

agonize it through all eternity. He who undergoes this second, this spiritual death, does not thereby cease to have life; but he ceases to have that favor of God which is better than life. He lives it is true, but it is the life of an exile from hope and from happiness. He lives, but it is in a state of hopeless distance from the fountain of living water. God is at enmity towards him; and in his own heart there is enmity towards God. This at least is the death of enjoyment. It is the death of all those pleasures, and of all those perceptions, which belong to a right moral state of existence. In this sense truly the soul is dead, though alive and most pun- gently alive to the corrosions of that worm which dieth not. In this sense there has been a quenching of its life, though all awake to the pain and the anguish of the fire that is not quenched. The temporal death is only the portal to sorer calamities. All who sin shall die; but this is not the conclusion of the sentence. All who die in sin shall live in torment.

Now it promises well for our Saviour's treatment of this sore malady—that He hath as it were placed Himself at the source of the mischief, and there made head against it. He has combated the radical force and virulence of the disease. He has probed it to the bottom. He has grappled with sin in its origin and its principle. He has taken it away—for by the sacrifice of Himself on the accursed tree, He has expiated its guilt; and, by the operation of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, He is rooting out its existence. Had He only put together the fragments of my body, and recalled my soul to its former tenement—He would have done nothing. Sin, both in its power and in its condemnation, would have claimed me as its own—and, in dreary banishment from God, it would have recalled me to life, but a life of misery; and stamped on me immortality, but an immortality of despair. But the Author of the gospel has swept off the whole burden of the calamity. He has made a decisive thrust into the very heart and principle of the disease. He has destroyed sin, for He has both cancelled the sentence and washed away the pollution; and, by the accomplishment of a mystery which angels desire to look into, He brings sinners unto

God, where they shall ever rejoice in the purest light and the happiest immortality.

To estimate aright the new moral existence into which Christ ushers every sinner who receives Him,—we have only to reflect how it is that every sinner, apart from Christ, stands towards God. He is either immersed in deep oblivion and unconcern, and so may well be accounted dead to the Being who made and who upholds him; or if his conscience be at all awake to a true sense of his delinquencies from the law, he must view the lawgiver with a feeling of dread and discomfort and jealousy. There is a wide gulph of alienation between him and his Maker; and the habitual the haunting apprehension of God's displeasure towards him, engenders in him back again a habitual dislike towards God. There is no community of affection or confidence betwixt them; and pursued as he is by a conviction of guilt, which he cannot resist and cannot escape from, he imagines a scowl on the aspect of the Divinity—an awful barrier of separation, by which he is hopelessly and irrecoverably exiled from the sacred throne of the Eternal. His spirit is not at ease. It is glad to find relief, in the day-dreams of a passing world, from those solemn realities, the thought of which so agitates and disquiets it. It seeks an opiate in the things of sense and time, against the disturbance which it finds in the things of eternity; and so, cradled in profoundest lethargy, it, while alive unto the world, is dead unto God.

We cannot imagine a greater revolution in the heart, than that which would ensue on the burden of this distrust or of this apathy being done away—when, instead of viewing God with terror, or shrinking from the thought of Him, the sinner would steadfastly gaze upon His reconciled countenance, and be assured of the complacency and the good-will that were graven thereupon. Now a simple faith in the glad tidings of the gospel is competent to achieve this. It would loosen the spirit's bondage, by merely transforming the aspect of the Divinity from that of an enemy to that of a friend. It would change our indifference or our hatred into love; and this

affection, from the central the presiding place which it occupies, would subordinate the whole man, and so utterly change his moral system as to make a new creature of him. The faith of the gospel is something more than the germ of a new hope. It is the germ of a new heart, and so of a new character. The believer's taste and sensibilities are now awake to objects, to which before he was utterly dead; or from which he wont to recoil with strong and sensitive aversion. In other words, he has become alive to these objects. He expatiates on another theatre of contemplation; and he rejoices in other scenes and other prospects than before. He has lost his relish for that in which he formerly delighted. He delights in that for which formerly he had no relish. It is just as if old senses had been extinguished, and as if new ones had been substituted in their place. If he is not ushered into life for the first time he is at least ushered into a new mode of life for the first time. He undergoes preferment from the animal to the spiritual life; and this life, with the immortality annexed to it, is not only made clear by the gospel—but faith in the gospel may be said to have created it.

Now all this is the doing of the Saviour. I cannot trust the physician who plays upon the surface of my disease, and throws over it the disguise of false colouring. I have more confidence to put in him, who, like Christ the Physician of my soul, has looked the malady fairly in the face,—has taken it up in all its extent, and in all its soreness—has resolved it into its original principles—has probed it to the very bottom; and has set himself forward to combat with the radical elements of the disease. This is what the Saviour has done with death. He has plucked it of its sting. He has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity operates. It was sin which constituted the virulence in the disease, and he hath extracted it. He hath put it away. He hath expiated the sentence; and the believer, rejoicing in the assurance that all is clear with God, serves Him without fear in righteousness and in holiness all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer in force, against us who believe. The Saviour

took the sentence upon Himself. He bore our iniquity. He became sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The sentence is no longer in force against us. The Saviour has cancelled it; and he has done more than this. He has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has extinguished its power. He reigns in the heart of the believer. He sweeps it of all its corruptions. He takes it such as it is—He makes it such as it should be. He brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification—so that while he lives he adds one degree of grace unto another—when he dies he rejoices in hope of the coming glory—when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unreprouvable in the sight of God and of His Saviour. In the whole of this treatment, I see the skill and intelligence and superior management of a physician who is up to the disease; and knows where the main force of its malignity lies—who has a thorough insight into the principle of the mischief, and has reached forward an appropriate remedy to confront it—who, to abolish death, has directed the strength of His attack against sin which is its origin—who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice—and who is destroying its power and its existence, by the operation of that mighty spirit, whereby He can break down the corruption of the human heart and subdue it unto all righteousness.

Believe this done; and the veil is thrown aside which separates you from the glories of heaven—the way lies clear and open before you; and light, pure and satisfying light, gives the highest evidence and splendour to the great doctrine of life and immortality. The grand mystery is resolved. The barrier which kept the sinner at a distance from God is levelled and put away. That barrier was sin; and Christ, by the mighty instruments of His sacrifice and His spirit, has overthrown it. But a victory over sin is a victory over death. Where sin hath no longer any dominion, death hath no longer any claim; and that mighty Being who spoiled principalities and powers hath abolished death, because He conquered sin. True, it still reigns in these mortal bodies; and till the new

system of things be established, it will scatter its desolation over the surface of the world. But the new system is preparing. A place is fitting up in Heaven, for those to whom our Saviour hath given the assurance, that, in His Father's house there are many mansions; and on earth, the Spirit is now working in the hearts of the destined occupiers, and making them meet for the inheritance. These vile bodies must be put off; and others put on, over which death shall have no power. They will persist in bloom and in vigour to eternity. Mighty change in the constitution of the species—mighty change in the material system around us—mighty change in the souls of men, as well as in the bodies which they animate. The bodies we now wear shall moulder into dust—the earth we now tread upon shall be burnt up—the heavens we now gaze at shall pass away as a scroll—But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the beings who live in it shall never die.

Before we conclude, let us refer your attention to the grand agent in this wonderful restoration of a fallen world. The work is His, and it is His only. We must take Him not as a fellow-helper in the cause, but as the Captain of our salvation. It was He who trode the wine-press alone. His was all the contest, and to Him be all the triumph. Let no man offer to usurp or to share it with Him. To Him belongs the work of our redemption, in all its extent and in all its particulars. It was His sacrifice which redeemed us from the punishment of sin; and it is His spirit which redeems us from its pollution. And we contend that man is not in the right attitude for receiving the mighty benefit, till he has cast down all his lofty imaginations, and resigned himself with gratitude and quietness into the Saviour's hands. "Here I am under the twofold misery, of having been a sinner in time past, and being a sinner still—of having incurred a sentence which I cannot expiate, and of persevering in a path of destruction which I cannot turn from. The case in all its helplessness, and in all its difficulties, I make over wholly to the Saviour. I may as well try to level yonder mountain, as try to master it by my own independent

exertions. I obey the invitation of the Saviour—'Come unto me'—I put the case into His hand; and, if I do it in the assured hope that His redemption will provide for it, I shall not be disappointed. If I offer Him the case, He will not refuse to take it up. 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' He takes up the case which I have submitted to Him. He examines it in its two leading particulars. I cannot expiate the sentence; but the blood of His atonement can do it for me. I cannot turn from the paths of sin; but He can turn me by His grace—He can reign in me by His spirit—so that though without Him I can do nothing—yet with Him for my strengthener and my friend I can do all things." This then is the finished work, the complete salvation of Jesus Christ. "Who-soever believeth in Him hath everlasting life." Believe, and you will come forth with alacrity at His call. From the contemplation of your own nothingness, you will cast yourself upon the Saviour and upon His sufficiency. You will make an entire and unconditional surrender of yourselves to Him; and be assured, that, from the first moment of your doing so, there will emerge the new hope of the redeemed, and the new life of the sanctified disciple.

And you Christians, who have sat at His table—who have eaten of that bread which is the symbol of His body, and drunk of that wine which is the symbol of His blood—be assured, that, if you have done so, with all the spirituality of a firm and believing dependence on Him as your Saviour, upon you shall the whole of this great redemption be accomplished. You have brought your bodies into contact with the elements of the ordinance; and if you have brought your minds into contact with the things represented by these elements, we can state to you in decisive language what will be the fruit of such fellowship. God is not unfaithful who hath called you unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and we can assert, upon the fidelity of God, upon the unfailling promises of Heaven, upon the strength of a high and unchangeable attribute, upon that truth of the Deity which is printed on all His works, and shines through all His revelations—In a

word, we can assert upon the solemn asseveration, nay, upon the oath of the Divinity Himself, that all who believe in His Son shall have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Such is the hope of your calling. Hold it firm and fast even unto the end; and the bed of death will be to you a scene of triumph—the last messenger will be a messenger of joy; and those bright images of peace and rapture and elevation, which, out of Christ, are the mere fabrication of the fancy, will, in Christ, be found to have a reality and a fulfilment, which shall bear you up in the midst of your dying agonies, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is no longer an idle declamation now. There is many a minister of Christ who could give you experience for it. He can take you to the house of mourning—to the mansion of pain and of sickness—to the chamber of the dying man. He can draw aside the curtain which covers the last hours of the good man's existence, and show you how a Christian can die.

He can ask you to bend your ear, and to catch the faltering accents of praise and of piety. What meaneth that joy in the midst of suffering—that hope in the midst of breathlessness and pain—that elevation in the midst of cruellest agonies? It is not his own merit which sustains him.—It is the merit of a benevolent Saviour. It is not a sense of his own righteousness which gives intrepidity to his expiring bosom. It is the righteousness of Christ. It is the hope of being found in Him, and a sense of the grace and forgiveness which he has received through His hands. In a word it is Christ who resolves the mystery. It is His presence which throws tranquillity and joy around the scene of distress. It is He who administers vigour to the dying man; and, while despair sits on every countenance, and relatives are weeping around him, He enables him to leave them all with this exulting testimony—O death where is thy sting—O grave where is thy victory!

SERMON XXV.

The Brevity of Human Life.

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short.”—1 COR. vii. 29.

THE affirmation of the text may be tried by a most distinct arithmetic. The average of man's life is numerically known. And should there be an overweening confidence to carry our hopes beyond this average, the maximum of life is numerically known. And, to balance the uncertainty whether our days upon earth may not greatly exceed the average, there is an equal uncertainty whether they may not as greatly fall short of it. There is no point, from its origin downwards, in which death may not lay his arrest on the current of human existence; and as if the whole domain of humanity were his own, does he go forth at large from one extreme to the other of it; nor is there a single portion of the territory, on which, with free and unfaltering footstep, he may not en-

ter. In the churchyard, we see graves of every dimension. This land of silence is far more densely peopled by young than by old—proving that through all the departments of life, whether of age, or of youth, or of infancy, the arrows of this mighty destroyer flee at random. Parents have oftener to weep over their children's tomb, than children have to carry their parents to that place, where lies the mouldering heap of the generations that have already gone by. So that on the side of our text, we have the clearest lights both of arithmetic and of experience; and one would think it superfluous to hold any parley with the understanding, on a topic of which the proof is so overpowering.

Why, it may be thought, should we be anxious in urging a truth, which may

safely be left to its own evidence? or take occasion strenuously and repeatedly to affirm, what none is able to deny? And this is just the marvellous anomaly of our nature, which it is so difficult to explain. In the face of all this evidence, and in utter opposition to the judgment which is extorted thereby, there is an obstinate practical delusion, that resides most constantly within the hearts, and rules most imperiously over the habits of the vast majority of our species. It is not that we are incapable of all influence from futurity; for it is the future gain of the present adventure, or the future issue of the present arrangement, or the future result of the present contrivance, that sets about the whole of human activity agoing. But it is to the future death, and to the future condition on the other side of it, that we are so strangely insensible. We are all in the glow and bustle and eagerness of most intense expectation, about the events that lie on the intermediate distance between us and death; and as blind to the certainty of the death itself, as if this distance stretched indefinitely onward in the region of anticipation before us, or as if it were indeed an eternity. There is a busy fitful and unsettled dream into which the world has been lulled as if by fascination; and out of which neither the moan of frequent death-beds, nor the daily tolling of the funeral bell, nor the constant breaking down of existing families, nor the piece-meal falling away of the old society, nor the building up of a new one in its place—we say that there is a deep sleep upon our world, out of which the whole noise and turmoil and terror of these incessant changes, have been totally unable to awaken us.

Nor do we expect of a new utterance about the brevity of time, that it will awaken you. For this purpose, there must be the putting forth of a force that is supernatural; and the most experimental demonstration we know of this necessity, is the torpor of the human soul about death, and the tenacity wherewith it stands its ground against the most pathetic and the most palpable exhibitions of it. We are never more assured of man, that he is wholly sold over to the captivity of this world, than on witnessing the strong adherence of

his heart to it, under the most touching experiences of its vanity—than on perceiving how unmoved he is out of all his earthliness, whether he go from burials to business, or from business back again to burials—than on observing how, after having carried a neighbour to his grave, and there trod as it were on the confines of the world, he will turn him again with a devotedness as intense and as unbroken to its concerns and companies as before. We affirm, that of the spell which binds him to earth, no power within the compass of nature is able to disenchant him—that argument will not—and the inroads of mortality on his own dwelling-place will not—and sermons poured forth over the closing grave of the dearest of his family will not—and the evident approaches of the last messenger to his own person will not—And it is indeed a most affecting spectacle to behold, amid the warnings and the symptoms of a dissolution which so speedily awaits him, that he just hugs more closely to his heart that world, which is on the eve of being torn away from his embraces for ever. Give me then a man who is actually alive to the realities of faith; and the inference from all this is, that another power than that of the experience of nature over the feelings of nature, must have been put forth to quicken him. There is not within the compass of all that is visible, any cause competent to the working of such an effect upon the human spirit. The power which awakens it to a sense of spiritual things, cometh from a spiritual quarter. There is nought in the world that is present, which can bring a human soul under the dominion of the world that is to come. One would have thought, that the failures and the fluctuations of time might have shaken the heart of man out of its devotedness to time, and shifted its regards to eternity. But it would appear not. The mere destruction of our earthly dependence, is not enough, to shift our desires and our dependence to that which is heavenly. The losses and the desolations which attach to the life of sense, and the certainty of all its joys and interests being speedily and totally swept away—these, it would appear, will not of themselves germinate within us the life of faith. The unmoved earthliness of the soul,

amid all the pathos, and warning, and menace, and solemn instruction of those affecting changes, which our earth so convincingly exhibits—this, of itself, demonstrates the need that there is, for the might and the mystery of a higher agent, to transform that which is carnal into that which is spiritual. In a word, the decay and the dissolution of all that is below, have no effect in raising the downward tendencies of the heart, which is only cradled thereby into more sunken infatuation, and strangely cleaves with more tenacity to a scene, on which the characters of littleness, and frailty, and rapid evanescence stand so palpably engraven. This wondrous phenomenon of our nature, convinces us of the doctrine of regeneration. It informs us that no treatment short of this, is able to spiritualize us—that ere our affections can be set on the things which are above, an influence from above must descend upon them; or ere we become alive to the unfading glories and the ethereal delights of the upper sanctuary, there must come down from that sanctuary, the light and the power of a special revelation.

There is a real and a most momentous distinction, between the children of light, and the children of this world; and that is a distinction which ought to be frequently adverted to, in our addresses to every mixed or general congregation. There are those of you, it is to be hoped, who have been born of the Spirit, and so made practically alive to the reality and the emphatic import of eternal things: And, there are those of you, it is to be feared, who have not been disturbed, or at least not yet awakened out of the deep slumbers of carnality; and to whom, till they are so awakened, the shortness of human life will prove an argument, in every way as feeble and as fruitless, as any that can be drawn out of the magazines either of natural or revealed truth. Let us first, therefore, endeavour to urge on the former of these two classes, such Christian lessons as the text might lead us at present to administer; and then let us endeavour to urge their conversion to Christianity, on the latter of these two classes, and that still too from the consideration of our text, which, though without the Spirit of God, it will fall powerlessly on their consciences, may,

by the Spirit of God, which both they and we are bound to pray for, be the very instrument of awakening them.

I. The first lesson that we would urge from the shortness of our abode upon earth, is moderation in regard to all its enjoyments—moderation, whether of desire in the pursuit, or of delight in the possession of them. There is not a stronger indication of time being felt as substantially our all, and of eternity being but a shadowy dream in our imagination, than the full set of our hearts upon the advancement of our condition in this world—so as to bedim all our prospects, and reduce to utter powerlessness all our efforts towards the advancement of our condition in the next world. The plausibility wherewith this undoubted habit of the soul is often palliated, is the duty that lies upon us all, of building up a provision for our family. But then they too are a family of immortals. They too are travelling along a journey that is short, and towards a long and lasting habitation. And if the accumulation of wealth for the expenses of their road, shuts out all care for the accumulation of that treasure, the purpose of which is to enrich and to beautify their residence for ever—still it resolves itself into that delusion, whereby the things of sense have been made to elbow the things of faith out of the system of human affairs.—Every man loves himself; and the preference of time to eternity for himself, gives decisive token of an unbelief about eternity. And most men love their children; and the preference of their time to their eternity, is just in every way as decisive of the same unbelief. The utter relaxation of all Christian guardianship through the week, is but wretchedly redeemed, by the tasks and the formalities of a Sabbath evening; and, on the other hand, the busy and intent and ever-plying carefulness wherewith men will labour for the earthly good of their children, forms the most impressive rebuke that can be given, of the little they do and the listlessness they feel for their unperishable souls. And O did they but compute, both for themselves and for their little ones—how soon the high-blown enterprise, with all its train of sanguine hopes, and dazzling anticipa-

tions, and rapidly succeeding centages, and the brilliant perspective, perhaps of a family raised to unbounded affluence, and admitted to all the privileges of free and honourable companionship among the upper circles of society—did they compute, as they would the returns of any worldly adventure, how very soon time with its ceaseless footstep will outstride the whole speculation, and cast both them and their children's children behind it among the ages that are forgotten—did they but think of the speed and the certainty of that coming day, when their bodies shall be food for the creeping things of the earth; and their souls, if neglected now, shall then be wandering in unprovided nakedness, through the dark realms of condemnation—did they but figure, as well they might, the look of despair, and the language of fell but fruitless execration, which ungodly families will then cast at the parents by whom their eternity has been undone—did they contemplate with adequate feeling, the anguish, and the helplessness, and the hatred, and the scowling reproach, that should then sit on the countenances of those, for whom now they toil so strenuously, and in the splendour of whose coming opulence they rejoice—O how would the deep and the dismal cloud that sits on their ulterior prospect, overshadow the nearer one. And even while they rode in triumph on the wings of this world's prosperity, would they learn to mix trembling with their mirth, and to carry the burden of all their aggrandizement with most reverential and religious soberness.

But on the other hand, and secondly, a dangerous adversity, as well as a dangerous success, may be the portion of many a family; and a boding cloud of disaster may hang and may discharge itself over their earthly habitation; and as they look onward to the scene of their future history in the world, may they feel themselves standing on the margin of a dark and fearful unknown; and even though daily bread is made sure by the promises of God to all who trust in them—yet who can brook the humiliation of a descent so woful; and what is the charm that can tranquillize the heart into patience, when the shame, and the

disappointment, and the terrors of the impending poverty, have thus raised within it the conflict of many agitations. It is thus, that man manifests himself to be as much the creature of sense in the day of his misfortune, as in the day of his prosperity. It proves how fully his affections are set upon the world, when, on gaining it, he rejoices as if he had gained all; but it just proves his affections to be as fully and as exclusively set upon the world, when, on losing it, he abandons himself as utterly to despair as if he had lost all. With a spiritual man, to whose mind spiritual things come home, with the impression of their reality—the consideration of our text would be effectual in both these cases; and while by its first lesson it would reduce the extravagance of his joy, it would by a second lesson equally reduce the extravagance of his distress. It has been well said that the faith of immortality, gives a certain firmness of texture to the soul. It places it on a high and a peaceful summit, which is beyond the reach of all earthly fluctuations. It brings within the ken of the mortal eye, such mighty spaces of bliss and glory interminable, as serve to expunge from the view of the beholder, that short intervening distance by which he is conducted to the margin of this vast territory. It is indeed a high exhibition which the disciple makes of his Christianity, when, sure of the present day because he knows that its subsistence is guaranteed, and sure of the coming immortality because he has laid his full reliance on the promises of the gospel—he can fearlessly commit the whole of that pilgrimage which lies between these two extremes, to a faithfulness that he knows to be unfailling—when, from the shore of present certainty, he can eye without dismay the brief but the stormy passage that lies on this side of death—when, athwart the dreary wilderness, he can behold the day-star of immortality, and be cheered by the beams of light and love and purity that irradiate therefrom; and, knowing that though the discipline for heaven be severe yet the time of that discipline is short, he can put up with all the pain and all the poverty which are allotted to his life in this world, and possess his soul in hope and in patience.

And there are other and severer ills

than those of poverty, wherewith the spirit of a pilgrim may be sorely exercised. There may be the death of friends; and, what perhaps is still more insupportable, there may be their desertion and their treachery. It is in the power of the arch-enemy of our race, to instil of his own spirit into the hearts of men—thus making it possible, even in the fair intercourse of society, to meet with deep and unfeeling cruelty under the guise of kindness; and, in return for the unsuspecting confidence wherewith one pours out the sincerity of his friendship into another's ear, to bring upon himself the unkindness and the wiles and the bitter derision of a cool and crafty deceiver. The great balsam for the wounded heart, under an infliction so painful, is the hope of immortality—in the believing sight of that distant heaven, where cunning and contrivance and brooding secrecy are unknown—where the light of a pure and cloudless transparency, sits upon every character—and not one countenance that there opens upon you with benignity, which does not truly express the glow and the graciousness that are to be found in the innermost recesses of the soul. This cheering hope is the grand medicine of the heart, under the bitterness it may be doomed to experience; but it does add a mellowing influence to the operation, when one thinks of the conflict of all its emotions that it will be soon over—that the triumphs of an infernal policy have but their little and their short-lived day, which will speedily be ended—that a retreat of peacefulness is at hand, in the bosom of which the oppressor and his victim will lie down in their graves together, where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary are at rest.

But this conducts us to the third Christian lesson, to which the consideration of our text might lend a very powerful reinforcement; and that is a lesson of charity, even in the midst of deepest injuries and bitterest provocations. A great deal more than one half of the malignity and exasperation of this world, is due to the want of mutual understanding. We often murmur, the one against the other, just because we misconceive one another. And the proud and stubborn

attitude of the two adversaries, and the sullen distance at which they so immovably stand, and the deep and ireful animosities which rankle within them, and the frenzied imaginations they have of their mutual deceit and mutual worthlessness, with all the other symptoms of fierce and stout hostility, are often resolvable—not unto the defect of truth or of friendship, but purely into a defect of explanation. Now this ought to have a softening influence. But when even for this, the evidences whether of malice or dishonesty, are too glaring to be resisted, there is something to temper and to mollify all our sensations of wrathfulness, in the thought of the coming disease and the coming deathbed. It were indeed a triumph, could the kindling resentments that now rage and burn within you, be quenched by the waters of compassion; and for this purpose, think we beseech you, even of the greatest enemy you may have in this world—how soon the fatal distemper will seize upon him; and the whole frame of his mortality will shake into dissolution; and he will lie a stricken and irrecoverable patient in most affecting helplessness; and he will send out a voice of feebleness that may implore, but has not strength to upbraid you; and after his lips have quivered and his eyes have rolled at the coming on of the last agony, he will sink away into deep and unbroken stillness. And O if you but saw the pale and peaceful repose, that sits on the dead man's countenance; or, still more, if you could follow his unembodied spirit to that bar, where it stands naked and defenceless before the scrutiny of God; and behold how it trembles there under the piercing inspection of an eye, before which all deceit lies open and all decision must forever melt away—tell us if this were present to your contemplation as it ought whether it would not curb the restless indignancy of your spirit, and whether you would not forget all his injustice and all his cruelties in time, when you thought of the horrors of his undone eternity?

But let us rise from particular lessons to one that is comprehensive of them all—from the separate graces which enter into the sanctification of a disciple, to the work of sanctification at large—from the

special virtues, that enter as so many distinct features of worth and loveliness in the Christian character, to the habit of general and most intent diligence in perfecting that character in all its points; and thus standing complete in the whole will of God. There is a mighty work to be done; and few and evil are the days that are allotted for the doing of it. The race of Christianity is a race against time—in which therefore there is not one minute to spare from its earnestness and toilsome prosecution. We know that it is the righteousness of Christ, which hath purchased for us our title of entry into Heaven. But there is a righteousness which must adhere personally to ourselves, that we may be qualified for heaven's exercises and heaven's joys. He hath recovered for us our inheritance, and our birth-right; and we must now enter upon our course of education, that we may become meet for the inheritance, and be qualified for doing honour to our birth-right, by the acquirement of all those graces and properties, which become the possession of it. It may be by an act of undeserved patronage, that a place of favour and emolument in the service of your earthly monarch is conferred upon you. But yet, after all, there must be a training for the place, and an examination of your personal fitness for its duties, ere you are inducted into it. A mansion of glory in the upper paradise, is just such a place of favour and distinction, under the eye of your Monarch which is in heaven—given freely through Christ Jesus to all who will; but still a place for which you must be trained, and on the success of which training you have to undergo a trial and an examination, and must have an approving sentence proclaimed, ere the door of heaven shall be opened to you.

On that day we shall be taken account of, not according to our dogmata but according to our doings; and we shall not be admitted to any part of the salvation that is through the blood of Christ, unless it be found that we have a part in the salvation that is by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And to work out this salvation, there must on our part be a fear, and a trembling; and an earnest suppli-

cation for that grace of God, which can alone work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and an ever-plying diligence in the cultivation of our personal character, that we may be found without spot and blemish in the day of Jesus Christ; and such a contest with nature, as that the spirit of the gospel may prevail over it, and sin, though not so eradicated, as that we shall be free of its hateful presence, may be so subdued as that we shall be free of its hateful tyranny. And is this a work, we would ask, that is only to be taken up at random opportunities; and abandoned to such scraps of leisure and convenience, as the busy history of a life spent in worldliness can afford; and put off indefinitely to those rare and occasional spaces, which may or may not cast up, when a respite from the manifold urgencies of the world meets and is at one with the caprice of our own inclinations. This may do with those who can recline themselves in the arms of their fancied orthodoxy, or it may do with those who think that the sobrieties of civil life are preparation enough for the sacredness of heaven. But it will not do with those, who, aware, of the mighty transformation that is called for into another heart and another character than before, labour to realize upon their persons that very Christianity which shone forth in the days of the New Testament—when the all things whatsoever of human life, were consecrated to the glory of Him who is the Author of it; and the lamp of religion was fed by the incense of a perpetual offering; and prayer without ceasing, and watchfulness with all perseverance, spoke the habitual attitude of men whose lives were ever girded for the work and girded for the warfare—who, in every change of experience, could find a something to do, that marked the discipleship on which they had entered; and, on the constant outlook of defence against the disturbing forces of the world, could keep an unstained purity in the midst of its most deceitful blandishments, and a fervent unabated charity of spirit when assailed by its host of most galling provocations.

There is indeed a mighty work to be done ere we die—that of crucifying the old man, and making a new man all over again—that of resisting the desires and

the habits of nature, till they are at least vanquished, if not exterminated—that of transmuting the character of earth which we have at the first, into the character of heaven which we must acquire afterwards, else heaven we shall never reach. The distance, great as it is between the two states, must be traversed on this side of death, or we shall never attain a state of blessedness on the other side of death. It is a far journey; and short is the period that we have for the performance of it. With many of us the day is far spent; and the shades of night are gathering around us; and we still linger, and hesitate, and send forth our few feeble and ineffectual aspirations, at the mere outset of this vast enterprise. The thing to be accomplished is, that we shall be translated from the mastery of sin to the mastery of grace; or that the works of the flesh shall be abandoned, and the fruits of the spirit shall flourish upon our persons abundantly. Ere these mortal bodies go into dissolution, the life of Christ must be made manifest in them—“else when they are raised again, and sisted before His judgment seat, they will be found unfit of occupancy in any of His everlasting habitations. The distance between hell and heaven is not greater, than is the distance between sin and sacredness; and what we have distinctly to do while we are in the world, is to make good our departure from the one territory and our entrance upon the other; and, clearing our way from the entanglements which detain us on the outcast and accursed region, to break forth on a career of prosperous and progressive holiness.

Now one entanglement may detain us as effectually as a thousand; and the finer subtleties of the world as powerfully enslave and implicate the heart, as do its most gross and revolting criminalities. Ye men, who sit at ease as if your work was over, or as if only a little of it was yet left which may be done at any time—we do not charge you with such sins, as go to deform your visible history. But we bid you remember that ungodliness is a sin—that causeless anger is a sin—that brooding anxiety is a sin—that dependence on the creature is a sin—that languor in religion is a sin—that distaste for prayer is a sin. We bid you think that

countless are the sins which go to desecrate the spirit, while they leave the aspect of the exterior morality entire; and the busy discipline to which you are called, is to war against and to subjugate them all. It lies with the single strength of any one of them, to keep you moored on forbidden ground; and we therefore ask, whether, escaped from them all, you are now bending in full sail to that land of uprightness, where nought that is unholy can enter? You perhaps would like it better, could you let down the guardianship of your spirits, and sink into the arms of an inert and unfruitful orthodoxy. But know that the grace of the gospel is held forth, not that you may indulge but that you may deny ungodliness. This it teaches, and this it enables us; and the full proof that you have to give of your discipleship is, that you are earnestly aspiring after the whole perfection of heaven, and, through the implored agency of the Spirit on your hearts, that you are daily coming nearer to it.

It is by the perseverance of your conduct in the walk of the Spirit, that the life of the Spirit in your souls is upholden. The Holy Ghost is given to those who obey Him. Every act of charity, nourishes the principle of charity. Every act of forbearance, strengthens you the more against the assault of future provocations. Every commitment of your anxieties to God, trains you more to the habit of thus disposing the heavier anxieties that still may offer to oppress and to overwhelm you. The doings of the Christian life go to enfeeble all the corruption that is resisted, and to confirm all the graces which have been put into operation. By reason of use, there is a prompter discernment, and a readier preference of all that is good—a quicker recoil, and more resolute departure from all that is evil. It is thus that every honest disciple, toils his laborious way through the course of sanctification. He spares neither prayers nor pains, in this steep ascent up the hill of difficulty. He makes fast work of it; for that time is precious which is dealt out in small and precarious measurement, and when nevertheless a work on which eternity hangs remains to be accomplished. And thus it is, that he makes a business of

the concerns of his soul—watching, and working, and connecting all his movements below with the eye of Him that looketh from above—denying himself at every time of temptation, and crowding every day of his brief endurance in the world with the deeds of new obedience.

We know not a text of more urgent and alarming import in the whole Bible, than that the righteous scarcely shall be saved. They will make out the prize of eternal life; but like the victorious courser in the race, they will make it as by the distance of a hair-breadth. Compare the task to be done, with the time that there is for the doing of it; and how it should speed us on to the business of our eternity; and what an occupying of all our hours, and a plying of all our expedients ought there to be—lest when the night cometh in which no man can work, we shall be found short of the kingdom of God.

II. But this carries us to the second head of discourse. If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? We are called to kiss the Son, while he is in the way. It is a short and a little while. The season of offered mercy is speeding onward to its close. In a few years, the likeliest of us all will be swept away from the land of gospel calls and gospel opportunities. The voice of a beseeching God is upon us only until death—after which the voice ceases to be heard; and the light of the Sun of righteousness is lifted up no longer; and the fountain that is opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, has an everlasting seal set upon it; and a dark and impassable gulph of separation, opens asunder, between the souls of the impenitent and the blood of sprinkling. Kiss the Son then while He is in the way; or, mark the alternative, His wrath will begin to burn. He who now is all meekness and gentleness and kind entreaty, will then look upon you with an altered countenance; and it is indeed a striking expression—the wrath of the Lamb—the wrath of Him who is denoted by that which is the emblem of patience and non-resistance and timidity—a wrath then, to the excitement of which, there must have been a series of deep and

bitter provocations—a wrath, ye careless and ye worldly, that you are now treasuring up unto the day of its outpouring—when you shall cry in vain for the rocks and the mountains to cover you; and will be made to feel that no indignation burns more fiercely than the indignation of slighted tenderness, and no vengeance more overwhelming than the vengeance of offered and rejected mercy.

Nor should we marvel at such a catastrophe—for only think of the way in which it is brought on. That Christ should so have toiled and suffered for our sakes—that He should have descended on our miserable world, from that eminence of pure and peaceful glory which He had before occupied—that He should have put on the infirmities of our nature, and shrouded His Godhead in a tabernacle of flesh, which He took back with Him to Heaven, and which, for aught we know, will adhere to Him there throughout all eternity—that, amid the agonies of a mysterious conflict, He should have poured out His soul; and, undertaking for the guilty millions of our race, should have borne the whole weight of their chastisement—that, during the hour and the power of darkness, He, in the depths of a passion that well nigh overwhelmed Him, should in love to men have weathered such an endurance; when the sword of righteous vengeance was awakened against Him; and the cup of retribution was put into His hands, and drunk by Him to its very dregs; and the vials of an incensed and insulted Lawgiver should have been poured forth by the Father upon the Son, when He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice—that thus He should have travailed; and thus He should have put forth all the energies both of strength and of suffering, that the mountain of our iniquity may be levelled, and we may pass over in peace and safety unto God—that, after having made reconciliation, He should rise again to the place from whence He came, and be hailed by the shoutings of the celestial as the author and the finisher of a mighty enterprise—that, after having entered there, He should turn His face to that world in whose behalf this movement was made; and mark how the men of it were prizing the vast redemption, and crowding the now

open gate of transition which leads from sin unto the Saviour—Just think of this, and call you it no provocation, that, after the cost and the labour of rearing such an apparatus, the overtures thereof should fall in listlessness and without efficacy on the hearts of our alienated species—that this great work of deliverance should be vilified into a thing of nought, and by the very creatures for whose deliverance and whose welfare it was accomplished—that we should slight these tidings of the gospel as insignificant, or impatiently spurn them as an offence away from us. O, think of all this, and you will be at no loss to comprehend, why He, who now stands out in the winning gentleness of His nature, and bends with longing compassion over you, should then come forth in vindictiveness and fury, on all who have put to mockery the dear-bought privilege; and on all who have unthankfully scorned the grace and the mercy of so precious an invitation.

This day of wrath is at hand. To you at least the time is short, when its fire will burn around you, and, through the openings of your mortal framework, as it goeth into dissolution, will it enter the premises, and seize the affrighted soul that now occupies therein. While in the body the surrounding materialism serves as a screen between us and the Deity; and we can escape into a temporary oblivion of Him and of His anger, among the scenes and the pursuits and the enjoyments of this visible world. But there is no such screen between God and the disembodied spirit—nothing that can shield it from the sight of His rebuking countenance, and the immediate glance of His fiery indignation. We are bidden now, to speed our way from this impending storm; and by movements too which are all expressive of rapidity—to flee from the coming wrath—to flee for refuge unto Christ—to haste and make no delay that we should keep the commandments. All which precepts, be-taken the urgency of a matter on hand. And with reason too, for, if it do not become better, your condition is daily becoming worse—your conscience more seared against the denunciations of the law—your heart more proof against the terrors of the threatened vengeance—your whole person more warped among

the entanglements of sin, and more helplessly captive than before to the great adversary. This day may aggravate your danger. This call that is now sounded, ye impenitent, in your hearing—if it kindle no purpose of amendment in your bosoms, may kindle a fiercer wrath in the bosom of the Divinity. Even now, may you be adding to the store of displeasure that is kept in reserve for the great day of its manifestation. And close as you are to the brink of eternity, and short as the period is, that will conduct you to its verge and plunge you into its abyss for ever—we ask, is it for you thus to accumulate the wrath of God, and to cradle your souls into a delusive peace, on the very eve of its discharge upon you?

Despise not the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; but know that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance. And do not, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

O avail yourselves, then, of the precious moment that is now passing over you. Christ is offered to you. Salvation is at your choice. Forgiveness, through the blood of a satisfying atonement, is yours if you will. God does not want to magnify the power of His anger—He wants to magnify the power of His grace upon you. Try to approach Him in your own righteousness; and you will find yourselves toiling at an impracticable distance away from Him. But come with the righteousness of Christ as your plea; and you will indeed be permitted to draw nigh. God will rejoice over you for the sake of Him in whom He is well pleased; and you may freely, and with all your heart, rejoice in God, through Him, by whom ye have received the atonement. Could we state the thing more plainly, we would. We want to bring you into the condition of a simple receiver of God's pardon—a simple holder on the truth of His promises. It is on this footing, and on this alone, that you will ever be clothed in the garments of acceptance; or stand firmly and surely on the ground of reconciliation before Him. O turn then into this peaceful haven; and, in

the act of so turning, God will pour out His spirit upon you. As the fruit of your faith, you will become a new creature; and in stepping over to that region of sunshine where all is gladness, you will be sure to experience also that all is

grace—that the peace and purity of the gospel are ever in alliance—They who walk before God without fear, being they who walk before Him in righteousness and in holiness all the days of their life.

SERMON XXVI.

The Faith of the Patriarchs.

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.”—HEBREWS xi. 14.

It is in the power of actions as well as of words to declare plainly; and the patriarchs of this chapter made it as plain by what they did as by what they said, whether it was that their desires and their affections were tending. Nothing could be more explicit of this, than the practice of Abraham—who gave up the place of his nativity; and tore himself away from all its charms and endearments; and became a pilgrim in an unknown land: And in the hope of a very distant fulfilment, which he saw to be yet afar off, and lying greatly beyond the period of his life in the world, did he shape every movement of that life, at the bidding of Him who had uttered a promise, and in whose hand alone lay the accomplishment of it. What is very well termed a man's general drift, stood most palpably out on the whole of his history. And in the same way, every human being has a prevailing drift, that may, in most instances, be pretty accurately gathered from certain obvious and characteristic indications, which are ever obtruding themselves on the notice of by-standers.

But there is a distinction to be remarked here. It may sometimes not be so very plain, what the particular interest is, which a man is prosecuting with the main force and intentness of his ambitious desires—whether it be the love of money, or the love of power, or the love of acceptance and good will in society, or the love of eminence above his fellows by the lustre of a higher literary reputation. It may sometimes require a force

of discernment to ascertain what the leading object of pursuit is—while, without any stretch of penetration at all, it may glare upon us with the whole broadness of day, where it is that the object thus aspired after is locally situated. I may not be able to pronounce of the most bustling and ambitious member of our city corporation, whether his heart is most set on the acquirement of a princely fortune, or on a supreme ascendancy over all his compeers in the political management of this great community. But whether it be the one or the other, I can say on the instant, that the great theatre of his fond and favourite exertion is this, the place of our habitation—that it is here, and not in the neighbouring metropolis where his various interests lie—that the game in which he is engaged is the business of this city, or the politics of this city, and not the business or the politics of any other—that it is among home society around him, where he seeks to signalize himself, whether by wealth or by influence, or by popularity; and not in any remote or distant society with whom no sympathies are felt, and for whose homage either to his dignity, or to his opulence no anxiety whatever has been conceived. All this may be plain enough without any piercing anatomy at all into the mysteries of the human character—so that, however difficult it may be to ascertain the precise interest which most engrosses the aim of any given individual, there may be nothing difficult in the question of the precise

locality, where all his interests and all the choice objects of his taste and of his affections are to be found.

And thus, in like manner, while skill, and subtlety, and great power and ingenuity of moral perception may be necessary, to estimate what that thing in the world is, which any of its people is most in quest of—yet it may be resistlessly evident to every eye, that they are the things and interests of this world, and not of any other, on which all its people are lavishing their time and their thoughts and the earnestness of their best and most devoted regards. We may not be able so to dissect the moral constitution of an acquaintance, as to find out of him, what that precise earthly object is, which wields the most tyrannical ascendancy over his affections—and, yet be very sure, all the while, that the object is an earthly and not a heavenly one—that it is ease, or fortune, or fame, or sensible indulgence (though you do not know which of them), on this side of time; and neither any enjoyment nor any glory on the other side of it—that it is perhaps the advancement of a rising family, stopping short however within the confines of the present life, without one thought of advancing either themselves or their children to a station of immortality. One would need to be profoundly intimate with the hidden mysteries of our nature, to trace the numerous shadings, and varieties of worldliness that obtain in our species. But it may be a matter of the most obvious recognition to the most simple of men, that worldliness in some shape or other, is the great pervading element of all its generations. This much at least may be seen, without the piercing eye either of scholar or satirist; and while the apostle said of the faithful whom he was enumerating, how they declared plainly that they were seeking a future and a distant country—we may say of nearly all whom we know, and of all whom we look upon in society, that they declare as plainly the world to be the only scene on which their hopes and their wishes do expatiate, and an atmosphere of unmingled worldliness to be the only element they breathe in.

It is not either that man is actually satisfied with present things. It is not

that he has set him down in placid acquiescence, among the creatures and the circumstances by which he is for the moment surrounded. We see nothing of the repose of full and finished attainment, with any of our acquaintances. There is none of them, in fact, who is not plainly stretching himself forward to some one distant object or other; and, as the tokens of one who is evidently on a pursuit, do we behold him in a state of motion and activity and busy endeavour. But when we come to inquire into the nature of the object that so stimulates his desires and his faculties, do we find it to be a something which lies within the confines of mortality—a something suited only to such senses and such powers of enjoyment, as death will extinguish—a something that he may perhaps hand down to posterity, but which a few rapid years will wrest away from himself, and that by an act of everlasting bereavement. We cannot move amongst our fellows, whether in meetings, or in market-places, or even on those convivial occasions when man is so willing to drown all his graver anxieties in the playfulness of a passing hour, without most plainly perceiving that the present is not enough for him—that he is constantly going forth in anticipation on some distant future, which he has not realized—that, instead of the quiescence of one who has found, there is with him all the forecast and restlessness and outlook of one who is still agog and is seeking. There is not an individual we know, who is not bending thus onwards, and that, with the set and strenuousness of his whole heart, on some object which lies or appears to lie in the perspective before him. But when we come to inquire, how far on in the line of his history it may be placed, we find, in the overwhelming majority of instances, that it belongs to the region of sense, and almost never to the region of spirituality—that the main force of human ambition is lavished on some swift and splendid evanescence, which cannot last to any single possessor beyond the limits of his own puny generation—that all are seeking, no doubt; but where is the discoverable symptom, of almost any seeking beyond the confines of that territory, which God hath spread under our feet, first for

the sustenance, and then for the sepulture of human bodies? Where is almost the man who is prosecuting, with the assiduity of a business, his personal interest in that country where dwell the spirits of the just made perfect? This tendency towards the distant unseen stood out most plainly and most declaredly on the history of the believing patriarchs. But now the tendency of almost every man we see, is plainly the opposite of this—so that on travelling the round of human experience, it may nearly be affirmed without alleviation of all, that, amid the heat and the hurry and the hard-driving of creatures in full pursuit of a something that lies in the distance before them, it is uniformly a something which they can only hold in frail and fleeting tenantry while they abide in this world; and which death, remorseless and unescapable death, will soon ravish eternally from their grasp.

To behold in man such a proneness to futurity, and at the same time such a perverseness in all his computations of futurity—to see him so disdainful of the past, and so dissatisfied with the present, and yet, in labouring for the future, to fix his regards on that only futurity which must soon be present, and soon be irrevocably past—to see him so boundless in his desires, and yet so averse to that alone field of enterprise where he can have scope for them, and so unwilling to exchange the objects of time for those of a boundless eternity—to perceive him so obstinately and so peremptorily blind in this matter, and that not merely in the face of most obvious arithmetic, but in the face of most urgent and affecting mementoes with which the sad history of every year is strewing his path in this world of mortality—Surely, it is one of the strangest mysteries of our nature, and at the same time, one of the strongest tokens of its derangement, that man should thus embark all his desires in a frail and crazy vessel, so soon to be engulfed by that sweeping whirlwind which sooner or later will overtake the whole of our existing generation—or that, on the quicksands of time, he should rear his only resting place, and even please himself with the delusion of its firm and secure establishment—though he knows, and most assuredly knows, that a few little

years will witness its total and irremediable overthrow.

But to alleviate this gross infatuation, it may be said, and with plausibility too, that the region of sense and the region of spirituality are so unlike the one to the other—that there is positively nothing in our experience of the former, which can at all familiarize our minds to the anticipation of the latter. And then, as if to intercept the flight of our imaginations forward to eternity, there is such a dark and cloudy envelopment that hangs on the very entrance of it. Ere we can realize that distant world of souls, we must pierce our way beyond the curtain of the grave—we must scale this awful barricado which separates the visible from the invisible—we must make our escape from all the close and warm and besetting urgencies, which, in this land of human bodies, are ever plying us with constant and powerful solicitation; and force our spirits across the boundaries of sense, to that mysterious place, where cold and meagre and evanescent spectres dwell together in some unknown and incomprehensible mode of existence. We know not, if there be another tribe of beings in the universe who have such a task to perform. Angels have no death to undergo. There is no such affair of unnatural violence between them and their final destiny. It is for man, and for aught that appears, it is for man alone, to fetch from the other side of a material panorama that hems and incloses him, the great and abiding realities with which he has everlastingly to do. It is for him, so locked in an imprisonment of day, and with no other loop-holes of communication between himself and all that is around him than the eye and the ear—it is for him to light up in his bosom a lively and realizing sense of the things which eye hath never seen, and ear hath never heard. It is for man, and perhaps for man alone, to travel in thought over the ruins of a mighty dissolution; and, beyond the wreck of that present world by which he is encompassed, to conceive that future world in which he is to expatiate for ever.

But, harder achievement perhaps than any, it is for man, in the exercise of faith, to brave that most appalling of all contemplations, the decay and dissolution of

himself; to think of the time when his now animated framework, every part of which is so sensitive and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when the vital warmth, by which at present it is so thoroughly pervaded, shall take its departure, and leave to coldness and to abandonment, all that is visible of this moving and active and thinking creature—when those limbs with which he now steps so firmly, and that countenance out of which he now looks so gracefully, and that tongue with which he now speaks so eloquently, and that whole body for the interest and provision of which he now labours as strenuously as if indeed it were immortal—when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefaction, and at length crumble with the coffin which incloses them into dust. Why, to a being in the full consciousness and possession of his living energies, there is something, if we may be allowed the expression, so foreign and so unnatural in death, that we are not to wonder if it scare away the mind from that ulterior region of existence to which it is the stepping-stone. Angels have no such transition of horror and mystery to undergo. There is no screen of darkness like this, interposed between them and any portion of their futurity, however distant; and it appears only of man, that it is for him to drive a breach across that barrier which looks so impenetrable, or so to surmount the power of vision as to carry his aspirings over the summit of all that vision has made known to him.

Now if this be the work of faith, you will perceive that it is not just so light and easy an achievement as some would apprehend. Why, there are some who seem to feel as if nothing more were required for the completion of this work, than merely to adjust the orthodoxy of their creed, and then have done with it. To acquire faith is with them as simple an affair, as to learn their catechism. Let them only import a sound metaphysic notion into the head; and this, they think, will bear them upward into heaven, though their treasure is not there and their heart is not there. To seize upon the title-deed to heaven, they feel as if they had nothing more to do, than to seize upon some certain dogma in the science of Theology: and that by keeping firm hold of this, they hold a kind of

legal or stipulated security for a place in the inheritance above. Faith is with them a mere embrace, by the understanding, of one or more articles in an approved system of Divinity. It is enough, in their imagination, to have a right to glory—that they be intellectually right about the matter of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. Heaven is somehow looked upon as a reward to the believer for the soundness of his speculative opinions. The faith which is unto salvation, is regarded in no other light than as the bare recognition of certain doctrinal truths, and the salvation itself as a return for such a recognition. The indolence of a mere theoretical contemplation, is thus substituted for the practice and the pains-taking and the perseverance of men, in busy pursuit of some object to which they are bending forward, with the desire and the diligence of an earnest prosecution. Instead of the attitude of men who are seeking, you witness the repose and the complacency of men who have already found. They look as if they had gotten all they want—a sort of mystical assurance for the next world, but without one expression beaming forth from the history of their lives, that they felt themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the present world. There is positively nothing about them, which declares plainly, as with the patriarchs of old, that they are seeking a country. With the understanding, they occasionally meditate on heavenly things; but with the affections they uniformly and habitually mind earthly things. We see nothing to distinguish them from others in the style of their great practical movements in the world; nor can we characterize their faith in any other terms, than as a mere entertainment given by the mind to the topics of an inert and unproductive theory.

Now this is really not the apostolical description of faith. It is not that which heads the enumeration of those Old Testament worthies, who exemplified the power and the operation of this principle. The assent of the understanding to any one of the positions of orthodoxy, is neither the substance of things hoped for, nor is it the evidence of things not seen; or rather, as it should have been translated, it is not the confident expectation of things hoped for, neither is it the clear

and assured conviction of things which are not seen. This last is the principle which set all the patriarchs in motion. They saw future things, with as fresh and operative a feeling of their reality, as they saw present things; and they acted not merely on the matters that were near and around them, but also on the matters that were in the distance before them: and believing equally in both, they just measured their path and their proceedings in the world, according to the real importance of both. This is faith; and you see how immediately, and without the intervention of a single step, practice emerges out of it—and how, by its simple presence in the mind, futurity obtains the ascendancy over all the purposes of the mind—and how, just as naturally as a man will prepare his house for the visit of a friend, because he knows his friend is coming, will a man prepare himself for the visit of his Saviour, because he believes and knows that his Saviour is coming. And hence the reason why the apostle minded not earthly things, but had his conversation in heaven, was, because from that place he looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—All illustrative of this, that, by faith, a moving and prevailing force upon the conduct is made to lie in the consideration of that which is coming, as well as in the urgency of that which is at hand; that the way in which the reality of a man's faith is attested, is by present but lesser interests being made to give way to future and greater ones; and that it is only he who declares plainly by his doings, that he is in quest of these future interests, it is he and he only who also declares that he is in the faith.

Think for one moment of the apostolical definition of faith. It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen—or, as it should have been rendered, it is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the clear and assured conviction of things not seen. It is that which gives to an interest that is future, all the urgency and deciding power upon the conduct, which belong to an interest that is present: And should the future interest be greater than the present, and they come into competition, the one with the other, faith is that which resolves him who is under its influence, to give up the immediate gratification for

the sake of the distant advantage. Thus it is, essentially and by its very nature, a practical principle: and no sooner does it take possession of the heart of any individual, than it holds out the plain attestation of itself upon his history—and not by his dogmata, but by his doings.

But in the work of seeking, it is possible to go astray. Paul gives an instance of this when he records it of his own countrymen, that they sought but stumbled, because they sought to establish a righteousness of their own. They sought to win Heaven by purchase, instead of humbling themselves to the acceptance of it as a present. But to make out this, man must either equalize his doings to the demands of the law; or the shortness of the doings from the demands must just be overlooked, and a polluted obedience be sustained by God as an adequate price for the rewards of eternity. The former way of it is impossible. Man has already fallen short; and lost a distance, which he, with all his strenuousness, cannot recover; and incurred a guilt, which he, with all his payments and all his penances, cannot atone for. The latter way of it is equally impossible. If it be true that man cannot clear himself of guilt, it is just as true that God cannot connive at it. It were carrying heaven by storm, and forcing a way into it over the ruins of the divine government—were the creature, on the strength of his own deservings, to challenge a place in it, while one single commandment that had fallen from the mouth of the Creator was either undone or resisted. And when that creature is man, so far gone in disobedience—such an attempt is marked both by a haughty presumption in himself, and by a most debasing sense of what was due to the holiness and authority of God. Man's obedience is not worthy of heaven, as a reward from God—however worthy heaven may be of God's munificence, as His free and unmerited donation to man. The gospel never relaxes into any compromise with human unworthiness—when it affirms the footing upon which eternal life is held forth to our species. It is not earned by us in the shape of wages. It is offered to us in the shape of a grant; and, whatever be the way in which we are to seek after a place in the kingdom of God, it is not by labouring

to render an equivalent price either in our property or in our services, that we shall obtain the possession of it.

Heaven is held out in the gospel, not in bargain as a reward to our performance of God's precepts, but simply in anticipation as a fulfilment to our hope of God's promises; and what place it may be asked is there for seeking after this? How shall we seek that which is already gotten? or what conceivable thing is there to do, in quest of a benefit that is offered to our hand; and on the honesty of which offer we have merely to lay an unflinching reliance? We can understand how to go about it, when the matter is to seek that which we must work for. But if heaven be not of works but of grace, what remains but to delight ourselves in the secure anticipation of that, which we should count upon as a certainty, instead of labouring for it as if it were a contingency that hung upon our labours?

And yet they are promises, and nothing else, which put all the patriarchs into motion. It was just because they saw these promises afar off, and were persuaded to them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth—it was just because of all this, that they declared plainly, both by their desires and by their doings, that they sought a country. Had the land of Canaan been proposed to Abraham as a thing to be purchased for a price adequate to its value, he would never have moved a single footstep towards the acquisition of it. But when proposed to him on the simple footing of a promise, and to obtain a right to the land he had nothing to do but to accept of it—from that moment he set himself busily forward, in prosecution of all the required steps by which he and his posterity were, not to buy a thing that was for sale, but to enter on the possession of a thing that was given. And it is quite the same of the heavenly Canaan. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord—a thing not purchased by us, but purchased for us by another—a matter so gigantically beyond any price that man could render for it, that, if held up to him in this aspect, it would look and rightly look to his despairing eye as if placed in the region of impossibility

away from him—a height of privilege and of glory, not to be scaled by human virtue at its utmost strenuousness; and therefore brought down to human attainment, by the opening of a mediatorial gate, through which one and all of us are invited to enter upon the joys of immortality. But, instead of bidding him enter upon these joys, bid him earn them, and that by the produce of his own industry; and then, as surely as a task felt to be insurmountable instead of stirring up his powers weighs them down to inactivity—so surely will heaven, held out not as a loving offer but as a legal payment, fasten such a drag upon his exertions as is quite immovable. Grace has been charged with ministering to human indolence. But it is free grace, and nothing else, which unfastens this drag—which releases man from the imprisonment that formerly held him—which brings him out to a large and open space, and sets an object of hopefulness before him that he knows to be accessible—which breaks him loose from the grasp of that law, from whose condemnation and whose penalties he felt so inextricable. So that, instead of doing nothing for heaven, when the gulph of a pathless separation stood in the way of it, he can now embark on a career of approximation, where, by all his doings, and by all his seekings, he may declare plainly that heaven is indeed the country to which he is travelling.

It is said of the patriarchs in this chapter, that they were not only persuaded of the promises, but that they embraced them. To be persuaded of them, was to believe in the truth of the promises; to embrace them was to make choice of the things promised. Abraham chose his prospects in a distant country, rather than his possessions in the country of his father; and, in the prosecution of this choice, did he abandon the latter, and plainly declare, by all his subsequent doings, that he was seeking and making progress towards the former. And a believer, now-a-days, is not only persuaded that he has heaven for the acceptance of it; but he actually accepts, and, in so doing, he, like the father of the faithful, makes a preference between two objects which stand in competition before him. He chooses heaven rather than

earth—the country he has in promise, rather than the country he has in possession—the place where God is revealed in sensible glory, rather than the place that has been so long unblest and unvisited by any manifestations of His presence—the land of holy and upright and obedient creatures, rather than this land of moral uproar and disorder, where selfishness and sensuality and sin have dethroned the authority of Heaven's law from the hearts of a degenerate family. To make intelligent choice of such a heaven as this, is surely to prefer all that is in it and about it, to the world and the things that are in the world; and the more that it is true of our nature, and is averred most strenuously in the Bible, that our affection for both is impossible. The man who chooses heaven rather than earth, chooses what is essentially characteristic of heaven, rather than what is essentially characteristic of earth; or, in other words, he makes choice of the piety of heaven, and the purity of heaven and the benevolence of heaven. It is not by these that he purchases for himself a place in paradise; but it is by these, that he prepares himself both for the doings and for the delights of paradise. It is by these, that he brings his taste and his temper into conformity with that which is celestial. It is by these, that he becomes a fit recipient for all those sensations of blessedness which are current there. It is not by these, that he secures his right to the inheritance above; for this was put into his hand at the very outset of his spiritual journey. But it is by these, that he secures what is no less indispensable, he secures in his own person a capacity for the joys of that inheritance; and by a transformation of character from the secular to the sacred, he can now breathe with kindred delight in an atmosphere of sacredness.

The point at which heaven is accepted as a gift, so far from marking that place in the history of a believer when he gives up his activity because he has now gotten all that he wants, marks the place of his breaking forth on a career of activity—at the entrance of which he was before bound by a spell that no exertion of his could dissipate. It is the very point at

which he is released from the bondage of hopelessness; and when, instead of idly aspiring after an object that is unattainable, he sets forth in the prosecution of an object now placed within his reach. It is not in proportion as the freeness of grace becomes manifest to the soul, but just in proportion as it is darkened by the fears and the fancies of legality, that the inquirer is kept back on his journey heavenwards. And it is not true that he has gotten all he wants, when by faith he has gotten his justification. This has done no more for him than to open up the commencement of his path. It has only given him the right of entry into heaven; but it has not given those preparations of the heart and the character, without which heaven would be an abode of weariness. One can conceive that the mere right of entry, may be enough to satisfy the man who is merely persuaded of heaven being by his faith; but it is not enough for the man who has embraced heaven as the chosen good of his existence. Ere he can attain the comfort of heaven, he must work himself into the character of heaven. It is not enough that there be rapture from without. There must be a relish from within. It is a place of happiness to none, but to those who have a heart for its kind of happiness. It is guilt which has closed the gate of heaven against the men of our rebellious generation; and there is not one of them, who would ever labour to qualify himself for the employments or the society of a place that he could not enter. But by the death of Christ, the guilt is washed away; and the gate is opened—and all to whom these tidings of joy come with acceptance, feel as if a fetter had been struck off from their persons, and so set themselves forth to the work of preparation. It is indeed the loosing of a bond, by which they who aforetime were stationary become free to move, and actually do move with alacrity as did the Psalmist. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the

courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord."

At the time when man was exiled from beyond the circle of God's favoured and unfallen creation, he had acquired a guilt by which he forfeited the place of his original settlement; and he had acquired a depravity by which he became incapable both of its duties and its enjoyments. To retrieve this woful departure, so as to be admitted again to the standing which he before occupied—the guilt behoves to be atoned for, the depravity behoves to be done away. For the first, man is as incompetent as he is to liquidate the debt of millions by the produce of his daily labour; and not till the discharge is obtained for him by another, will all his practice in the sight of God be any thing else than presumption, and all his attempts to establish a righteousness of his own, but demonstrate the utter worthlessness and incapacity of him who makes them. For the second he of himself is equally incompetent. But the same Mediator who for him hath wrought the first of these purposes, works in him the second of them. And this he does, not by superseding the activity of man, but by stimulating that activity—not by setting aside the machinery of human will and human intelligence and human action, but by setting to work that very machinery—So that the man who before could not labour with any effect at all, both because he was without strength, and also because the obstacle of unexpiated guilt stood like a wall of iron in his way—now that the obstacle is removed, and now that the power of Christ is made to rest on the person of every honest and aspiring disciple—now begins that great process of transition in his history, by which he departs from the character and the habits of a mere citizen of earth, and plainly declares that his heart is set upon other joys and he desireth a better country that is a heavenly.

But the plain indication which Abraham gave of his seeking another country, than the one which harboured all the friendships and all the interests of nature, is different from the indication given of the same thing by a modern Christian. He demonstrated this by a visible act of locomotion. He simply left the place of

his nativity, and went forth in quest of a promised land; and, by a movement palpable to the eye of the body, did he prove that he renounced present things in pursuit of other things which were distant and unseen. The Christian who sets out for the heavenly Canaan, and in so doing takes his departure from the Mesopotamia of this world, has not one mile of locomotion to perform. He makes no visible transference of his person from one place to another; and the whole change that he undergoes, lies in the transference of his affections from one set of objects to another. This journey is altogether a spiritual one; and the progress of it may be traced, not by his distance from an old country and his nearness to a new one—but by his distance from the old character, and his unceasing approximation to a new one. You see plainly where a man is going by the road upon which he travels; and if you can see as plainly what a man is seeking after, by the objects on which his heart is evidently set, then it may be as true of a Christian in our day, as it was of Abraham in reference to the promised land, that he declares plainly how heaven is the place after which he aspires—how heaven is the inheritance that he has selected and made choice of, as the joy of his heart and his portion for evermore.

In this spiritual movement, there is a something that you have to forsake—not such a forsaking as causes you to go out of the world, but such a forsaking as causes you to give up the world—so that you may truly say, though I am still with thee in presence I am no longer with thee in heart. This implies as painful an abandonment of all that was before desirable and precious to the soul, as the patriarch had to undergo.

For the rich man not to cast away his wealth but to crucify his affections to it—for the man of eminence to become dead to the voice of praise—for the man of sensuality to abstain from every unlawful indulgence, and both to overcome and to mortify all those appetites which war against the soul—for the man of sore and irritable feelings, utterly to quench the anger and the malice and the envy that wont to agitate his heart—for the man of worldliness, in any one shape to arouse him out of its inveteracy, so as

to thwart and entirely to traverse the whole tenor of an existence, that had been devoted to gratifications which are unknown in heaven and which death will put an end to—In all these there is a departure as wide, and in every way as arduous, as is made by him who wrests himself for ever from his native land—a moral transition from one great principle to another, where there is a surrender and a work of separation as violent, as it is possible to conceive in any personal transition from one place to another—a resistance to the solicitations of nature's tenderness and nature's urgency, just as hard to be gone through as is that parting scene where the resolved missionary has to tear himself away from the embraces of weeping relatives; and set forth from his parents' and his sister's home on an unknown pilgrimage, uncheered by the hope, may steeled against the wish or the purpose of returning to it.

But it were not possible to make a renunciation so mighty, for no positive object either of desire or of endeavour. It does not lie with the heart of man, to forego an old attachment but by the superior power of a new one. He will not force himself away from a scene peopled with delights, for the mere sake of entering on a scene of desolation. It was doubtless a day of gloom to the mind of Abraham, when he bade his long and last adieu to the place of his fathers. But he was not driven to such an exile; he was lured to it by the prospect of another day, which he saw afar off and was glad. And, in like manner, when a Christian is drawn in affection from the world, he is still drawn by the cords of love and the bonds of a man. He is not told to cease his affections from the things that are beneath, without the exhibition of objects better and lovelier than those he is bidden to relinquish, and without being told to set his affections on the things that are above. And there he may behold by faith Christ sitting at the right hand of God; and with an eye of tender solicitude looking towards the world which He died to save; and welcoming every applicant to that fountain of mercy which He Himself has opened; and rejoicing, most sincerely rejoicing, over the approaches to it of every new spiritual patient—(for how is it else that

the cause of salvation can be carried forward, a cause on the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set;)—and at the same time demonstrating by His word and example and Spirit, that the way on which the ransomed of the Lord pass over is a way of holiness—Thus binding every follower of His to the righteousness which He Himself loves, and withdrawing them from the iniquity which He hateth; and from that beautiful sanctuary which He irradiates by his presence, causing the purity as well as the peace of the upper regions to descend on the soul of the believer. In the heart of every believer there is love to Christ—love to Him for what He is, and therefore admiration of all the graces by which He is adorned. And such is the moral influence of this feeling, that it causes a reflection of these very graces on his own person; and he longs for the society where the alone perfect exhibition of them is to be found; and the way in which he plainly declares himself to be seeking towards it, is by growing every day in the taste and in the acquisition of its moral excellence. Gratitude to Christ seeks to gratify Christ. Love impels to the keeping of His commandments; and following the impulse of these new desires, and labouring in the prosecution of these new interests, does the disciple bespeak the great movement that he has made from that earth which he no longer cleaves to, to that heaven whither all his wishes and all his efforts are continually tending.

Before we conclude, let us offer two remarks, which may serve to explain the precept of laying up treasure in heaven—as it is by our treasure being there, that our heart will be there; and out of the abundance of a heart, so set and so situated, will there come forth such doings as shall declare plainly that we seek a country, which lies on the distance that is on the other side of the grave.

The first way in which we grow in the heavenly riches, is to grow in a heavenly relish for the enjoyments that await us there. To be in heaven without such a relish, were like the possession of an ample fortune, without health or taste or appetite for any one gratification which it can purchase. It is only by cultivating the musical talent, that

you can add to the rapture of the next musical entertainment; and it is only by increasing the spiritual habit of the soul, that you fit the man for breathing with kindred delight in that great spiritual element which composes the air of paradise. It is thus that every addition made to the purity of your character, will render more exquisite your delight in seeing God. Every addition made to the benevolence of your heart, will cause it more joyfully to respond to each note of happiness, which is heard to arise from among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Every addition made to your piety here, will the more heighten your seraphic elevation in that place, where the glories of the Divinity will be expanded visibly before you. Every addition made to the intenseness and constancy of your love to the Saviour, will quicken the more your heart-felt ecstasy as you join in the song of eternal glory to Him, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood. There are two ways in which you may become happier after death, either by obtaining an outwardly better heaven, or by obtaining an inwardly better heart for the enjoyment of it. But there is only one heaven—with a gradation of felicity there, from the variety which obtains in the character and capacity of those who live in it. And thus it is, that though the righteous are to shine as stars, yet it will be as one star differing from another in glory. And thus it is, that you lay up treasure in heaven by an assiduous cultivation of the personal virtues upon earth; and each of these virtues is like another jewel in the crown which is to encircle you; and the man who has got the true heavenly taste, is never satisfied with his present acquisitions, but like Paul he forgets the things that are behind, because there is still a higher eminence before him which he labours to attain: And hence his unceasing diligence to be found without spot and blemish against the day of Christ—labouring after all moral and spiritual perfection; and, with this as the high aim of his existence to which he subordinates every other, declaring plainly that he is in quest of an object which places him far beyond the general pursuits or sympathies of the world.

But secondly, the happiness of heaven is not merely the result of a meetness between its comforts and your character—it is also in part conferred upon you, in the shape of a reward for service. It is given as a return for your good deeds—like wages for work—or payment for a performance, that you have rendered at the will or bidding of a superior. There is at the same time a strong agreement between this way of it, and the former. A series of benevolent actions strengthens the principle of benevolence; and makes you therefore personally more alive to all the delight, that is ever circulating in a region of benevolence. And a series of successful conflicts with the pollutions of the world, strengthens the habit of purity; and makes you partake more largely of the divine nature, and to enjoy with fresher and livelier sensation the ethereal purity that encompasses the divine throne. But in addition to this, there seems to be a boon conferred upon the righteous, specifically and formally as a reward for their distinct services. And thus it is that he who giveth to the poor, will, not only be happier in heaven, on account of the finer and stronger and readier sympathies of kindness that he bears with him from earth. But there will be an actual payment made to him like that of an account with interest, because by giving to the poor he lendeth to the Lord. And in like manner, he who giveth a disciple a cup of cold water shall not lose his reward. And the rich are said to lay up in store for themselves against the time to come, by being rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And alms done in secret shall be rewarded openly. And prayers done in secret in the same way. And on the day of judgment, there will be a specific investigation made of specific deeds of charity; and you will be dealt with according to the principle and amount of them—All proving that by every act of obedience to the will of Christ, you lay up treasure in heaven, and so become richer towards God; and how plainly therefore you may declare that you are seeking after a place among His mansions, simply by a studious and pains-taking conformity to his will—by being stedfast and immoveable and al-

ways abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as you know that your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

And to meet the alarms of orthodoxy upon this subject, let it be remarked, that, though there is no rewardableness in good works under the legal economy, there is under the gospel economy. The law ministers condemnation, and nothing else; and, to flee from its penalties, do we take refuge with the offered Mediator. It is with Him now that we have to do; and while it is in His merit alone that we find a righteousness commensurate to the truth and holiness of the Godhead, to Him do we at the same time concede a right to all our time and to all our services. And this is what He actually claims; and deals out the tokens of His approbation to those who submit themselves; and, as the father of a family has his rewards and his chastisements, so has He; and thus, though redeemed from the curse of the law, we are yet not without law to God because under the law to Christ; and all that is done unto Him is treasured up in His remembrance, and will be brought out in the great day of manifestation, as the proofs of our faith and of our faithfulness—So that it is by unwearied assiduity in His service, by living not to our own will but to His, by abounding in the fruits of that righteousness which He has prescribed to all His disciples—it is thus we shall declare plainly that we seek a country, that we seek the welcome of the judgment-seat, that we seek to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Let us entreat you to lay all this to your consciences. Are you or are you not seeking a country? Many of you are quite familiar with the satisfaction that is felt, when stock is on the increase; when bills and title-deeds of property come abundantly into your possession; and you can read in such documents as these, the authentic vouchers of the wealth that perisheth. Are you as familiar, or rather are you not altogether strange, to the satisfaction which springs from the consciousness of a treasure in heaven—from such an examination of self, as proves you to be sealed by the Spirit of God for an inheritance that never fades—from the account of such virtues and the perusal of such characters upon your person as bespeak you to be a new crea-

ture in Jesus Christ our Lord? Tell us upon your honesty, ye hearers, whether the whole set of your habits and affections is more upon the acquirement of the first or the second kind of property? More upon the money which purchaseth all things, that serve to build or embellish our abode upon earth; or upon the substance that so endureth as to be of worth in heaven, and to serve for the wear of eternity? And what is the kind of disaster which goes nearest to overwhelm you? Is it the sweep of resistless bankruptcy, that demolishes your fairest prospects in time? Or is it the urgency of some violent and unlooked for temptation, that has well nigh overthrown all those hopes of a blissful immortality, which rest on the basis of experience? O be at length convinced of nature's folly and nature's miscalculation. Let not these seasons which pass in sure and rapid flight over your heads, speak to you in vain. Let the silent eloquence of friends, who, now tombed in their sepulchres, and who in their little day laughed as loudly and thronged as busily for this world's interests as yourselves—let it touch and solemnize you.

And O, though it be a thought of horror—yet if possible to snatch survivors from the gulph of perdition, let us not withhold it—Just think of some such acquaintance—who toiled through life his unwearied round of earthliness, and with all the earthliness of his soul unbroken breathed his last—if from the place of despair he now occupies, he looks back on the land of opportunity and sends forth the bitter and unfruitful longings of his heart for one little hour upon its borders, that he may have another call to repent and another chance for eternity—what he never can obtain you still possess. The gate of Christ's Mediatorship to you is open. The road of access to that fountain which is for sin and uncleanness, is free and open. That redemption which is through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, is held out to every creature who now hears us; and all the portals of reconciliation with the God whom you have offended, are most widely and welcomingly open. The farm and the merchandise, and the domestic cares or the domestic comforts, may so engross the soul, and

deafen all its organs of communication—that the voice of the preacher shall be unheeded when he calls you to turn to Christ from your iniquities; and, for the sake of the world that is future, to renounce the present one. But it is his part to preach though at a venture. And

he who hath ears to hear, let him hear—that breaking forth from the entanglements of sense, he may turn his path through life into a holy pilgrimage, and so declare plainly that he is seeking a country.

SERMON XXVII.

On the connection between the Incipient Duties, and the Subsequent Experiences of a Christian.

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”—LUKE xxiv. 49.

You are aware that there was an interval of forty days, between our Saviour's resurrection from the grave and His ascension into heaven—that during that time He appeared upon various occasions and at various places to his disciples—that among others, He met them as far from Jerusalem as Galilee, whither they had gone, but whence it behoved them to return that they might witness His ascension; for this great event was to take place in the very neighbourhood of the Jewish metropolis; and thither it was appointed that the apostles should repair; and there it was commanded them to wait, till, in the language of our text, “they were endued with a power from on high”—and, as it is expressed in the book of Acts, they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, that is, to wait for a baptism from heaven, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after. There was a scrupulous obedience rendered by the apostles to the commandment. They did travel from Galilee to Jerusalem. They returned to the mount of ascension; and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication even till the promise came upon them, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We hold this narrative, short as it is, and consisting of very few steps, to be replete with soundest instruction; and

which, in the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall endeavour to unfold and apply, in some of its leading particulars.

1. By the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were endued with a power, which of course they had not previous to that visitation. “Ye shall receive power,” our Saviour said, “after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” It is a power which they had not, then, before that the Holy Ghost was come upon them. But you will observe that even when destitute of this power, they had a part to act in regard to it; and were the subjects of a precept, that stood connected with the high and heavenly inspiration which was afterwards to descend upon them. There was a plain and practicable bidding laid upon them, which was, to return to Jerusalem and to wait there. They had power for doing this, though they had not yet the power that was to come upon them after doing this. There was a power in their feet, that carried them to the place of assignation. There was a power in their wills that kept them there, and made them resist the movement of any inclination that might have seduced them away from it. There were certain common powers and faculties, which they had along with other men; and by the obediently putting forth of which, in the way that was laid upon them by the authority of the Saviour, they were af-

terwards endued with a power which signalized them above all other men. But meanwhile, they in a plain way, did the plain thing that was required of them. They walked back to Jerusalem, and they stopped there—till the fulfilment of the promise, which was to be realized upon them there. Had they gone elsewhere, or tarried elsewhere, there would have been no such fulfilment. The accomplishment that came after followed in the train of that movement which went before; and the enlargement of spirit, that came upon the apostles in the day of Pentecost, was the distinct consequence of a very plain act of obedience.

The first general process then, which our text exemplifies, is that by which the beginner is guided, from an humbler to a higher acquirement, in the course of his Christian education. It shows how the obedience of such powers as he has, can haste him onward to such larger powers and endowments as he at present has not. It shows that in the inferior stages of discipleship, there is a distinct and tangible something for him to do; and in the doing of which he is at length raised to its more elevated stages. We shall seize upon this narrative as an illustration of the very important principle, that in no part of a believer's progress, not even in the very infancy of it, and further back than this, not even at the time when most sunk in the unconcern of nature and of the world, is there the want of some specific and practicable thing, to which he might and ought to turn himself; and which has a bearing upon the interest of his eternity.

We read of the trumpet giving a certain and an uncertain sound; and a direction which could well be understood and instantly proceeded on by the full-grown Christian, might sound most uncertainly indeed, to the hearing of him who is but a babe in the mysteries of the gospel, and still more of him who has not yet felt one desire or made one movement towards it. Yet there is a way of dealing with them too, there is a word in season for every man; and for them also, there are words which can be spoken seasonably. In that low degree both of understanding and power, which obtained among the apostles, immediately after the

resurrection—the direction, given subsequently, and even by themselves in their own epistles, would not then have suited them. They would have felt the obscurity of such sayings, as “quench not the Spirit,” and “glory in the cross of Christ,” and “have no confidence in the flesh,” and “be dead unto the law,” and “rejoice in the Holy Ghost.” And so, as a high point of wisdom and delicacy, our Saviour, in the treatment of these his immediate disciples, abstained from many things at the first, and limited himself to the utterance of such things as they were able to learn. He fed them with milk, and reserved his strong meat for the manhood of their Christianity. They would have been at a loss with very many of the instructions, which were scattered over their own compositions; but at no loss whatever, how to set about the very obvious bidding of our text—how to make use of their feet in carrying them to Jerusalem, and stedfastly to abide there, till the promised enlargement should come upon them. And there we read that they waited and they prayed, till, as the result of their own performances and God's promise together, they received that from Heaven which raised them nearer to Heaven's light, and love, and liberty; and brought them up to a far higher platform in the ascent of Christian experience.

Now the interesting question is, whether a process similar to this ever obtains in the present day. Is such still the economy of grace, that the obedience which can be accomplished by a lower degree of power, elevates the Christian disciple to a higher degree of it? Will the compliance with such humbler directions as require less of light and knowledge to understand, carry forward the teachable inquirer to more of light and knowledge than he had before? What are the movements that we on earth can perform, so as to meet the influences which are rained down upon us from heaven?—and whither shall we lead our footsteps, that we may receive of some promised enlargement? There is, it would appear, a visitation from on high, by which they who are the subjects of it, become versant in the mysteries of the faith, and have the mark impressed upon them of a very peculiar people. To them the

whole doctrine and phraseology of the gospel are familiar; and many are the truths which spring from that doctrine, and are couched in that phraseology, whereof they both see the meaning and feel the power and the preciousness. To them the trumpet giveth a certain sound, while to them who have never yet been called out of darkness into marvellous light, it may sound most uncertainly. The technicals of Christianity may fall upon their ears, like the vocables of an unknown language. The truths of Christianity may be shrouded from their mental eye, by a veil that looks most hopelessly impenetrable. They may have no sympathy, and no common intelligence, with the children of light; and the question is, whether, with the unintelligence which they have as the children of the world, any space however small can be cleared out before them, on which they might make one step in advance towards the knowledge and the faith which are unto salvation? Is there but one obvious truth on which they might lay palpable hold, and by which they may pluck all the other articles of a recondite Theology from their hiding-place?—or, rather, is there any visible path of access that can lead them to the margin, and at length introduce them within the confines of a spiritual manifestation, whereunto they have not yet been admitted? All which the Bible says of regeneration, and of the righteousness which is by faith, and of the life which is hid with Christ in God, and of walking in the Spirit, and of God's residence within them as if they were the temples which He chose to decorate and in which He loved to dwell,—these, and many other expressions to be found in the pages of the evangelical record, may be as darkly incomprehensible to them, as any cabalistic responses that were ever given forth by the oracles of heathenism; and the question still is, whether for these men of our present generation, we can prescribe a way as plain, as that in which the apostles were bidden walk, when commanded to go to Jerusalem, and there to wait till they were endued with power from on high.

Our general answer to this question is, that, just as Jerusalem was assigned to the apostles, for their place of meeting

with the Spirit of God, so still there are places of meeting with the same Spirit assigned for us; and just as easily as they could do as they were bidden, when they went to their prescribed post, so can we do the bidding to repair to ours; that still there lies a distinct call, even upon the uninitiated, who are afar off from the gospel, as well as upon those babes in Christ who are nigh unto its fuller revelations; that still, there is a progression, by which all may come from the acts of a humbler to the powers and the spiritual gifts of a higher obedience; that still there are movements which might be done by us on earth, and by which the earthliest of us all may come within the limits of that influence which falls on certain gracious places in a descending ministration from heaven,—That so all are left without excuse; and will not have to allege on the day of reckoning, at least of every neglected call which has been brought to their door, how, in each instance, it was too hard and too high for them—that their consciences through life, have been repeatedly plied with the obligation of duties as clear as they were urgent and imperative; and to the performance of which, if they had not been wanting to themselves, God would not have been wanting with the aids of his grace, to carry onward their education for heaven—that, in short, for all there is a path which is plain, and a sound which is certain and intelligible,—that many, very many things, are laid upon us, which bear on our future and everlasting interests, the neglect of which can be traced distinctly, not to the want either of power or of understanding, but to the want of inclination—that for these at least we are clearly and fully responsible; and because of these it will be found, not of the not able but of the not willing, that God has wiped His hands of every one of them, and they have themselves to blame for the undoing of their eternity.

But to be more specific. One assigned place of meeting between man and the Spirit of God, is the word of God. In like manner as their ordinary and natural powers took the apostles to Jerusalem, and kept them there—so our natural faculties will avail us so far when put forth upon the Bible. The Bible may be to

us, what Jerusalem was to them. We can at least place it before us; and bind ourselves over to the perusal of it; and direct our eye upon its pages; and give to it the same strenuousness of attention and of thought, that we give to any other composition; and press the understanding, and the memory, and the conscience, and all the other gifts and sensibilities that are within us, into the service of being rightly informed and rightly impressed by it: And this we can persevere in many days, even as the disciples of our Lord tarried for days at the post which was prescribed to them. The Bible is the post prescribed to us. And there is just one thing more to be added, in order to complete the resemblance between the two cases. They waited at Jerusalem, and we are farther informed that they prayed. The promise of God that they should have the Holy Ghost, did not, it would appear, supersede, but stimulate their prayers for its accomplishment. Instead of causing them to give up supplication, it suggested a topic for it. And so let us, to the forth-putting of all the light and strength which we actually have, add our supplications for more. More especially to the earnest heed which we give unto the Bible, let us add our earnest entreaties that God would open our eyes, to behold the marvellous things which be contained in it—let the diligence wherewith we ply all its various passages, be joined with devotion for a blessing upon the exercise—let us look unto the word, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, and look up unto Him, at the bidding alone of whose voice, all the darkness can be dissipated—And just as the first Christians kept by Jerusalem, and in the earnest expectation there of a coming enlargement—So ought we to keep by the Bible, and continue to give earnest heed unto the word of its prophecy, until (to use the very language of the apostle Peter), until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

There is a peculiar fitness in the Bible, as a place of meeting between God's Spirit and man's spirit. It is the very place, through which a conveyance from the one descends upon the other. There is no other inspiration to be expected now-a-days, than simply the word of God

being made clear and impressive to us. When the Holy Ghost speaks to us, He makes use of no other vocables than the words of Scripture. When He illuminates the soul, it is by a lustre reflected upon it from the pages of Scripture. When He bears upon the conscience, it is with the urgency of some truth or some moral lesson, the whole letter and expression of which are to be found in the Scripture. He does not operate on the mind of man, but by putting Himself into contact with the Scripture. And man ought not to look for this operation, but by just, on the other hand, bringing himself into contact with this said Scripture. The Bible, ye hearers, the Bible is the place of concourse between the celestial influence from above, and the terrestrial subject that is below—the common ground on which the two parties hold their conference the one with the other, and where the earnestness of man meets with the visitation of that God who rewards them who seek Him diligently. It is here, if any where, that if we draw near unto God, God will draw near unto us. This is the field where the treasure lieth hid, to find which you must dig up and down upon it; and if you should not have succeeded, we have no other direction to give, than that you must just dig over again. It is in the perusal and the re-perusal of Scripture, that you can obtain and make sure of the pearl of great price; and the truth, and the power, and the enlargement which you are in quest of, are all embosomed there. The word is the intermedium between God and man; and it is through it, and it only, that the light of inspiration is given. You are at your post, when, in the act of reading God's word, you may be said to place yourselves beside that intermedium, and there to listen for that voice of efficacy, which might transform you into a new creature. You may have to wait; but there is every assurance that no honest inquirer shall have to wait in vain: and we believe it to be unexcepted, in the whole history of the Church, that, wherever there has been a desirous and a devoted attendance upon the word, there the demonstration of the Spirit has been added to it.

Is there any here present, who, still a stranger to the light and liberty of the

gospel, has to complain that long and wearily he has knocked at a door which he cannot open? Perhaps he may have been reading without prayer, as many do, who, acquitting themselves of their daily chapter, drivel out their time at a formal and fruitless task-work. Then he is like what the apostles would have been, had they gone to Jerusalem, but sent up no supplication to heaven there. Or perhaps, under a sense of darkness and discomfort, he may have been praying for enlargement out of the straitening which oppresses him; but not looking to the Bible as the only channel through which the light of life is to flow in upon his soul, as the appointed place where the answer is to come, he may just have fared as the apostles would have done, had they not followed the order of going to Jerusalem; but at some other part than that which was prescribed to them, thought of making up by the strenuousness of their devotions for their palpable act of disobedience. You are on the one hand bidden to search the Scriptures, and on the other hand to ask for the Spirit. Without the one, you will never find, in their power and in their preciousness, the truths which lie deposited in the other. Still these truths are to be gotten at a certain and specified place; and if away from the place, the help of the Spirit will be of no avail to you.

To the apostles was offered the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem; and to you there is the offer of the same Holy Ghost, in the act of giving your diligent and desirous attendance upon the Bible. The compound direction under which you lie, is, to seek for something in a given place, where that something is to be found; and to take the aid of an able auxiliary along with you. If not at the place, you will seek in vain; and if you have not the aid you will also seek in vain. The Spirit sent forth upon the soul, is no mystic or undescribable afflatus; and all his teaching, indispensable as it is, is couched and embodied in the literalities of Scripture. You may have read, it availeth not if you do not pray; you may have prayed, it availeth not if you do not read. They are the readings and the prayers together which avail you. There are many of this careless and unthinking generation who do neither; and there be

some, with whom these exercises are prosecuted apart—we do not mean apart in time, but apart as to all dependence the one upon the other. We ask you to proceed on the harmony that is between them—to knock at no other door than the door of Scripture for Heaven's inspirations; and at the same time to know, that, unless Heaven be addressed by your earnest and persevering entreaties, these inspirations never will be given.

And now for those, who, to justify their irreligion, complain that a plain path hath never been set before them,—that they might have been Christians had it not been for the hieroglyphical obscurity in which Christianity is shrouded—that they have not yet made one movement towards it, because they know not where to place their next footstep, and are quite sure that they could never find their way through its points and its paradoxes. It is thus they would excuse themselves—while all the while their Bible lies unopened—while the plain question, “of what readest thou,” remains unanswered—while, to solve this question, they give no time, either to perusals or to praying. And with a readable volume to lie beside them, and invite their eye upon its pages; and with the promise of that merciful Heaven which smiles so benignantly upon them, and offers to unravel for them all its mysteries—it is in the midst of such facilities as these, they will persist in their apathy, though at the very opening of that career which leads to Heaven's bliss and to Heaven's glory. It is not because the way is inaccessible, but because the spells of earth and of earthliness have bound them. They have no right to complain of a hedge across their path. It is the manacle of their own hearts' choice and nothing else, which so detains and fastens them among the treacherous delights of the world. There has been pointed out to them a way as specific, as that which led the apostles of our Lord to Jerusalem. There has been made to them a promise as sure, as that of the power by which the apostles were endued from on high. And if during your short-lived day, you choose to give all your energies to its business and its pleasures—if in the unabated fervour wherewith ye ply your busy round among the interests and gratifications of sense,

you are scarcely, if ever, arrested a single hour for one pause or one preparation of seriousness—The great searcher of hearts will Himself not only pronounce but vindicate your doom, when He tells from the judgment-seat, of the Bible that He sent and the Spirit that he offered to you.

Nor is it enough to vindicate your unconcern, that the evidence for this Bible is still unseen by you—that you have yet met with nothing to over-power you into the conviction of its truth—that, for aught you know, it may be the record of a base and unprincipled imposture, instead of an authentic and authoritative message from the upper sanctuary. The Bible may not stand forth in such characters of certainty, as to compel your instantaneous belief; and yet stand forth in such characters of likelihood, as to challenge your instant and most serious inquiry. We do not require of you to believe in the absence of proof; but we require of you to peruse and to ponder and to investigate, in the midst of many semblances and many probabilities. We do not affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, you will see as much as to force the whole system of its doctrines and articles at once into your creed; but we affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, there appears as much on its forehead as should constrain your candid and respectful attention to it. It is not our demand, that you should believe without inquiry; but it is our demand that you should not reject without inquiry. We do not say there is enough in and about the Bible, to dogmatise you into the sudden assurance of its infallibility; but we say, that, in and about this Bible, there is enough to rivet your regards, and rebuke away all your heedlessness. How, I would ask, have you disposed of the history of its miracles? And how of that magnificent train of prophecy, that so accords with the general march and movement of our world? How have you contrived to resist the appeal, which is made in behalf of Scripture, by the existence of the Jews as a separate and monumental nation? Or have you so mastered the records of other times, as to warrant your summary rejection of a volume, that so many of the wise and the good in all ages have revered? Or have

you looked into its pages; and, putting your hand upon your bosom, can you honestly say, that you have discovered no characters of truth and of sacredness; and that you have met with no one presumption on its side, either in the loftiness of its morality, or its searching discernment into the human spirit? Still we do not ask your faith, till the evidences of its truth have been manifested; but we ask your faithful and assiduous inquiries, till you have the manifested evidence of its falsehood. We beg you not to look so safe and so satisfied, in your habitual neglect of this religion, as if imposture were plainly and palpably written on the face of it: And we put the question—whether, with nothing to lose if it be false, and every thing to lose if it be true, you would hazard one earthly interest that belongs to you, in the way that the contemners of the gospel of Jesus Christ have staked the fortune of their eternity? O, they have done repeated violence, even to the light and the voice of nature, in their treatment of Christianity; and when visited, as they have sometimes been, with the suspicion that they are wrong, their own natural conscience hath testified against them.

The Bible, with its many probabilities that should urge them to begin the investigation, and its many proofs that would have met and multiplied upon them ere they had gotten to the end of it—this Bible when opened in the day of reckoning, will be their coming witness; and will furnish against them many a clear principle of condemnation. He who ponders the heart, and hath an eye upon all its secrets, will bring out the lurking unfairness to the light of day—will uncover the moral perversity that hung at the bottom of it all—will make it clear to every looker-on, that never in one instance, has a thorough earnestness after truth, missed of evidence enough for all the truth which is unto salvation; that if any did not see, it was because they did not seek; that if strangers to the light, it was because they shut their eyes against it; that if they abode in darkness, it was because they loved the darkness and chose to abide in it. It is not that they had no proof for the ways of God; but that they had no pleasure in these ways—not that there was a want of harmonious and

convincing doctrine on His part, but a want on theirs of any desire after it; and this is the condemnation, that their desires were away from heaven and bent upon earth—that, whatever the decencies of their outer man, these deeds of the inner man were evil.

We have expatiated so long on this one illustration wherewith our text has furnished us, that not enough of time is left for other and similar illustrations. The general principle of them all is, that we creatures on earth, are not left unbidden and untold of some one movement that each of us can make; and in the making of which, we shall meet, if we will, some further light and influence from heaven. The apostles could not take the celestial flight of following the Lord Jesus Christ in the air; but they could at least perform the terrestrial motion of a walk to Jerusalem—and there it was that a power and an enlargement from above came upon them. We cannot, in the words of Paul, we cannot ascend up on high, and thence bring down the light of God's sanctuary upon our soul—We cannot descend into the deep, and thence bring up any secret thing from its unfathomable recesses; but we can at least go to the word which is nigh unto us, and from the Spirit through the medium of the word, get all that is needful of Heaven's power and Heaven's illumination. The Bible stands to us, in place of Jerusalem to the first disciples; and many other are the ordinances of God, each of which may be regarded in the light of a waiting-post—where if we do some palpable things that lie within the compass of human hands, and have the desire which should be felt in sincerity and should issue in prayers from human hearts, God will not fail of the grace and the loving-kindness, that He has promised to all who seek him diligently. This view of the matter, stamps a peculiar and characteristic value, on all that might be termed the ordinances of religion. They are such things as man can do in the letter of them; and in the doing of which, with hearts of desire and hands of diligence, God will pour forth of the Spirit upon them. They offer precisely those occasions, in which God and man meet as fellow-workers towards the same end:

when without the co-operation of the one nothing will be given, and without the co-operation of the other nothing will be received. The Sabbath is just such an ordinance; for you can then rest, and abstain from all earthly business, and read books of sacredness, and give your presence to the solemn assembly, and perform certain movements which may be said to be terrestrial, and put yourself into certain attitudes which are also terrestrial; and to all which done by you below, if you are only prompted by a seeking heart, a celestial virtue from above will be given. In the opinion of some, the table of the Lord has a converting as well as a confirming efficacy; and they will look on the sacrament of the Supper as such another ordinance. And most certain it is, that the church whither you repair in obedience to the precept of "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," is precisely such an ordinance. This is a Jerusalem to which you are bidden as the place of your weekly resort; and you are at an assigned post, when your feet stand within its gates. Thither do the worshippers of the Lord go up, unto the testimony of Jesus; and there do they give thanks to the remembrance of His name. Where two or three are met together in that name, there He is in the midst of you. This is one of the chosen spots which He loves to bless and to hallow; and it is here of all other places, where the presence of man meets with the promise of God. Without attendance upon Church, you may fare as the apostles would have done, had they not waited at Jerusalem; and still if it is but the attendance of heartless and hackneyed formality, you may fare even as they would have done, had they waited at Jerusalem, but had not prayed. To the dutious regularity of your presence, add the devoutness of your prayers; and here too living water will descend, and sons and daughters will be turned unto righteousness.

Some there are who despise the ordinances. They have no right to imagine that the Spirit will be theirs. Others there are who rest upon the ordinances; and to them the Spirit will be as little given. It is only to them who are found at the prescribed place upon earth, that we can

expect the counterpart promises of heaven to be fulfilled. But then they must have a dependence and a desire towards the promises—And so while we would exact from you an assiduous church-going—we would bid you look up assiduously to that quarter whence alone the blessing and the efficacy are to come.

SERMON XXVIII.

Connection between Faith and Peace.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—
ROMANS V. 1.

It is, in the first place, evident, that no man can have true faith in God, whose faith does not extend to the whole of God's testimony. If He choose to deliver more than one intimation, we cannot be said to put faith in Him—unless we give credit, not to one only, but to all His intimations. And this of necessity conducts us to the inference, that, if faith attach itself only to a few particulars of God's communication; or if certain portions of Scripture be dwelt upon with a warm and special satisfaction, while other portions are entertained with coldness, or resisted in the plain and obvious meaning of them by an overstretched application of the favourite doctrine—Or, in other words, if the faith be partial, it is not real.

But, in the second place, it is a very possible thing, that a man may possess a general belief in God's testimony, without directing a strenuous attention, or bestowing a fixed and steady regard, on any one of its particulars. He may vaguely admit the trueness of all; and yet not actually believe the trueness of any. He may be able to demonstrate, how the abuses of one doctrine are restrained by the faithful applications of another doctrine; and that therefore any such abuses can never be chargeable on the true faith which embraces both, but only on the spurious faith which has adopted the one while it has rejected the other. And yet all the while he may just have as little of the true faith, as the man whose error he has completely demolished by the power of his argument. He may be quite triumphant in

his reasoning, when he vindicates justifying faith from the imputation of Antinomianism. But while he thus reasons, and incontrovertibly too, about the relation and the influence and the bearing of the several doctrines of Christianity on each other, each individual doctrine may of itself have failed to make its distinct lodgement in his understanding, and its distinct impression upon his heart. The whole matter may yet have come to him in word only and not in power; and the words or terms which he employs, and are expressive of the doctrine in question, may be no more than the symbols made use of in a logical process, which is conducted by him at the same time with the skill and the soundness of a logic that is quite unexceptionable; and thus the whole matter may come to him, both in word and in argumentation, and yet not come in power. On every subject, indeed, there is a great danger of the mind satisfying itself with rapidly-sketched generalities, without appropriating in detail their several and distinct truths. In the case of Christianity, this danger is fearfully aggravated—where one may have a literal discernment of its truths, without a saving and a spiritual discernment of them. Let us therefore be careful to attend to each of them severally and particularly; and, instead of counting it enough that we bestow one comprehensive glance upon the whole—let us feel that if we give not earnest heed to each of the things that we read in this book, we neglect the great salvation that is unfolded in it.

He who has a true faith, will admit all

the known articles of Christianity into his belief; and he will give his earnest endeavour to the object of ascertaining these articles; and he will dwell at distinct times distinctly upon each of them; and this faith of his, while it embraces all, will also single out each as a separate object of attention; and the business of each will be pressed home on occasions of need upon the understanding and the heart. And here it is altogether worthy of remark, that, though faith includes as the object of it the whole testimony of God, yet it is by faith exercising itself on each portion of that testimony, that the influence or the benefit of that portion is realised to the believer. If he merely cast a summary look at the whole, even though it be a look of acquiescence, he may still miss every distinct benefit of that salvation which is unto all and upon all who believe. He may profess an acquiescence in the whole, and yet be a stranger to the habit of acting faith in any particular. Now it is by the distinct acting of his faith in some particular of the divine testimony, that a particular promise is fulfilled to him; or a particular privilege made good to him; or a particular necessity met and relieved. When our Saviour was asked to cure a man in the gospels, He did not demand of him at the time whether he believed that Christ was able to do all things—but whether he believed that He was able to do this thing; and according to his belief so was the thing done unto him. When we ask for wisdom, we are required to ask it in faith; and the object of the faith is that God giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. When we ask for the Spirit, the belief that bringeth down a fulfilment of our petition, is the belief that God giveth His Spirit to them who ask it. When we obtain forgiveness through faith, it is specifically stated in the Bible, that it is through faith in the blood of Christ. Each truth of Christianity forms a distinct topic for the exercise of faith; and it is when the faith so exercises itself, that the good corresponding to that truth is realised to the believer. Doubtless, some of these truths have a more pervading influence over the range of Christian contemplation; but an inquirer may lose himself in the comprehensiveness of

his views. He may so generalize his survey, as to overlook particulars. It is true that a real faith will have room for all that is known to be of divine attestation. But each distinct attestation will be entertained, will be dwelt upon, will be turned to its appropriate use, will be viewed in its connection with the others; and, so far from excluding these others, the attention and the trust and the interest which have been attached to this one, will form the best guarantee for all of them properly exercising the mind, and properly influencing the conduct of the believer.

And if there be one doctrine of more primary and pervading importance than another, it is that which relates to the question of our justification before God. Disguise it as he will, there is not a rational man who feels himself on terms of solid confidence, with the Being who made and who sustains him. There is not one of them who can look God fully and fearlessly in the face, and say of Him that He is my friend. There is a lurking suspicion about Him, in virtue of which the creature shrinks from the Creator, and flies away from the thought of Him, to such perishable vanities as may grant him temporary relief or occupation. Conceive his intercourse with the visible world to be in some way suspended, and the invisible God to draw near by some convincing manifestation; and he would not feel at ease or comfort in his presence. Let the feeling be as deep and inexplicable as it may, still is terror at God, the real and the powerful and the constant feeling of nature. As inferior animals flee from the presence of man, even though they know not whether it be friendship or hostility that is in his bosom—so there is in man the same instinctive dread of the Deity. And there is doubtless a foundation for it. There is the consciousness of guilt. There is the uncontrollable sentiment of a power, which can carry all its purposes into execution, and which he has done nothing and can do nothing to propitiate. There is the haunting idea of a great and righteous Monarch, who can summon all creation into His presence, and sweep all iniquity and whatsoever offendeth away from Him. The sinner who has his mind darkened, as well as his

heart alienated from God, may not clearly perceive the connection between his sin and his fearfulness. It may be as much of a sensitive, as it is of an intelligent recoil, from the great Lawgiver. But is not this saying enough for the wretchedness of his condition, that, to make it tolerable, God must not be thought of but forgotten; and that, to secure him ease, he must so surround himself by the idolatry of sense, as to intercept from the eye of his mind that unseen Spirit, from whence he took his origin; and that, to enjoy time without disturbance, he must shut out the view of an approaching eternity; and that he cannot brave the realities which are before him and around him, but must bury his intoxicated soul in delusion that he may gain the respite of his present transitory life, from a state of darkness and dreariness and despair? This is the real and universal way in which Humanity, when awake to her own condition, stands moved with reference to God. It is a state of fear, and a state of antipathy. The question may be shunned and lie dormant, for months and for years, amongst those numberless expedients of diversion, by which the God of this world confirms the empire of deceitfulness over his infatuated victims. But if ever it be fairly looked to, such is the actual revolt of man from the God who formed him. And the death which carries his disembodied spirit to the God who gave it; and the judgment which brings the piercing eye of omniscience, upon all the secrecies of his heart and history; and the dissolution of the present system of things, in which he now screens himself from the Deity as in a hiding-place: and the immortality, throughout the whole of which he conceives that there will be no intervening materialism to stand between himself and the Being with whom he has to do—all these suggest the idea of God and man being brought into nearer or more visible contact with each other; and let Nature say herself, whether she feels more attracted or repelled by it—let her answer, whether the prospect of these things look inviting or formidable to her eye: And is it not clear that God is felt by man as an enemy, if every event by which man is brought nearer to God is thus associa-

ted with the anticipations and the images of terror?

In these circumstances, a restoration to the divine favour must be a question as big with interest to man, as the question of a passage from death unto life. It stands identified with the main object of his existence. If it remain unsettled, all theology is superfluous, and but the mockery of a heartless speculation. That man should seize upon this as a preliminary question, and give to it his first and his foremost earnestness, is just saying that man, after he has become an inquirer into the things of God, still cannot escape from the urgency of the principle of self-preservation. Let us cease to wonder, then, that the topic of acceptance with God should have so exercised the minds of the men of all ages; or that they should have directed their longing attention to a matter so important, and at the same time so personal, as that turning point, at which God, from the enemy of a restless and terrified sinner, becometh his friend.

But the question, how shall God, from the enemy of man become his friend, just resolves itself into the question, how shall man be justified before God? Had man rendered a full obedience, it would not have been a merciful but a righteous thing for God, to have favoured and cherished and rewarded him. But man has not rendered this obedience; and while therefore it is a merciful thing for God to take him into acceptance, let us beware of thinking that this is done in such a way, as not to make it a righteous thing also. If done in the latter case, it must be as righteous a proceeding, as it would have been if done in the former case. There may be a special putting forth of one attribute, in this dispensation of favour to the guilty—but not to the disparagement or the letting down, of another attribute. The character of the Deity, we may be assured, will sustain no mutilation by any one act in the moral administration of the Deity; and unless the truth and the holiness and the justice and the other perfections of God give their full consent to the exercise of His mercy, then the exercise of His mercy is impossible. Accordingly when we read, in the New Testament, of that salvation which is unto the sinner—this is spoken of as done for him by grant-

ing him a righteousness, as well as by granting him the remission of his sins. He is, somehow or other, invested with a righteousness, which renders it a just thing in God to justify him. There is no man, we believe, who is visited with a real and practical earnestness in the work of seeking after God, who will ever feel himself in grounded and settled peace, on the imagination of a bare act of mercy in his behalf. He will not obtain a secure and firm repose on any such foundation—and will thus in spite of himself, offer an involuntary homage to the holy and inflexible attributes of the Godhead. He will seek for a something which he might render up unto those attributes, and by which he might make them propitious to himself; and therefore it is always the question of longing, restless and dissatisfied nature,—“Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord and bow myself unto the most high God?”

In the prosecution of the following discourse let us endeavour, in the first place, to explain the meaning of the term justify—in the second place, to show how it is that we are justified by faith—in the third place, how it is that by this faith we have peace with God—and lastly point your attention more particularly to Jesus Christ, as the medium of conveyance—through which we obtain so inestimable a blessing. We may then conclude with a few such observations as the whole topic is fitted to suggest.

To justify a man, is sometimes used in the sense, of to vindicate him from the charge of having done that which is evil. If he be made the subject of a criminal imputation, of which you succeed in proving him to be clear, you justify him from that imputation. If something be laid to his charge, and you undertake his defence and make out his innocence, you justify him from the charge. It certainly is oftener understood in the sense—to make out his innocence of what is wrong—than to make out his pretension to what is positively righteous. So that the word “to justify,” in its common acceptance, is not so comprehensive of meaning as the word to vindicate. You may justify a man of an alleged transgression, so as to ward off from his person the punishment that is annexed to it. In so doing you certainly vindicate his innocence. But the

office of vindicating may be carried farther than to this negative performance. You may also vindicate a man's positive title to the reward, that is annexed to a particular service, or a particular act of laborious obedience and virtue. By the one office you prevent the threatened penalty from falling upon his head. By the other you make clear his title, and obtain the investiture of his person with the promised reward.

So that the meaning of the term to justify in this verse, deviates in two particulars from the term in its common and general acceptance. In the first place we cannot prove any man to have been personally clear of those offences, which constitute him a sinner at the law of God. We cannot overturn the fact, of his having been a sinner throughout the whole of his past history; and that he is therefore in himself the subject of a righteous condemnation. Neither can we overturn the fact, of his being a sinner still; and that therefore if God were now to set up his law with its proclaimed sanctions in judgment over him. He, under this examination also, would reiterate upon him the sentence of condemnation. The whole gospel proceeds upon the fact, that in man himself there is no righteousness before God; and yet it unfolds to us the possibility of man being righteously made the subject of acceptance and reward. Man is not a righteous person; and yet, in some way or other, it can be made a just thing to treat him as a righteous person—not merely a merciful, not merely a generous, not merely a compassionate thing, but positively a just thing to admit him into the rewards of righteousness. In ordinary language, to justify a man, is to make out for him a plea of innocence, grounded on the facts of his own personal history; and when such a plea is made out, there is made out along with it a right in his favour to have the penalty or the chastisement remitted to him. To justify a man, in the evangelical sense of the term, we cannot possibly make out a plea grounded on the fact of his own personal innocence; but still a plea is found, in virtue of which justice requires that he should be treated as an innocent person. He cannot be so justified, as that it were a just thing to say of him—he has acquitted himself throughout the whole of his

past life, and is now acquitting himself, as a holy righteous and innocent person—But he can be so justified, as that it should become a just thing to treat him, as if he ever had been, and still were, a righteous holy and innocent person. But while we thus advert to the distinction between justification in the gospel sense of it, and the same term in its common acceptation; let us never at the same time forget, that the justification of the gospel is totally distinct from a simple ministration of favour and forgiveness to the guilty. The benefit which a sinner receives, who is simply forgiven, is a matter of pure kindness. The benefit which the same sinner receives, in consequence of being justified, is a matter of desert. He may not deserve the benefit in his own person. The desert may not be his own. He may not have acquired a title to the benefit by any self-exertion; but it is of importance to remark that a title, he, in some way or other, has gotten. By the gospel, the same good-will, and the same happiness, which is the fruit of that good-will, are conferred upon the sinner, that would have been conferred upon him, had he, instead of a sinner, been perfect in all the duties and in all the services of loyalty. But the great peculiarity of the gospel lies in this, that, before it forgives the sinner, it, in some way or other, invests him with a claim to forgiveness—before it grants him a reward, it grants him a right to it. There is a something attached to him, which renders it a righteous thing for God to treat him as a righteous person. He obtains remission and reward; but not till by being justified, he obtains a title to them. Ere the dispensation of gospel mercy can take effect, it must be made a righteous dispensation; and it is this which constitutes the great peculiarity of its character—by which both the guilty are invested with a title to that which they receive, and the Giver displays holiness and justice and truth in the ministration of His kindness to the guilty.

And let it further be observed—that to arrive at the evangelical meaning of the term justification in its whole extent, we must understand it in the fullest sense of the word vindication. The man who is justified, is not merely in possession of a title to have all penalties remitted to him; but he is in possession of a title to have

rewards conferred upon him. God not only forbears to treat him as a subject of condemnation; but He treats him as a subject for the positive distribution of His favours. Did the privilege stop short at the making out of a release from punishment, the sinner would be delivered from the wrath that isto come; but he might ever afterwards remain an object of indifference to the Eternal. But the transition he makes by being justified, is far wider than this. The man from an object of wrath, becomes an object of fatherly affection. He is rescued from a fearful looking for of judgment; and he becomes an heir, an expectant of promise. He obtains something more than a deed of acquittal. He obtains a deed of wisest and most abundant conveyance; and, instead of having a midway place assigned to him between hell and heaven, the right he acquires is so comprehensive, as to secure for him, by one and the same charter, a rescue from the wretchedness of the one, and a translation into the bright glories and felicities of the other.

Now it may be thought, that, to change the prospect of sinners from a place of torment to a place of blessedness and triumph—nothing more is necessary than a simple putting forth of divine tenderness, and a simple manifestation of the divine will. But to give these sinners, not merely a permission but a right to the tree of life—to clear away all the incapacity which attached to their state of guilt—to crown with honour the transgressors of the law, and at the same time to magnify the law itself—to vest with the title-deeds of a full and finished obedience, those, who, from the fulfilment of that obedience, had fallen so utterly away—to devise for them such a path of transference from the one place to the other, that mercy could not only lift her song of gratulation; but justice, stern, vindictive, incommutable justice, could shield and secure their entrance to the city which hath foundations—for God to welcome them into His own presence, not in the capacity of forgiven men in whose behalf He had recalled the truth of His own denunciations, but in the capacity of justified men on whom it was a righteous thing to bestow the reward of loyal and of rendered services—to turn His throne into a throne of grace, and at the same

time to preserve and to manifest its character as a throne of righteousness—This it is which gives its grand peculiarity to the dispensation of the gospel, and makes it to be both the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Let us now endeavour in the second place to explain how it is that we are justified by faith.

We say of a room, that it is lighted by the opening up of a window; and yet the window only transmits the light, which is given out by the Sun in the firmament. We say of a human body, that it is nourished by the act of eating; and yet by that act, we only take in the food which is the cause and the source of nourishment. We say of the holder of a deed of conveyance which has been gratuitously conferred upon him, that, by this holding, he possesses a title to certain properties; and yet he neither originated the deed, nor drew up the deed, nor granted the deed—he simply received the deed. And so it is, when we say of a man, that he is justified by faith. He who is so justified, is in possession of a discharge from the penalties of a broken law, and of a right to the rewards of an honoured and of a fulfilled law. But faith did not work out this discharge, faith did not establish this right, faith barely imports these privileges from the quarter in which they are framed; and thus brings them into contact with the person of the believer.

We know, that there is a jealousy about this point among theologians, and a fear, lest, by assigning too high an office to faith, the honour of Christ be infringed, as the alone author of justification. It is He in fact who achieved the whole of this benefit; and man receives of it by the act of believing. Man is not in any way the author of this work—he only obtains the good of it by giving credit to the author. Christ reared the foundation—man leans upon it. He does no more than is done by the malefactor, who holds out his hand to the reprieve which has been made out for him; and thus acquires a warrant for his discharge.

And it will serve still more to exalt the one party, and to annihilate the other, in this transaction—when man sets himself in good earnest to the work of believing

—when he sends out his mind, as it were, in repeated efforts, to lay hold of the truth which is unto salvation; and as often retires dejected and baffled by the fruitless undertaking—when he wears himself out with diligence and prayer; and, after the tarrying of weeks or months or years, still finds that he cannot pluck this pearl of great price from its hiding-place—when, instead of creating light for himself, he finds that he must knock for it at the door of a sanctuary which he cannot open—Should God at length meet this inquirer, and shed the powerful demonstration of His Spirit over the doctrine he is in quest of—he will not be the man who aspires to a share in the glory of his own redemption, or counts upon his faith as an independent contribution which he has brought to the cause. This very faith he will acknowledge to be a gift; and, like the paralytic who is asked to stretch out his hand to an offered alms and receives power along with the offering, he, under a sense of nothingness, will feel that to himself belongs all the gratitude of his deliverance, and to God belongs all the glory of it.

Meanwhile, faith, though neither the procuring cause nor the meritorious ground of justification, is indispensable to it; and just as much so, as the striking out of a window is to the lighting of an apartment. It is the medium of conveyance, through which God hath ordained that all the blessings, purchased and wrought for by the Saviour of sinners, shall come into contact and appropriation with the sinner's soul. We are sensible, that something like an efficient importance is given to faith, by such expressions as the righteousness of faith, and that by faith we are justified—But never is it intended, that faith hath wrought out for us a righteousness; and only, that it affords a passage through which all the privileges of a righteousness already prepared, may be conveyed to the believer. A man must believe, ere he can be dealt with by God, as if, in the reckoning of God, he were a righteous person. But still it is the everlasting righteousness which Christ hath brought in, that is so reckoned to him. When justification is spoken of, the near and the natural question for him who desires to obtain it, is—what for this purpose must I person-

ally do, or what must I personally become? This suggests a competition, not between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of man, but between one personal condition of man in respect either of state or of performance and another. The question—"what shall I do to be saved?" points the attention of him who offers to resolve it, to an alternative between the efficacy of a man's doing for this object, and the efficacy of a man's believing for it. When the whole efficacy is given to the latter, it is for the purpose of setting aside altogether the efficacy of the former; and to decide for man the interesting question of what that single thing is, which he has personally to attend to in order to be justified before God. The question, whether my faith or the work which Christ hath finished is the efficacious principle of my salvation, presents another alternative, and there is nothing in the first solution, which ought to darken or to embarrass the second. Strange if man should arrogate a glory to himself, because told to do that thing by which in fact the whole glory of his salvation is awarded to another—if the law of faith, the declared effect of which is to exclude boasting, should be so perversely understood as to encourage it; or if that doctrine should go to mar and to divide the glory of Christ, by which we are led to look to Him alone for salvation.

Your salvation, says St. Paul, is by grace, and through faith; and not of works lest any man should boast. Were a competition on the question what shall man do to be saved, started between man's faith and man's works, this apostle would decide it to be altogether of faith and not of works. Were it a question, whether does salvation come of God's giving or of man's believing, and a competition started between grace and faith, the apostle would decide that it was by grace and through faith. Were the question, whether is it God who gives it or man who works for it, and the competition between grace and works, the apostle has bequeathed us his decision upon this too in the following memorable sentence—"If by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is

no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

We now proceed to observe, that faith is no faith at all, if it embrace not the whole testimony of God. But the benefits annexed to faith are various. There is forgiveness promised to it. There is the plea and the reward of righteousness promised to it. There is strength for holy obedience promised to it. Now faith, in the act of bringing home as it were each of these benefits, attaches itself at the time to a particular and corresponding portion of the testimony; and what portion of the testimony is that to which faith attaches itself, when, through it as a medium of conveyance, the privilege of justification comes into the possession of a believer?

It is that portion, in which the narrative of Christ's work for our justification is laid before us. It is that portion, which relates to the death and the obedience of Christ. By the one He offered Himself up as a propitiation for the sins of the world; and those of the world who believe in this, have their sins remitted to them. By the other, that is by His obedience, which comprehends His death, He fulfilled the righteousness of the law; and this righteousness it is testified to us that He fulfilled in our stead; and the merit of this righteousness is imputed, and the reward of it is assigned unto all, and is upon all who believe.

There has a distinction been made between His passive and His active obedience. By the one He is conceived to have expiated sin, by bearing in His own person the punishment which sinners should have borne. By the other He is conceived to have acquired for them a righteousness by rendering in His own person, that perfect obedience which they should have rendered. Certain it is that His work is commensurate to the whole extent of their justification. It accomplished for them the remission of the penalty. It accomplished for them their right to a reward. And the oft-repeated doctrine of the Bible is, that we obtain this right and this remission by faith—that by faith we are justified—that the righteousness of Christ is unto those who believe—that it is a righteousness made up of the works of Jesus Christ, and is alto-

gether separate from any righteousness which may be conceived to reside in the works of the sinner—and that upon his believing, it is not what he hath done for himself, but what Christ hath done for him, which is imputed unto him for righteousness.

So that man is accepted into forgiveness and favour, not on account of any righteousness of his own—but on the righteousness of Christ being put to his account; and it is counted to him on his becoming a believer. He stands before God in the name of the Lord his righteousness; and the reward due to this righteousness is made his reward. His own personal guilt has been laid upon Christ; and on him it has been expiated. The merit of Christ is laid upon himself, and in himself it is rewarded. His sin put to Christ's account, and Christ's righteousness put to his account, changes altogether his relation with the Lawgiver whom he had offended. From an heir of wrath, he becomes a child of adoption; and, at that point of marvellous transition when belief enters in, he is vested with all the rights and translated into all the privileges of the sons of God.

And thus all we have said of justification in the general, is confirmed and appears in greater distinctness, when we come to view the ground of justification. A man is justified, but not on the ground of anything he deserves in himself. It is on the ground of what another has wrought for him, and deserved for him. He is held to be righteous in respect of claim, though he is not righteous in respect of actual character. It would not be true to say of him, that, as he is in himself, he is a righteous person. But it is just on account of the relation that he bears to another, to treat him as a righteous person. The righteousness, in fact, which avails him for being justified, has a forensic and not a personal acceptance. It is that by which he is held righteous in law, though not in fact—by which the sentence of guilt is taken off, and he is discharged from the penalty—by which the sentence is utterly converted, and he is invested with a title to the reward.

And you further see, how this treatment of the sinner stands distinguished altogether, from a simple and direct ministration of kindness to him. It is the

kindness of God to him, no doubt; but a kindness which feels itself at freedom to expatiate, on account of a consideration rendered to the justice of God. Mercy did not reach in a direct way the accomplishment of her object; though it was mercy that instigated the whole of that process, by which the object has been gained. It was not the deed of mercy awake, while other attributes were sleeping. All of these, if we may so speak, were at their post; and all of them gave assent to this lofty and mysterious device of man's restoration. So that though his salvation be a boon, it is not a simple deed of favour and forgiveness which is put into his hand. But it is a deed by which a right to favour and forgiveness is conveyed to him, that is put into his hand. Man is not only permitted to put up a prayer for these blessings; but he is empowered to put up a plea for them. He can appeal for them to the truth and the righteousness, as well as to the mercy of God—so that God is faithful and just in forgiving his sins—God is just while the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

We know that the doctrine of justification by faith, has been charged with an injurious effect on the moral character of him who embraces it; and were the present the place for it, we would willingly consent to try it by this, as a touchstone of its worth. But in the meantime we may remark, that acquiescence in this doctrine is the far more legitimate fruit of a lofty than of a low conception of virtue. He who stands on the level of human attainment, and thinks of the law that he has not only reached but exceeded its acquirements, will look down upon it as exhibiting a humbler pattern of excellence than he himself has realised; and, in his bosom, will there be the elated feeling that in his own strength he is more than conqueror. He again who looks on the level of actual character as being on the same even platform with the commandment of God, will feel at least that he has gained his object; and neither will he seek to be justified by faith. It is the man who stands on this level and thinks so sublimely of the law, that, in order to survey it aright, he has to cast his upward eye to a light that is inaccessible—it is he

who carries in his mind the purest and the worthiest imagination of moral rectitude—it is he whose view of the standard of duty is the most exalted, and whose desires after the fulfilment of it are the most earnest and aspiring—he it is, who, humbled under a sense of transgression, will be most ready to admit the need of another righteousness than his own. Strange, if a belief, which originates in a high sense of virtue, should issue at length in the subversion of its practice. But whether righteousness of life be the product of this doctrine or not, we do well to remember, that a true conception of righteousness, in all its extent, and in all its elevation, is the likeliest principle for urging us onwards to the adoption of such a doctrine; and, amid all the aspersions it has gotten, as being hostile to the cause of morality—let us not forget, that he bids fairest to be a disciple of faith, who has the keenest perception of morality, and he who yields her the profoundest reverence.

And we know nothing that flashes with more evidence from the Bible, than that to be justified by faith is the authorised way of being justified; and that to seek to establish a righteousness of our own is called by the apostle a stumbling-block; and that to slight the righteousness of Christ is not only to refuse the offer of the Lawgiver, but to aggravate His wrath; and that to attempt a plea of merit for ourselves, instead of coming unto God in that merit which the Saviour hath earned for us, is, in fact, to abandon the patent way, and to attempt the kingdom of heaven by the prosecution of a by-path. Nothing can be more pointedly announced than that Christ is the way, and that there is no other by which a sinner may draw nigh unto God. It is a covered way; and the material by which the covering is formed is the righteousness of Christ, resting by imputation on the head of the believer. Should he try to wrap himself in the merit of his own obedience, he will find it too frail and too scanty a defence against the storm of the coming vengeance; and the only method of turning the fury of God into the favour of God, is to appear before Him in the faith of that righteousness which He Himself hath prepared, with which He was well pleased when ren-

dered to Him by His well-beloved Son, and for the sake of which He is well pleased with all those who put their trust in Him. They are accepted in the beloved. They are justified in the name of Jesus.

Let us no longer therefore forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew out unto ourselves broken cisterns which can contain no water. Let us set ourselves to the work of believing. We know that to believe without evidence is impossible; and that if we could not set you on the path where that evidence is to be met, to bid you believe were a useless and unintelligible prescription. But if our evidence for the word lieth in the word itself—then, plainly, what you have to do, is to give earnest heed unto the testimony. Hearken diligently unto me says the Lord, and your soul shall live. Read diligently the Bible. Bring your mind into frequent contact with what is written in this book; and it will at length evolve itself in its characters, both of importance and of truth, upon your understanding. Go up unto Jerusalem, says Christ, unto His disciples; and there will you be endued with light and power from on high. Jerusalem was the assigned post at which they had to wait then, for such a demonstration; and the Bible is the post to which we must repair now, that we may be visited by the same demonstration. The man who reads, and who prays, and who sends forth his mind to the assurances of the Bible, and who tries to conceive the trueness of them, will at length be met by the evidence of the trueness of them. The trumpet does not blow an uncertain sound, when it calls on you to believe and be saved. Even before the light of conviction has spread its overpowering brilliancy over the truths of Scripture, there is a clear definite intelligible something which an inquirer has to do. He will have ample reason to rejoice after he has found the Lord. But there is a way to find Him. There is a way of seeking Him; and we have a warrant to rejoice at its very outset—for let the heart of them, says the Psalmist, rejoice, *who seek the Lord*. Let it never be said that we are without the means of faith unto life everlasting, when we have the Bible in our hands, and the promise that God will

light His candle in our hearts. The evidence upon which this coming conviction will turn, it is not for us at present particularly to explain. But many is the simple cottager, on whose understanding it has dawned; and he has seen the wisdom and authority of God engraven on the pages of his Bible; and he has recognised His voice in the call which is there lifted up to all the ends of the earth, to look unto Christ and be saved; and he has perceived, that, as there was no exception to the call, he would in fact be thwarting the message altogether, did he make an exception of himself; and, with this warrant for appropriation, he has appropriated the general declarations of the record to his own special and individual behoof; and thus has he entered into life, he has believed in Christ his righteousness, and according to his belief so has it been done unto him.

To encourage you in the work of thus seeking after the kingdom of God and His righteousness, let us assure you, that, from the very first movement of such an undertaking, if honestly embarked in and steadily pursued, you have your well-wishers in heaven. God has no pleasure in your death. It were just another triumph to that process of redemption, which he had made known, did you come in for a share of its benefits. Nothing can exceed the welcome and the good-will which lie in that call, from which there is most assuredly no exclusion of you. Even though you were the chief of sinners, it were just a glorifying of the gospel of Christ, that, by your believing it, it became the power of God unto your salvation. He protests that it is not your destruction He wants. It is your deliverance, take His word for it, that he longs after. And now that that deliverance is rendered possible, do we see the Creator actually courting his creatures to reconciliation. For the deliverance might have been impossible. In the same sense in which it is said of God that He cannot lie, might it have been said that God cannot take sinners into acceptance. They must be vested with a righteousness, ere the all-righteous God can admit them in peace and favour to his presence. Here lay a difficulty, not merely affirmed to be so in the schools of Theology, but ac-

tually and substantially felt to be so in the counsels of Heaven—not merely standing, till it was done away, an unresolved puzzle in the theory of jurisprudence; but standing, till it was done away, an impenetrable barrier of separation between God and the guilty. But now that a righteousness has been provided, this wall of partition has been removed; and there is nothing but the most affectionate urgency on the part of God, that man should walk through the intervening space which has thus been opened for him. The proposal is, that the sin of his own person should be transferred to the person of another, and the righteousness of that other should be transferred to him. These are the plain but weighty terms of a message, which is destined to charm our world into confidence and spiritual life. Whoever shall think of the proposal that it is a fiction, and a mockery,—he, for himself, shuts the door against it; and on him it cannot be realised. He who believes it an honest proposal shall actually find it so. This faith opens an inlet, through which the righteousness of Christ reaches his person, and becomes attached to it by imputation. He staggers not at the promise of God because of unbelief. He counts Him to be faithful who has promised; and God, counting this to him for righteousness—by faith he is justified.

We now proceed, in the third place, to offer our remarks on the connection between faith and peace.

To illustrate this connection, little, we apprehend, need be said in the explanation of these two terms. If I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings, I have faith in the Bible; or I have faith in the Author of the Bible. If I believe any testimony to be true, I have faith either in the subject of the testimony, or in the author of it. If I believe a doctrine to be true, I may be either said to believe in the doctrine, or to believe in him who proposes it. I believe all that I find in the Scriptures to be true, or I have faith in the Scriptures. One of the things I find there, is, that the whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and thus for me to believe in Scripture is to believe in God. He sent His written message to the world; but He employed

a messenger even Jesus Christ, and I believe also in Christ if I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings.

There are two ways in which the phrase peace with God may be understood. It may signify that the real hostility which subsisted between the two parties is now at an end; and, in particular, that God, the alone party who can turn his purposes of hostility into execution, has now ceased to be the enemy of man and has become his friend. It may denote that the wrath of God towards man is appeased, and that the former is now willing and actually will bestow friendship and forgiveness upon the latter. Now it is conceivable, that this may be the real state of matters between God and man, and yet man be ignorant that it is so. God may have become his friend—and yet he remain for some time in dread of God as an enemy. After a negotiation for peace has terminated in the accomplishment of it between two countries, it may take months before an inhabitant of one of these countries comes to know this. There may be a real peace between the countries, while, in his bosom, there is all the restlessness and discomfort of a yet unappeased terror. Now the same of God. It is certainly conceivable that He may have ceased from His purposes of vengeance upon man, before that man comes to know this—so that there may be a real peace between the two parties, while, in the bosom of one, there may still be the turbid apprehension of God as a judge and God as avenger. And this suggests a second sense in which the term peace may be understood—even that peace which arises in a man's bosom, when he ceases from those painful apprehensions of God's displeasure, which formerly disturbed him. The one denotes the change which has taken place in the external relation between the parties. The other denotes the change which has taken place in the mind of one of them, when he comes to have a view of the new relation into which he has been translated. Peace in the one way, denotes the event of reconciliation on the part of God towards man. Peace in the other way, denotes the calm which enters into the heart of man, when he is visited by a sense of reconciliation.

Now there can be no difficulty in perceiving why peace in the first sense of the term, should stand connected with faith. This connection is a matter of God's own appointment. He hath so willed it, that if man shall believe in the message which He hath sent, He shall cease to view man as an object of condemnation. He hath devised a scheme of mercy for sinners; and it hath pleased Him, that every sinner, who shall give Him credit for all he says about the plan and about the execution of it and so confides in its efficacy, shall also experience its efficacy. It may perhaps be altogether arbitrary on the part of God, thus to single out faith as the qualifying circumstance on the part of man through which God becomes pacified towards him. Be it so. It could not be in the hand of a more wise and righteous arbitrator; and were this the place for it, we, narrow and darkened as we are in our every view of the high matters of eternity, might still trace in the rule of proceeding the lineaments of wisdom and of rectitude. And if he can see reason, why God should cease from His anger towards the man who confides in His declarations of good will, and of the plan by which He has carried it into accomplishment; and so should make the specific salvation of every individual, to turn on his possession of faith—still more may we discern a reason and a propriety, why God should now be so far reconciled to man in general, as to hold out salvation to all and propose to the world at large the overtures of reconciliation. There is now made out in behalf of the whole species a capacity of salvation; and this capacity becomes an actual accomplishment, in behalf of every one son and daughter of the species who believes. He who has the faith is justified. He who wants the faith has the wrath of God abiding on him. Whosoever hath the faith is justified, and should all have the faith all would be justified. The friendship of God is actually conferred on those who believe. This friendship is put within the reach of all, who have within their reach the means of believing—the record of the sayings which are to be believed—the evidence, which all who will to do the will of God, may, upon their honest attention, actually find in

that record; and upon which they obtain the faith that is unto salvation. There must be a reason why the benefits of the gospel, should have this special direction impressed upon them. There must be the uttermost wisdom, on the part of God, in selecting this as the condition on which the actual salvation of man turns in every particular case. But there is a still more evident reason, why now there should be such a disposition on the part of God towards man, that salvation is largely and universally offered to him—that, whether he accepts or not, the invitation is now given, and may be carried round the globe without exception and without partiality—that a message of peace may now be carried to every door, and the bearer of the message be only acting in the spirit of his warranted commission, when he urges and entreats every man he meets with to entertain it—that this embassy from heaven may be made to traverse the face of our earth in every conceivable direction, and hold forth its free and generous proposals in every spot of ground on which is reared a human habitation. There must be a reason why these proposals should be restricted, in their effect and in their accomplishment, only to those who give credit to the embassy. But what is the cause that there should have been such an embassy at all?—that this world of sinners should have been so kindly and so generously dealt with?—that God, sitting on a throne of judgment, of which the stability must be upheld, should thus send forth the overtures of a free and willing acceptance over the whole extent of a guilty creation?—that He who cannot lie, and who therefore seemed by the utterance of His threats and proclamations, to put peace with His rebellious creatures at an irrecoverable distance from Him, by laying upon it the burden of an impossibility which He Himself had framed—that still the movement towards this peace should proceed from the holy and inflexible God; and so patent a way to reconciliation be devised by Him, that all who will may have life, and all who have the belief, which no man can refuse to have without the violation of a moral principle, might be restored to terms of friendship with their offended Lawgiver? How comes it that

He should be so pacified towards those who have trampled his law under foot, that all its sanctions are withheld from execution, and the threatened punishment is turned into the proclaimed and the offered reward? How comes it that every obstacle which formerly existed in the Divine bosom, should be now so marvelously cleared away?—that now there should be no barrier of separation with God?—that He, without let or hindrance should now send forth so wide a call of reconciliation?—and that the contempt of man who will not listen, the incredulity of man who will not believe, form now the only resistance which it has to struggle with?

This change then in the feeling of the Divine mind towards sinners, is through Jesus Christ our Lord. The souls of those who believe in Him, are given to Him as a reward for His services. The peace which God has entered into with sinners, is through Christ their peace offering; and the very love which the Father bears to the Son, is among the number of its guarantees. It is not saying all that might be said for the strength and the sureness of God's pacific disposition towards us, when we say that His truth and justice have now been magnified on the person of the Redeemer, and that mercy is now free to follow the workings of its own kind and generous instigations. It is for the honour of Christ, as well as for the happiness of man—it is for the glory and the success of His great undertaking—it is for the furtherance of that cause, upon the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set—it is giving Him in fact of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied that all who have faith in His name should have salvation by His merits. God, in holding out the right hand of reconciliation towards the guilty, is in fact rendering to His own righteous servant, to the elect in whom His soul delighteth, the reward of finished and accepted services. And from that tender but deeply mysterious prayer of the Saviour—"that all who believe in me shall be one, even as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in thee and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"—from this prayer, may we gather how firm is his

security, and how intimate is his union with the Godhead, who hath fellowship, not with the Father only, but with the Father and the Son.

But there is not merely a connection between the faith of the sinner and the cessation of God's enmity against him, which is the first sense that we have given to the term peace. There is also a connection between the faith of the sinner and a sensation of peace, which thereupon enters into the sinner's bosom. He obtains peace and joy in believing. Before he had faith, and if he saw his danger aright, he was in a state of disquietude. After he has faith, and if he see aright his new relation with God he will be delivered from this state. This process however, let it be observed, has been actually experienced by many who could not perhaps describe the steps of the process to others; and to whom also it may be altogether unnecessary, that another should offer any description to them. In attempting the explanation of this process, we are sensible that we attempt a task of as difficult management on the part of the speaker, and requiring as patient and sustained an attention on the part of the hearers, as any that we have yet entered upon. It is at the same time an explanation, the metaphysical understanding of which is not essential to him, who, under the guidance of the Spirit, is made both to abound in faith and taste of peace as the fruit of His operation. But still it may help to evince to those who are without, the rationality of Christian experience; and it may even help, not only to comfort and confirm those who are within, it may also help them the more effectually to fulfil the precept of the apostle, "be able to render unto every one a reason of the hope that is in you."

And here let us observe, by the way, that the meaning of words is often darkened by the definitions which are offered of them. There is a light and a simplicity in many a subject, that is sometimes in danger of being buried under a parade of explanation. And we do confess, that it is with some degree of fearfulness we enter upon a topic, which involves in it some of the nicest and most interesting points of theological argument.

But on the other hand, we would have you to understand, that there may be a diseased and exclusive appetite on your part, for such views as force an easy and immediate conviction on the mind of the observer—such views as can be got at without any painful, difficult or laborious ascent, by the steps of a lengthened investigation—such views as, without the fatigue of a sustained attention, might flash a cheering and a satisfying light upon you by their own brilliancy; and while you are sitting in the posture of indolent spectators rather than of attentive hearers, minister some such cheap enjoyment, as the pictures of a moving panorama, on which the characters of fidelity and loveliness and grandeur stand palpably engraven. There is no doubt a pleasure, and a very exquisite one too, when, from a commanding eminence, we gain the wide and the magnificent survey of some rich domain of speculation. But it is a pleasure that must be purchased by toil. We must climb the eminence; and it is really expecting too much from the leader of such an intellectual expedition, that he has both to force his own way, and to sustain the weight of a whole multitude, who would like to be dragged, without effort on their part, to the summit along with him. You must contribute your own strength in this undertaking. You should yield the strenuous co-operation of your own attention to it. He cannot possibly carry you to all the interesting points of survey, without having to cross at times the uninviting wild, or to force the steep and the winding path of some arduous elevation. It is not possible, nor would it be right, to strew the whole of such a path with blossoms, or to irradiate the whole of it by the glow of a rich and attractive colouring. And you are positively in the wrong, if you look for delicacies on every step in the way of instruction. It bespeaks you to be children, and not men—the possessors of a superficial, rather than of a strong and hardy understanding,—if, ever on the edge after such luxuries as regale your taste for poetry, or your taste for pathos, you sink down into disappointed listlessness, when truth offers herself to your notice with no other recommendation than her own worth, and in no other

garb than her own sober and unwrought livery.

For the minister to lend himself to such an appetite as this, is, in the first place, to prostitute the pulpit into a stage; and for the people to be under its dominion, is, not merely to indicate how low is the place they occupy in the scale of intellect, but how utterly destitute and degraded is their place in the scale of Christianity. There is no practical conviction of sin, when the taste to which we have now referred, is the clamorous and predominant one. There is no earnest seeking after salvation, if he who is its messenger, must, to be heard with patience, shed a frivolous and a passing splendour over the way everlasting. We know not, if you have ever tried to compute the guilt which may be incurred by each of the parties in such a worthless and wretched ministration. Let us flee from it, as we would from that coming wrath, which must be in reserve for those, who could thus trifle with eternity, and spoil the doctrine of the cross of all that effect, which, in its own unaccompanied simplicity belongs to it. Put the dangerous propensity in question under the severest castigation. Let the weight and the value of truth, ever predominate in your esteem over those attractions, which, while they fascinate, may also most wofully mislead their tasteful and impassioned admirer. You never will reach the solid attainments of an intelligent and well founded Christianity, if truth, and truth alone, have not power, though stript of all the embellishments and all the graces, to compel you around her, and bend your willing ear to her plain and grave and weighty announcements. This is the habit to which we should like to train you; and a habit to which we have our suspicions that some of you need to be trained. What we want to summon to the bar of instruction, is neither your taste, nor your feeling, nor your imagination. We want to summon your attention. Our exactions are upon this single faculty; and what we demand is its patient and prolonged waiting on a deliverance, which, however prosaic in its terms, is pregnant in its truths with matter, just as important in point of value as an existence of

blessedness, and just as lasting in point of effect as are your unperishable natures. What we are feebly attempting to deal around us, is the very essence of that truth which is unto salvation; and, in the words of the Bible, we call upon you to stir yourselves up that you may lay hold of it; and that your souls may live we call upon you, not merely to hearken, but to hearken diligently.

It will perhaps aid you to understand how you should come to have peace, when you come to have a belief that the sayings of the Bible are true sayings—could you conceive one whom you believe to be a divine messenger, and calling himself if you will the Son of God, to approach any one of yourselves, and enter personally and individually into conversation with you. You are still, we suppose, under the feeling that there is not yet a settlement of the controversy between God and yourself as a sinner; and that His Son comes to your door as a bearer of good tidings, as a setter forth of the way of peace and reconciliation. The question is, what are the sayings which we may conceive to be uttered on such an occasion—and how do they operate in communicating peace of mind to him who believes on them?

Did this messenger of God tell me, that he comes as the bearer of a sure and absolute salvation to me and to every one, and that all should in point of fact go to heaven when they die—we need to offer no explanation of the way in which peace would enter the heart, at the very moment in which the belief of such an announcement entered the understanding. It is not even necessary to conceive, that this communication should be personally directed to me by the mouth of a present and a living messenger. If there be faith, the effect in bringing peace to me is quite the same, whether I be told in this way of my own particular salvation, or whether I read in the Bible that all men immediately after death are to be translated into a blissful eternity. The belief of this saying would necessarily involve in it the belief, that I, as being a man, as being included in the general description of all men, had a sure part in that inheritance which fadeth not away. Were such one of the sayings of the

Bible, then it follows directly from the import of it, that all who did believe in the sayings of the Bible would have peace.

It is unnecessary to observe, that no such intimation occurs in the written record we have of God's message to us; and that therefore the supposition of it serves no other purpose than that of illustration.

But again, did this messenger state to me in oral conference, not that all should be saved, but that only some should be saved; and that a book of life was kept in heaven; and that therein were kept the names of all to whom God had ordained a place in heaven: And did he further tell me, that my name was written there, then if I believed in his saying, would I be assured of the prospect of blessedness that lay before me, and this also would be an assurance of peace. Or, to shift our supposition from a messenger to a Bible, if, in that Bible my name and my locality and my circumstances and the period of the world at which I lived were so specified, as completely to identify my person; and it were said of this person that he was of the number who were recorded in the book of life—then also would a belief in the sayings of the Bible, carry me, by an immediate transition, to the peace I am in quest of. But in truth, there is no such revelation there. There is not one individual of our species to whom the Bible attaches such a specific mark of his personal and particular safety as this. The Bible deals in generalities; and, if he is ever to have peace and joy in believing, he must gather it out of these generalities; and they must be constructed in some such way, as to have the effect they would have had, had they looked particularly towards him, and had they carried in them so pointed a direction to himself, that, on their basis, he can trust in having God for his own friend, and an eternal dwelling place with God for his own inheritance.

It is true that the Bible does tell us something of the book of life. It tells us that the names of all who after death are to be translated into the realms of everlasting security are written there. It tells us that there are names, but it does not tell us which names. Here then is an example, in which it would be possi-

ble to have faith without having peace. Did a messenger from God just tell me thus much—just tell me that some were to be saved, and that there was a list of them in heaven, but forbear to satisfy my painful desire of knowing whether my name had been inserted in the list, I might perceive in all this a chance of salvation; but the uncertainty of it would continue to adhere to me on this side of death. I might thoroughly believe his announcement as far as it goes; and yet not be at rest. Or if, instead of being an intimation to me from a living messenger, it were an intimation of the Bible to all the readers of this book; and were it the only intimation from which we were left to gather hope to ourselves, all men might have faith and yet no man have peace. I cannot ascend to heaven while in the body, and there examine the contents of the book of my destiny. This mighty secret lies in a book that is far off, and to me inaccessible; and thus might I have entire faith in all the sayings of the word that is nigh, and yet live out the whole of my time in the world in a state of fearful agitation.

But again, let the messenger talk with me, and inform me that though that salvation, the tidings of which he bore, would only be realised by a particular number of the species—yet he had a more satisfying indication to offer than the mere circumstance of their enrolment in a record that was invisible, and that all who were so destined had a visible mark each on his own forehead. I may have faith in this announcement too; and could I only ascertain by self-inspection the existence of the mark in question, I would no sooner have the faith than I would have the peace along with it. But had I no such mark, then my faith, instead of being the harbinger of my peace, would be to me the harbinger of despair. So that if, instead of being the statement of a messenger it were the statement of a Bible, all men might believe in it, and yet only those men be at peace who were in possession of the mark—while the others who had equal faith, but were destitute of the mark, would be reduced by their faith to a state of utter despondency.

Were the first then the only announcement in the Bible respecting the future

condition of man, viz., that forgiveness and favour were granted to all without exception—all who had faith would have peace. Were the second the only announcement, viz., that there were favour and forgiveness for a particular number whose names were written in a book that was inaccessible, all might have faith and yet none have peace. Were the third the announcement, viz., that favour and forgiveness were only to those who were in possession of a certain palpable mark upon their foreheads that could be instantly ascertained, all men might have faith—both those who had the mark and those who wanted it; and yet this faith would bring despair to the latter, and peace only to the former. Settled peace would only be the portion of the one class and as settled despair the portion of the other class.

Let us now suppose, that the mark in question, instead of being of so palpable and so discoverable a sort as a visible impression on the forehead, lay deeper and more difficult of access within the recesses perhaps of a man's mind and a man's character. In this case, there might be no peace till the mark was ascertained; and the peace might be long of coming, if it came as the result of an anxious and laborious examination. If the mark be not such as to obtrude itself upon the discernment at a single glance, this might delay the attainment of the peace after which we are aspiring. It may be easy to perceive by the organ of the eye, that which is situated without us. It is not so easy, in general to perceive by the organ of consciousness, that which is situated within us—to make a survey of all the objects which lie in the hidden province that comes under the recognition of this faculty; and there to take account of such a desire, or such an affection, or such a principle, as that, on the assured possession of it, we may be assured of a destiny of bliss being in reserve for us.

Now in none of these ways have we yet unfolded, either what the chief and at the same time most comprehensive saying of the Bible is upon this matter, or how the peace of a sinner's mind stands connected with the act of his believing it. The Bible does not proclaim absolute forgiveness and felicity to all men—so that the transition from faith

to peace is not just so direct and obvious, as under the first supposition. It does proclaim this for a particular number; and it tells us also that their names are written in the book of life, though it no where specifies the names—so that as under the second supposition, were there no other announcement on the subject, all might believe and yet all might remain in a state of disquietude. And it also assigns marks by which the children of the kingdom might be distinguished even in this life—though these marks be not generally of so palpable a sort, as that they can be seized with the same promptness and facility, with which the eye is arrested by something externally and immediately visible. And therefore to come at the thorough assurance of having such marks—it might be necessary to institute a lengthened and laborious process of self-examination. And here the circumstance which offers itself, in proof that we have not yet by any of our suppositions got into a precise accordancy with the Bible, is, that, under none of them have we yet assigned such sayings as have precisely the same influence with the Bible in pacifying a sinner's bosom. In none of them would belief have the same effect upon peace, that a belief of Scripture has. For while, on the one hand, there are marks specified in the Bible, by which the children of the kingdom are distinguished from the children of this world—there are, on the other hand, sayings in the Bible, the belief of which, antecedent to all self-examination, brings an instantaneous peace and joy along with them. There are tidings which are there called tidings of great joy; and when is it, one would think, that the joy should be felt but just when the tidings are believed? They positively would not deserve the name of glad tidings, unless they gladdened our hearts at the moment of our putting faith in them; and, accordingly, we read, both of the first and of the latter Christians in all ages, how often their peace came immediately in the train of their faith—how they had peace and joy in believing—how as soon as the word of the testimony dawned with credit upon their understanding, so soon did it prove itself a peace-speaking testimony, and that by a tranquillizing influence which it brought at the very

moment into their hearts—So that there must be a something in the communications of this book, which, if rightly understood, must, when believed, bring peace immediately along with it. And yet in this very book we are called upon to prove ourselves, and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and to take heed lest we fall, and to labour that we may obtain full assurance, and to count not that we have yet attained. And while, on the one hand, the first converts did at the very outset receive the word with gladness—they, on the other hand, were taught to look upon their salvation as a point at issue, as a matter in dependence, as the reward of a race that had yet to be run, as the prize of a victorious contest that had not yet been carried to its termination: And thus, while the peace of God ruled in their hearts, their prospect of eternal life did not lie before them in such full characters of certainty, but that it admitted of being brightened into a still more cheering hope, and confirmed into a still higher and more steadfast degree of assurance.

So that there is both a peace felt by the believer, when he looks to the truth that is without him in the Bible; and yet that Bible refers his attention to a mark that is within him upon his own heart. The word and the testimony of Christ, at the first drop peace upon him. Marks which by the work of Christ are impressed on the believer's person, afterwards reflect peace upon him. There is peace at the outset, if he believe what he is told about salvation; and yet it is a peace which admits of being confirmed afterwards—just as if his salvation were still a matter of doubt and a matter of dependence. There is something peculiar surely in the sayings of the Bible, about this whole matter of a sinner's hopes—a something which distinguishes the whole sum of these sayings, from any of the single suppositions that we have yet come forward with—a something which brings to one these apparent inconsistencies, and turns that which looks a foolishness and a mystery to the eye of the world to be indeed the wisdom of God for the world's salvation.

Were we called upon then to assign the most compendious, and at the same time the most frequently reiterated saying

of the Bible about the salvation of man, we would fix upon that statement of constant occurrence in its pages, that it is he who believeth that shall be saved. It is like as if the messenger whom we have already quoted, should come to my door and offer salvation to me simply upon my giving credit to him. It is not an absolute offer of salvation as under the first supposition. It is not the bare announcement of a chance for salvation, which could never be ascertained on this side of death, because the certainty of it was only recorded in a book of names that was inaccessible. It is not the assurance of salvation to me, on the possession of a mark that stands visibly engraven on my forehead, which if I have, I in my belief of such a message shall have peace; and, if I have not, I shall on the very same belief be plunged into despair. Neither is it such an assurance of salvation or any other more latent mark, as to make me feel that the first thing I have to do is to look inwardly upon myself, and there institute a metaphysical search into the arcana of my heart and of my character. The intimation is that if I believe I shall be saved. The peculiarity lieth here, that the messenger makes my salvation to turn upon my faith in his statements—makes it to turn on possession of a personal attribute certainly, or if you will a personal mark—such a mark as has its residence within me, and to find and ascertain the existence or which I must look inwardly; but at the same time such a mark, as neither I nor any man can possibly acquire, but by first looking outwardly. I cannot believe in any affirmation, till I have looked to the matter of that affirmation. I cannot have faith in the statements of the messenger till I have considered his statements. It is true that to believe is a personal act; but it is the act of a mind sending itself forth, and busying itself among the things to be believed. It is true that faith, just like affection, or principle, or desire is a personal accomplishment. But it is an accomplishment stamped upon my person, by an influence emanating from that which is without; and it is by the direction of my mental eye to the object without, that I keep the avenue open for the transmission of this influence. Though it be on the posses-

sion of a personal accomplishment—though it be on myself that faith hath its standing-place, and it be on the possession of faith in the statements of a messenger calling himself divine that my salvation is made to turn—it were altogether preposterous on that account, to look first away from the statements with the view of looking inwardly and downwardly upon myself. It were just as preposterous, as if some benefit were to accrue on my obtaining a sight of the sun in the firmament, I should, instead of looking outwardly toward him, endeavour to search for the image that he has impressed of himself upon the retina of my eye. Was it upon some other speciality of my understanding or of my character than faith, that the Bible made my eternal felicity to hang—I should instantly have felt myself committed to a process of self-examination. I should have looked inwardly upon myself. But when it comes forth with the primary declaration, that we are saved by faith in its own statements—this draws the attention of the mind to those statements, and we are led to look outwardly upon our Bibles. The only conceivable way in which we can obtain a belief of any truth, is by turning the eye of the mind towards the truth and its accompanying evidence. So that the truths of the Bible are among the first things with which a seeker after God, who is in the direct way of salvation, feels himself engaged. Were he bidden look to some external object so that he may obtain the sight of it and be saved, the eye of his body would be directed towards that object and not towards his own person. And were he bidden give earnest heed to the word of God's testimony so that he may obtain the belief of it and be saved, would the eye of his mind be directed towards the things contained in this book. It is there repeatedly said that faith is competent to the entire salvation of every one who possesses it. If there ever should then be any other marks insisted on, these must be subordinate to faith—for faith, if competent to salvation, must be competent to the formation upon the person of every such mark as is indispensable to salvation. So that in every view of it, believing comes upon us with all the urgency of the first matter on hand. The great, and what ought to be

the felt concern of every one of us, is how to attain the faith; and, for this purpose, there is not a more likely or suitable attitude of the mind than an earnest contemplation of the objects of faith.

In endeavouring to trace the connection between faith and peace, let us remark, that, had the saying to be believed been that our salvation turned on our possession of some personal property distinct from faith and independent of it—then if we believed this saying, would we have gone instantly in search of this property, and explored the map of our own persons. But when the personal property which is unto salvation is just the very faith itself, then our possession of it may be indicated in two ways—either by the liveliness of its own exercise, or by the existence of other personal marks which it works upon the character by its own influence and operation. In both these cases, the connection between faith and peace is brought about, by our being made conscious that we have faith—conscious that we have that within us or about us which ensures salvation. But still if faith be only known by its exercises, it must be in exercise before we are conscious of it—or if it can be only known by its fruits, it must have had enough of time and enough of operation to produce these fruits, ere we can infer the existence of it. So that ere peace can be derived from the consciousness that we have faith—faith is in actual operation; the mind is in contact with the truths of the Bible; the inquirer is exploring the map of revelation; he is contemplating objects that are without him, and he believes their reality. He must look outwardly, before, through the medium of consciousness, he can gather any peace in connection with faith by looking inwardly.

What we affirm is, that such are the truths of the Christian revelation, that, in the single act of looking outwardly upon them, there is a peace which enters into the looker's mind along with his faith. There is a peace in the bare exercise of believing. The truths themselves are fitted to convey peace into the heart, at the very moment that they are recognised to be truths. Even were it possible to believe without the consciousness of believing, such are the intimations of the

gospel, that a single perception of the trueness of them (a single reliance upon the faithfulness of these intimations) is enough of itself to send a tranquillizing influence into the sinner's bosom. Conscientiousness may afterwards suggest to me that I am a believer. The faith which has taken possession of my mind, may there work the influences upon my heart and character which are ascribed to this principle in the New Testament; and, from the fruit of these influences may I gather the existence within me of the real faith of the New Testament. I may then couple this discovery with the assurance, that the privileges of the gospel are unto all and upon all who believe; and may thus come at peace through the medium of a process of self-reflection and self-examination. This is a possible—nay this is a legitimate—nay this is a prescribed exercise with every disciple of Christ. But still the peace which is thus come at, is but the confirmation of a peace which is already arrived at previously. It is not then that peace makes its first entrance into the heart—nor is it the introduction of a new feeling which takes place at this time; but only the ratification and the establishment of an old feeling. There was a peace conceived in the sinner's heart, along with the delivery of the message of the gospel, so soon as that message was understood in the terms of it and discerned in the trueness of it; and, just as upon the utterance of any other good news, a joy will be felt at the moment of their utterance barely upon their being believed and though there be no reflex consciousness of believing—so were the good news of the gospel fitted in the days of the apostles, and are they fitted still, to send an instantaneous peace into the bosom, and that solely on the perception that we have of its being a true and a creditable message.

For should the bearer of such a message come to my door, and tell me, that God carries to me individually such a good-will in His heart as to have no pleasure whatever in my death—what else can it require than a simple faith in such a statement, to be gladdened and tranquilized by it? Or should he call himself an ambassador from God, and say that

by his mouth God beseeches me to be reconciled—will there no peace and joy flow direct from my faith in this communication? We want not to embarrass you by the metaphysics of any unseen and inward principle whatever. But should a powerful and offended neighbour, send his own son to me with the intelligence, that he has now obtained by the hands of an interposing friend an ample satisfaction for all the wrongs I ever inflicted on him, and is now ready to take me into friendship—is there any thing metaphysical or embarrassing in our discernment of that process, by which a simple feeling of deliverance from fear will come immediately in the train of a simple belief in this intelligence. And sinner as I am, deeply as I have revolted against the Lawgiver in heaven, inflexible as His justice is and awful as is the power of His anger—I only need to be told that God is pacified by the blood of an all sufficient propitiation, and to believe in what I am told that I may be pacified from my fears of the coming vengeance. Let me only believe what I am told of the Son of God, and I will no longer be afraid. Let me know it to be a truth, that my salvation is an object which His heart is set upon—that He bore the pains of death, in order to accomplish it—that from the place of glory where He now sits, He casts a longing regard towards me, and that every look and every wish which I heave towards Him is met by the merciful High Priest of the human race, with a responding welcome—that He is able, and just as willing as He is able to save to the uttermost—that He knocks at the door of my heart, and that all which He wants and is honestly desirous of there, is to be admitted into confidence—that He offers me the redemption which He hath achieved for many, and not only backs the offer with the invitation of His Father but with the commandment of His Father that I should accept of it—Let me only conceive that these are so many steps of an authentic transaction in behalf of the world, and in behalf of me as one of the world's inhabitants; and there is not the distance of a single link, between my belief in all this, and the peace of deliverance the peace of joy the peace of expectation which emerges from it.

SERMON XXIX.

On the Analogies which obtain between the Natural and the Spiritual Husbandry.

“And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”—MARK IV. 26—29.

A MAN may be qualified for practically carrying forward a process, of whose hidden steps, and of whose internal workings, he is most profoundly ignorant. This is true in manufactures. It is true in the business of agriculture. And it holds eminently true in the business of education. How many are the efficient artisans, for example, in whose hands you may at all times count on a right and prosperous result; but who are utterly in the dark, as to the principles of that chemistry in their respective arts, by the operation of which the result is arrived at. And how many a ploughman, who knows best how to prepare the ground, and who knows best how to deposit the seed for the object of a coming harvest; and yet, if questioned upon the arcana of physiology, or of those secret and intermediate changes by which the grain in the progress of vegetable growth is transformed into a complete plant ripened and ready for the use of man, would reply in the language of my text, that he knoweth not how. And in like manner, there is many a vigorous and successful educationist, who does come at the result of good scholarship, whether in Christianity or in common learning—and that without ever theorizing on the latent and elementary principles of the subject, upon which he operates—without so much as casting one glance at the science of metaphysics, a science more inscrutable still than that of physiology; and which, by probing into the mysteries of the human spirit, would fain discover how it is that a truth is first deposited there by communication, and then takes root in the memory, and then warms into an impression, and then forms into a sentiment, and then ripens into a purpose, and then comes out to vi-

sible observation in an effect or a deed or a habit of actual performance. There are thousands, who, in the language of our text, know not how all this comes about; and yet have in point of fact and of real business, set the process effectively agoing. We are not sure indeed if our mental philosophers have done much, or if they have done any thing to guide or to enlighten the methods of practical education; and for this, we should certainly have less confidence in the philosophy of those speculative men who can expatiate on man's internal constitution, and talk of associations and remembrances and laws of primary or secondary suggestion—than we should have in the home-bred sagacity of those operative men, who have put forth their hand to the employment, and laboured for years in the business of schools or of parishes.

The phrase of the “kingdom of Heaven” in our parable, possesses the same significancy, which it has in those passages where it is said, that the “kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation” and “the kingdom of Heaven is within you.” The kingdom of Heaven, in all these places, meaneth the reign of Heaven's principles over the heart of man. Let the word of God be addressed to him, and come home to his heart with a deep sense of its truth and obligation—this is the good seed taking firm root in it. Let his faith in the word be genuine, and have its genuine effect on his character and walk—this is the good seed yielding in abundance the fruit of righteousness. And thus it is, that, while in one parable, a teacher of the word is compared to a sower—in the parable before us, its train of influences upon the taught is compared to a process of vegetation.

We cannot afford, at present, to trace all the analogies, which obtain between a plant from the germination of its seed, and a Christian from the infancy of his first principles. We shall in the first place confine ourselves to one or two of these analogies; and secondly endeavour to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of having a certain measure of light thrown upon them, by the comparison which is laid before us in this parable, between the work of a teacher and the work of a husbandman.

First then, in the agricultural process, there is much that is left to be done by Nature, and in a way that the workman knoweth not how; nor is it at all necessary that he should. He puts forth his hand, and sets a mechanism agoing—the principles of which, he, with his head, is wholly unable to comprehend. The doing of his part is indispensable, but his knowledge of the way in which Nature doeth her part is not indispensable. And accordingly, after he hath sown, he may go to sleep if he chooses. He hath done the palpable work, and he wisely meddles not with the profound speculation. The casting of the seed into the ground was his concern. The bringing forth of the fruit was what the earth did of herself; and by the operation of a physiology which he neither comprehends nor cares for, a harvest produce is given to him as the return of his exertions.

Now it is even so in the work of spiritual husbandry. There is an obvious part of it, that is done by the agency of man; and there is a hidden part of it, which is independent of that agency. The first part may well be done by a man, who is free of all that ambitious curiosity, that might have led him to pry into the mysteries of the second. Were this rightly attended to, it might save both parents and teachers, a deal of misplaced, and even mischievous anxiety. What more settled and reposeing than the faith which a husbandman has in the constancy of Nature. He knows not how it is; but, on the strength of a gross and general experience, he knows that so it is. And it were well in a Christian teacher to imitate this confidence. There is in it, both the wisdom of experience, and the sublime wisdom of piety. He plants and he waters,

and he goes through all the human work of the spiritual husbandry; and then, he should commit it quietly and confidently, to Him who giveth the increase. He should not meddle with matters too high for him; and, on the principle of not attempting to be wise beyond the obvious lessons of Scripture or observation, he should cease his inquiries at the right point, and save himself from all the perplexities of restless and ungovernable speculation. There is great comfort in this exercise of faith; and, what is more, we promise it great efficacy. Be steadfast and immoveable, and always abounding in your proper work. God will not be wanting to His. There is no danger, either of the processes of Nature, or the processes of grace being suspended, because we have not been able to lift the veil, which shrouds them from the eye of our intelligence. We have nothing to do, but to make right and conscientious use of the instruments which have been put into our hand; and to rest assured, that, if we labour in the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain.

But again—it is the work of the husbandman to cast the seed into the ground. It is not his work to manufacture the seed. This were wholly above him and beyond him. The seed is provided for him by a higher hand; and all that lies upon him is the practicable task of putting it into the ground, and following his judgment in suiting the various kinds of seed to the various soils and various preparations.

In like manner, to excogitate and to systematize the truths which we are afterwards to deposit in the minds of those who are submitted to our instruction, were a task beyond the faculties of man. These truths, therefore, are provided to his hand. What his eye could not see, nor his ear hear, has been brought within his reach by a communication from heaven; and to him nothing is left, but a simple acquiescence in his Bible, and a faithful exposition of it.

Our writers upon education may have done something. They may have scattered a few superficial elegances over the face of society; and taught the lovely daughters of accomplishment how to walk in gracefulness their little hour, over a paltry and perishable scene. But it is

only in as far as they deal in the truths and lessons of the Bible, that they rear any plants for heaven; or can carry forward a single pupil to the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Ah, how much has this Bible simplified the work of religious education. It leaves me nothing, but to sit like a little child to the lesson that is set before me; and to convey it with simplicity and clearness, to the other children who stand in need of it. We may now give to the wind all our self-formed demonstrations; and for the fatigue and harassment of all former uncertainties, we have nothing to feel but a reposing confidence in the efficacy of the word, and nothing to do but to enter vigorously and without suspicion on the work of depositing it.

And as we have not to manufacture a seed for the operations of our spiritual husbandry—so neither have we to mend it. It is not fit that the wisdom of God, should thus be intermeddled with by the wisdom of man. It is utterly incompetent for us, to throw aside any part of His revealed counsel as matter of unfit or dangerous communication; and it were putting forth a sacrilegious hand, did we offer to purify it, of what we choose to imagine a doubtful and deleterious ingredient. This must be kept back from our pupils, lest it leads to Antinomianism! That other must be kept back too, lest it unsettles their orthodoxy! Why, if we may not come absolutely forward with the Bible and the whole Bible, we are just where we were. If we can do nothing in the way of making a doctrine for ourselves, surely we do worse than nothing when we mutilate or modify the doctrine which has come down to us from heaven. If we are for ever to be qualifying and mending from the fear of consequences, then we are out at sea again, and in as harassing uncertainty as before; and the business of education is left to the waywardness of our gratuitous and ever-varying decisions. There is no other way of helping ourselves out of this difficulty, than just to bind over our whole understanding to our whole Bible. We dispute not the talent and genius of many, who, in the attempt of skilfully adapting the doctrine of Scripture to the mind of the scholar, have only made laborious deviations from the simplicity

that is in Christ. But the man who spares himself all their work of ingenuity, or is even incapable of it, is better qualified for the business of religious education than they. He takes up the Bible fearlessly as he finds it. His single aim is to understand it, and to make it understood; and he brings a simple and a sincere mind to a simple exercise.

But again—we do not lose sight of the analogy which there is, between the work of a spiritual and that of a natural husbandman—when, after having affirmed the indispensableness of casting into the ground of the human heart the pure and the simple word, we further affirm the indispensableness and the efficacy of prayer. Even after that, in the business of agriculture, man hath performed his handiwork, by depositing the seed in the earth—he should acknowledge the handiwork of God, in those high and hidden processes, whether of the atmosphere above or of the vegetable kingdom below, which he can neither control nor comprehend. By the work of diligence which he does with his hand, he fulfils man's parts of the operation. By the prayer of dependence which arises from his heart, he does homage and recognition to God's part of it. And we are not to imagine that prayer is without effect, even in the processes of the natural economy. The same God who framed and who organized our great mundane system, has never so left it to the play and the impulses of its own mechanism, as to have resigned even for one moment that mastery over it which belongs to Him; but He knows when to give that mysterious touch, by which He both answers prayer, and disturbs not the harmony of the universe which he has formed. He knows how to make nature subservient to prayer, and that without invading the constancy of any of her visible successions; and though the eye of the most vigilant experimentalist, should never once detect any law or principle of meteorology, to have been traversed by a special interference of the Deity—yet He nevertheless overrules all the changes of that fitful and fluctuating weather, on which all the hopes of the year are suspended; and the prayers of the husbandman for the earlier and the latter rains, for a season that might secure the ripenings of a

productive, and a season that might secure the ingatherings of a safe and prosperous harvest, do not rise in vain to that place where sitteth the Guide and the Governor of our world.

But it is in the world of mind, more than in that of matter, that the efficacy of prayer is realised. It is in those processes of the spiritual economy, when the mind of the creature reciprocates with the mind of the eternal Creator; and when the one, all athirst for the supplies of a refreshing and renovating grace, brings down a shower of living water out of the other's inexhaustible fulness. That is the prayer to which the ear of Heaven is more especially open, and which He who sitteth upon its throne most rejoices to meet and to satisfy. It is when man aspires upwards after fellowship with God, and looks and longs for the communication of light and of power from the sanctuary—it is then that God looks with fondest complacency upon man, and lets willingly downward all the treasures of grace upon his soul. He draws near unto those who draw near unto Him. It has been said of prayer, that it moves Him who moves the universe; and it is in the universe of spirit, that this saying has its chief and most emphatic fulfilment—among those busy interchanges, of dependence on the one hand, and good will upon the other, which take place between the great Parent Spirit, and all those derived or subordinate spirits who constitute the members of His immortal family. It is thus that prayer is an organ of such mighty avail, towards the prosperity and the extension of Christ's Church upon earth; and that whether in the shape of a direct supplication for our own souls, or of benevolent intercession for the souls of others—insomuch that the first preachers of the gospel, in the conduct of their spiritual husbandry, though busied to the uttermost in the work of casting the seed, gave an equal and co-ordinate importance to the work of prayer for a blessing thereupon. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

And here a beautiful analogy suggests itself between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which serves to confirm

by one illustration more, a doctrine that cannot be too often propounded to the view of Christians. It is said of Elisha, that when he prayed, the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. Now we venture to affirm of all the plenty which was thus brought forth, that not one atom of it was produced, which did not spring up from the seed that was previously in the ground. Of all the stems in that luxuriant vegetation which was given to Elisha's prayers, not one of them we will say grew without a root, but each of them from a root. The crop which was made to cover the fields of Israel, was not a crop without seed, but a crop from seed. Such a miracle might have been wrought, as, without either rain or seed, could have made a boundless fertility to wave all over the land. But this was not the miracle which followed on the intercession of the prophet. It neither dispensed with seed, nor rain; but brought down the one from heaven for the purpose of fructifying the other that lay waiting for it under the earth. For the development of the seed, a descent of rain from the sky was indispensable; but for a produce to come after the rain, the deposition of seed in the ground was alike indispensable. And it is just so in spiritual husbandry. The seed, which is the word of God, cannot bring forth fruit of itself, without the descent of the spirit of God—that living water from above upon the soul. And neither does the Spirit of God cause of itself the fruits of righteousness to grow, in a soul unfurnished with the truths and informations of the Bible. The vegetation of grace in the heart, is brought about by the one operating upon the other—by the spirit giving efficacy and expansion to the word. This view marks, and we think most distinctly, the limit between the agency of God and the agency of man—both what that is which man ought to perform, and what that is which he ought to pray for. The word is the germ, whence proceedeth all spiritual growth; and this must be deposited in the heart, or he shall not be saved. The Spirit is the shower, by which this word, that would else have remained inert and unproductive within him as a dead letter is quickened and

unfolded ; and unless the Spirit descend upon his heart, he shall not be saved. The soul that is ripening for heaven, has been compared to a well watered garden. There would be no germination without a watering of grace from the upper sanctuary ; but still the germination arises, not from the stones, but from the seeds of the garden—and if no seeds be there, neither showers nor sunshine will avail it. And thus let it never be forgotten, that, in the heart of man, every germination of fruit by the Spirit, is a germination from the truths of the Bible ; and that therefore the work of grace in the soul is carried forward, not by perusals of the book alone, neither by prayers for the blessing alone, but by the co-operation of the perusals with the prayers.

We now come to the second thing proposed, which was to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of a certain measure of light being thrown upon them, by the comparison made in this parable, between the work of a Christian teacher and the work of a husbandman.

And first, it may evince to us the efficacy of that Christian teaching, which is sometimes undertaken by men in humble life, and of the most ordinary scholarship. Let them have but understanding enough for the great and obvious simplicities of the Bible, and let them have grace enough for devout and depending prayer ; and, on the strength of these two properties, they are both wise unto salvation for themselves, and may become the instruments of winning the souls of others also. We deny not the importance of a far loftier scholarship than theirs for the clergy ; and when pleading in behalf of the latter for the union of deep science with the deepest and most devoted sacredness, we cannot fail to be reminded of Paul, who, though the most accomplished of all the apostles in the literature and philosophy of his age, was at the same time the most effective of them all in gaining converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We shall ever prize then a lettered and an intellectual church, whose ministers might sustain the battles of the faith on the field of authorship, or in the high places of society—and yet be the bearers of its glad and gracious embassy

to the habitations of the poor. Nevertheless, we deem it a great thing for Christianity, that, among the poor themselves, there are to be had such effective auxiliaries to the cause, by whose means the whole mass might be leavened into a busier and more pervading fermentation ; and the message of salvation be speeded with tenfold celerity, through parishes and populations that no minister can possibly overtake. It is well for the families of our land, that the lessons of eternity can fall with effect even from the lips of the cottage patriarch ; and it is more especially well for its huge and overcrowded cities, that the piety of Christian mechanics who spend the week in unremitting drudgery, can be made successfully to bear at Sabbath, even on the profligacy and profaneness of a neglected boyhood. We cannot at all sympathize with that lordly intolerance, which would look either with distrust or with disdain upon their labours—which, jealous lest the work of Christian education should thus be vulgarised, would confine the whole religious instruction even of the common people, to regularly trained and regularly constituted functionaries. Were there a sufficient strength and equipment of these, we should the more readily defer to this antipathy ; but it is quite palpable, that in every parish, a great deal more can be done for the interest of the gospel, than lies within the achievement of one solitary arm ; and that scarcely a town can be named, where, on comparing the little band of ecclesiastics with the hosts which are congregated therein, we do not feel, as if the labourers in so mighty a harvest, must utterly sink before it into the impotency of despair. There is now a general revolt against every species of monopoly, but the monopoly which would engross to itself the business of Christian instruction, and yet leave it undone, is truly the most execrable of all. And the horrors of that scarcity which it entails upon the land are nothing the less, because it is an artificial scarcity ; or because the people are stinted in their supplies of the bread of life, not from any want of this precious commodity, but from the want of that free trade which might bear it more quickly and more copiously round among the families. There is a wo denounced upon

those who keep the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and who neither enter themselves nor suffer those who are willing to enter. Be assured that the profligacy of the many in cities will fill up and overflow, unless the piety and Christian principle of the few, be called forth and rightly directed to the object of making head against it. Every available force which can be enlisted in this moral warfare, should be turned to the service of it. The religionist of some narrow street or lane, whom neighbours send for when any of a family is dying—the gifted man of prayer, who, amid the groupe of assembled households, can send forth the unction of his own piety through a chamber crowded by listeners—the respected though humble fellow-citizen, who, in the absence of all the ministers, is called on for the holy services of a funeral day, and does acquit himself with a simple pathos and a power which are felt throughout all the company—the homely artisan, who, obscure in the world's eye, has yet been visited by a light from heaven; and, in love for the souls of those around him, longs and would labour that they shared with him the hope and the happiness which have gladdened his own—These were most efficient helps, in the work of Christianizing the wastes and the wilds of our city heathenism; and that, by a virtue which they have not gotten at any university, and which all our universities cannot give. It is in these powerful instruments, the word of God and prayer, that the secret of their great strength lieth. Theirs is that higher wisdom, which is revealed unto babes—not often to be found in schools of philosophy, and far oftener to be found among the humble and despised of this world—among men whose names are never heard of in our tasteful and enlightened circles—among obscure tradesmen, unlearned in every thing but the simplicity that is in Christ—among uncouth devotees whom the finger of scorn points at; but who have been known to persevere in their labours of love under the scowl of proud and priv-

ileged instructors; and to reclaim whole neighbourhoods, by bringing the terrors of the law and the calls of repentance to bear with an all subduing energy upon the vices of their neglected populations.

But this brings us to the last of those analogies between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which we shall at present be able to overtake—an analogy not certainly suggested by the text, but still close enough for the illustration of all which we can now afford to say, in defence of those parochial establishments which have done so much we think, both for the Christianity and the scholarship of our people.

A territorial division of the country into parishes, each of which is assigned to at least one minister as the distinct and definite field of his spiritual cultivation—this we have long thought does for Christianity, what is often done in agriculture by a system of irrigation. You are aware what is meant by this. Its use is for the conveyance and the distribution of water, that indispensable aliment to all vegetation, over the surface of the land. It is thus for example, that, by the establishment of ducts of conveyance, the waters of the Nile are made to overspread the farms of Egypt—the country through which it passes. This irrigation, you will observe, does not supply the water. It only conveys it. It does not bring down the liquid nourishment from heaven. It only spreads it abroad upon the earth. Were there no descent of water from above causing the river to overflow its banks—there is nothing in the irrigation, with its then dry and deserted furrows, which could avail the earth that is below. On the other hand were there no irrigation, many would be the tracts of country, that should have no agriculture and could bring no produce. Let not therefore our dependence on the Spirit lead us to despise the machinery of a territorial establishment; and neither let our confidence in machinery lead us to neglect prayer for the descent of living water from on high.

SERMON XXX.

On the Universality of the Gospel Offer.

“Good-will toward men.”—LUKE ii. 14.

WHEN you want a friend to shift himself from a worse to a better situation, there are two distinct arguments that might be employed for the attainment of your object. You may either insist upon the evils of his present situation; or you may lay before him an alluring picture of the new situation, you want him to occupy. You may work either upon his fears or upon his hopes; and while by the constitution of some minds, the one argument is more effectual than the other—there are also minds, which need both the arguments to be earnestly and perseveringly urged upon them, ere you can obtain their concurrence in the measure you are aiming at.

Now there is one common situation in which we are all placed; and it is a situation full of insecurity and danger. We trust we may have said enough to do away that delusive peace, which may rest in the fancied accomplishments of their character. One face is more beautiful than another. Yet there is a worm of decay in each and all of them; and the loathsomeness of corruption will at length spread itself over the fairest and the most fascinating of human forms. One mind is more amiable than another—yet each of them carries in it a rooted principle of alienation from God. Under all their variety from the less to the more lovely, this foulest of all moral deformity adheres to them; and thus it may be said of the most amiable men, that, with this point of decisive condemnation about them, they are the children of wrath even as others; and a spiritual law looks hard upon them also, for their habitual violation of its first and greatest requirement; and there is no one power within the whole compass of nature, no one expedient within reach of the situation which by nature they occupy, that can ward off the threatenings of this outraged law. Heaven and earth must pass away, ere

a single sanction of God's proclaimed law can fail of its accomplishment. And thus it is, that there are many, and very many, revered by their fellows while they live, and leaving a dear and a much loved remembrance behind them—who, remaining in the situation which by nature they occupied, remain in the number of those over whom the second death has full power; and they, even they, with all the passing admiration they get on this side of death, are fast hastening to a corruption more hideous than the grave, and to a misery still more hopeless than ever body of man in the full weight of its dying agonies was doomed to endure.

Now when we lay before you the danger and the helplessness of such a situation—when we tell you, that, forgetful of God as you are by nature, all the lustre of your other accomplishments will not keep Him, in His own language, from tearing you in pieces when there is none to deliver—when we assure you, that, if you continue what nature made you, you continue a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction—when we bid your conscience answer us the question, whether, upon a review of what that is which chiefly engrosses your heart and animates your conduct and forms the ruling object of your most urgent and habitual desires, whether or not you may be said to live without God in the world—when the answer of conscience is, that, in thought and in affection, you are almost constantly away from God; and, while all alive to the impression of other things, you in reference to Him are a most blind and senseless and alienated creature—Then, surely, if the Bible be something more than the mockery of an imposition, and it tell us that all the nations that forget God shall be turned into hell, we, when pressing this upon you, are just endeavouring to alarm you out of your present situation—We are bringing the argu-

ment of terror to bear upon you, an argument which we believe to be most effectual with some minds—for it is to its operation that the apostle Jude seems to refer. when he says “some save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.”

But there is another situation to which we are called upon to come over; and there is a free passage opened up to it; and when we move from the one situation to the other, we are relieved from the mighty burden of all that misery which originally weighed upon us. “There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus”—these are the words which give us the delightful assurance, that, while to all who are out of Christ the look of God is a look of severity; to all who are in Him it is a look of kindness—while from the one situation there is a fearful looking for of judgment; from the other there is a rejoicing hope of the glory of God—while in the one there is the helplessness of unaided nature, painfully striving after an obedience which it can never reach; in the other there is a supply of all that strength and spiritual nourishment, which are daily given to the daily prayers of believers—while in the one there is an obstinate forgetfulness of God, because He is shut out at every turn from the eye of the natural mind, still under the dominion of things seen and things temporal; there is in the other, a fond and a habitual recurrence of all our affections to Him. For by the renewing process which all who take the offer of the Gospel are made to undergo, the soul is made alive unto God. Love to Him becomes the aspiring principle of all its endeavours. Instead of that louring and suspicious distance at which we before stood from the God whom we had offended, we draw near with a confiding sense of our reconciliation; and our hearts know what it is to love Him who first loved us. Under the influence of these new principles, we are gradually formed after the image of Him who created us. We are made meet for that communion with Him, which sin had broken up. We are restored to a fitness for His society in heaven, and for all those holy exercises which form the pleasure and the employment of heaven’s inhabitants. And surely we have completed the contrast between the two situa-

tions, when, for the present darkness and sinfulness and gloomy apprehensions which hang over the one, we lay before you the progressive virtue and the triumphant prospects of the other. And, instead of your fear, we work upon another principle of your constitution, even your hope—when, in our attempts to cheer you forward to that ground which believers occupy, we lay before you their peace with God and progressive holiness here, and the splendours of their unfading immortality hereafter.

But this argument, though differing from the former, is not just the argument of our text. The goodness of the things to which you are invited is one thing. The good-will with which you are invited is another. It is the latter argument which we are at present called upon to address to you. What we offer to your notice is—not the happiness you will enjoy by the acceptance of the gospel call, but the kindness which prompts the call. There is no doubt a mighty effect upon some minds, in the displeasure of God manifested against all who refuse to obey the gospel of His Son; and knowing his terrors, it is our part to make use of them in the business of persuading men. But others again are more drawn by the cords of love; and the tender voice of a beseeching and inviting God, will sometimes soften that heart into acquiescence, which would have remained in shut and shielded obstinacy against all the severity of His threatenings. It is the desire of God after you—it is His compassionate longing to have back again to Himself, those sinful creatures who had wandered away from Him—it is His fatherly earnestness to recall His strayed children—it is this, which, by moving and subduing the will of man, exemplifies the assertion of the apostle when he says—know ye not that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. And thus while Jude says of some in his general epistle, “these save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;” he says of others—“on them have compassion, making a difference.”

In the farther prosecution of this discourse, we shall first say a few words on the principle of the gospel message—good-will—Secondly, on the object of the gospel message—men—it is a message

of good-will to men—And thirdly, on the application of the gospel message to the men who now hear us.

When we say that God is actuated by a principle of good-will to you, it sounds in your ears a very simple proposition—easily uttered by the speaker, and as easily apprehended by the hearer. Yes! it is easy enough to reach the mere understanding of the hearer by such an announcement. But it is a work of greater difficulty than many of you have perhaps thought of, to win his confidence in its truth—to shake him out of his suspicions—to open his heart to a sense of God's graciousness, and God's willingness to take every sinner into acceptance. There is a barrier in these evil hearts of unbelief, against the admission of a filial confidence in God. We see no mildness in the aspect of the Deity. Our guilty fears suggest the apprehension of a stern and vindictive character. There is a veil which hides from the eye of flesh this greatest of spiritual Beings; and to our fancy there lurk behind it the undefined images of wrath and terror and severe majesty. It is not in the power of argument to do away this impression. It does not lie within the compass of strenuous asseveration to dislodge it. The minister may put forth all his eloquence, and tell you in tones as gentle as ever dropt from the lips of persuasion, that God is love; and that his every aspiration after His lost and fallen children is tenderness. He may melt, and soothe, and for a time compose your hearts by his winning assurances of God's good-will to you; and you may weep and wonder at your injurious sentiments of so good a Father. He may put the assertion into your mouth, that God wishes me well—but secretly you have other feelings of Him. Your mind recurs to its rooted and habitual jealousy of God. There lies a darkling cloud of suspicion over your every impression of the Deity. The earnest assurances of the preacher may disperse it for a moment; but his voice ceases and it again gathers over you. You leave the church, and you carry away with you a heart as uncheered as ever by the light of God's countenance. You recur for another week to your familiar employments, and your path in life is as unblest as ever by a

sense of God's reconciled presence. There may be an occasional joy in these hearts of yours; but when we come to examine it, it is not joy in God. There may be all the repose of an undisturbed security in your minds; but it is not a security resting on a sentiment of conscious acceptance with God. It is joy in the creature. It is security in earthly things. It is the idolatry of a heart, delighting itself with that which drives all painful and fatiguing thoughts of God away from it. The gay or peaceful tenor of your lives, is no evidence of trust on your part in the good-will or in the graciousness of God. It only proves how seldom you think of Him. When you do think of Him, it is not with the delighted confidence of children. There is a jealousy of God, which haunts you and hangs over you; and, to escape from the painfulness of this, do you take up with other things, to which the heart recurs with a readier and more habitual fondness. Could we succeed in obtaining for the lesson of our text, the full persuasion of your minds, it would not be so. If you saw the good-will of God, in all that kindly and endearing character which belongs to it, you would find a treasure in which you would greatly delight yourself. He would become that secure and joyful habitation to which you would resort continually. The heart would be taken up with Him, as its strength and its portion. Other things might pass at times before the attention, and be as much loved as not to impair the supremacy of the love of God over all your affections. But He would ever remain the object of the ruling desire which filled and actuated your bosoms: And if we find that a desire after the creature, occupies that place within you which should be taken up by a desire after the Creator—then all the tranquillity of worldly men, and all the careless and animating gaiety which abounds among them, will not convince us that a peaceful confidence in the good-will of the divine Being, is the sentiment which they carry in their hearts. O no! it is not because they think God to be their friend, that they move along so securely and so pleasantly. It is because they do not think of Him at all. It is because they find a sufficiency in the things of sight and sense, which

are around them; and they forget the unseen Being who formed all and who supports all. They have their treasure and their enjoyment on earth; and, as to the God who made it, they hate Him, they distrust Him, they are afraid of Him.

Now though we are persuaded, that a real belief, existing in the minds of these people, of God's undoubted good-will towards them, would have the effect of charming them away from the deceitful enjoyments of the world, and making them rest their enjoyment in the possession and in the service of God—yet it is not them we have chiefly in our eye, when we press in your hearing, the argument of our text. They are people of another temperament, whom we are adverting to—people who brood in anxiety over their chance of a higher interest than any that this world can offer—people who are smitten and softened, under a sense of unworthiness—people who walk in darkness and have no light, who cannot win the length of cheerful confidence in God, who long after a sense of His good-will but cannot obtain it; and who, so far from never thinking of Him, are much employed in pondering His ways, and who think of Him often, but do it with trembling and with much heaviness. We know that they will not be made to see God, in that aspect of graciousness which belongs to Him, till the power of a special revelation be made to rest upon them—till God Himself who created light out of darkness shine in their hearts: But knowing also, that He makes use of the word as His instrument, it is our part to lay the assurances of that word, in all their truth and in all their tenderness before you. God swears by Himself, that He has no pleasure in your death. That He may prevail upon you to trust Him, He tries every expedient. He does all that tenderness can devise to remove your every suspicion; and to cheer you on to a confidence in His good-will. He pleads the matter with you. He beseeches you to accept of reconciliation at His hand. He offers it as a gift, and descends so far as to knock at the door of your hearts and to crave your acceptance of it. To do away the obstructions which lay in the road of access from a sinner to his offended God, He

set up the costly apparatus of redemption. As the remission of sins without the shedding of blood is impossible. He cleared the way between Him and a guilty world of this mighty barrier. Rather than lose you for ever, He sent His Son to pour out His soul unto death for you. And now that iniquity is put an end to—now that an everlasting righteousness is brought in—now that every attribute of His nature has been magnified by the great Sacrifice—now that the weight of that heavy burden, which restrained the expression of his good-will to the children of men, has been done away by Him who bore the chastisement of our peace—now that there is nothing to intercept the flow of friendship from God to man, does it come down free as the light of day and rich as the exuberance of heaven upon a despairing world.

II. We now proceed, in the second place, to the object of the gospel message—men—a message of good-will to men. We think that much is to be gathered, from the general and unrestricted way in which this object is stated. The announcement which was heard from the canopy of heaven, was not good-will to certain men to the exclusion of others. It is not an offer made to some, and kept back from the rest of the species. It is generally to man. The generality of the term tells us that no one individual needs to look upon himself, as shut out from the good-will of his Father in heaven. Let him be who he may, we cheer him on to confidence in God's good-will to him; and we do so purely and singly in virtue of his being a man. We see no exception in the text; and we make no exception from the pulpit. We find a general assurance in the word of God; and we cast it abroad among you, without reserve and without limitation. Where it is to light, and who the individual whose bosom it is to enter as the harbinger of peace we know not—but sure we are that it can never light wrong; and that wherever faith in God is formed, it is followed by the fulfilment of all His promises. We know well the scruples of the disconsolate; and with what success a perverse melancholy can devise and multiply its arguments for despair. But we will admit of none of

them. We look at our text, and find that it recognises no outcast. By one comprehensive sweep, it takes in the whole race of man; and empowers the messenger of God, to ply with the assurances of His good-will, all the individuals of all its families. We see that there is no straitening with God—that favour and forgiveness are ready to come down abundantly from Him upon every son and daughter of the species—that His mercy rejoices over all—and that in pouring it forth over the wide extent of a sinful creation, the unbelief of man is the only obstacle which it has to struggle with. Tell us not, in the obstinacy of your distrust, that you are such a sinner—all your sins, many and aggravated as they are, are the sins of a man. Tell us not of the malignity of your disease—it is the disease of a man. Tell us not of your being so grievous an offender that you are the very chief of them. Still you are a man. Christ knew what was in man; and He knew all the varieties of case and of character which belong to Him. And still there must be something in His gospel to meet all and to make up for all—for He impairs not by one single exception, the universality of the gospel message, which is good-will to man. We again lift in your hearing the widely sounding call. Look unto Him all ye ends of the earth and be saved. If the call be not listened to, it is not for want of kindness and freeness and honesty in the call—it is for want of confidence in the called. There is no straitening with God. It is all with yourselves. It lies in the cold and dark and narrow suspicions which stifle and fill up your own bosoms. The offer of God's good-will is through Christ Jesus, unto all and upon all them that believe. We want to lodge this offer in your hearts, and you will not let us. We want to woo you into confidence, but you remain sullen and inflexible. We want to whisper peace to your souls; but you refuse the voice of the charmer, let him charm ever so wisely. We stand here as the ambassador of a beseeching God, and we are charged with His freest and kindest invitations to one and to all of you. We do not exceed our commission by a single inch, when we tell of God's good-will to you, and that nothing is wanting

but your good-will towards God, that you may obtain peace and reconciliation and joy. All who will may come and drink of the waters of life freely. God fastens a mark of exclusion upon none of you. He bids us preach the gospel to every creature; and every creature who believes will be saved. He has no pleasure in any of your deaths. Believe and ye shall be saved. Draw near unto God and He will draw near unto you. Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? We speak in the very language of God, though we fall infinitely short of such a tone and of such a tenderness as He has over you. If you think otherwise of God, you do Him an injustice. You look at Him with the jaundiced eye of unbelief. You array Him in a darker shroud than belongs to Him. You mantle one of the attributes of the Divinity, from the view of your own mind. You withdraw your faith from His own declaration of His own name, as the Lord God merciful and gracious. Instead of yielding the homage of your confidence and your affection to the true God, you superstitiously tremble before a god of your own fancy. You put all the earnest and repeated assurances of God's actual revelation away from you; and nourish in your hearts such a cold and distant and timid apprehension of the Deity, as, if persisted in, will land you in an inheritance among the unbelieving and the fearful.

And here the question occurs to us—how does the declaration of God's good-will in the text, consist with the entire and everlasting destruction of so many of the species? In point of fact, all men are not saved. We speak not of those who never heard of Jesus—for instead of spending our strength in attempts to dissipate the obscurity which hangs over the hidden counsels of God, we want every thing we say to bear on the great object of a home and a practical application. But of those who have heard of the name of Jesus—how few alas find the way to life—how many are carried along the broad way that leadeth to destruction. How does the good-will of the text obtain accomplishment upon them; and in what way are they the objects of good-will, who eventually shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence

of the Lord and from the glory of His power? Understand then that the good-will of the text, consists, not in the actual bestowment of eternal life upon all in the next world; but in holding out, in this world, the gift of eternal life to the free and welcome acceptance of all. We hold out a gift to two people, which one of them may take and the other may refuse. The good-will in me which prompted the offer, was the same in reference to both. God in this sense willeth that all men shall be saved. We are doing His will, when we lay the gift of eternal life before each and all of you. Some may refuse to know God, and to obey the gospel of His Son; but this does not impair the frankness and the freeness and the cordiality with which the gift is shown to all, and all are invited to take hold of it. Nay, the good-will of God to those who have rejected the salvation of the gospel, may look more conspicuous in the day of judgment, than His good-will to those who have received it. It might not be so, had He only issued one call—had He plied them with one invitation, and never repeated it. But He has done more than made one invitation. He has made it again and again. It has been repeated in a thousand forms. From the first moment that you understood your Bibles, you had the invitation. Every time you see the Bible, you may again have the invitation. Every time you read, "If any man is athirst let him come unto me and drink," you get another invitation. Every time you hear the minister faithfully expounding the oracles of God there is still another invitation: And will you deny the good-will of God to you at this moment—that He has brought you in life and listening around us—and to-day if ye will hear His voice you have another invitation. None of you have reason to complain of God. He is at this moment wiping His hands of you; and on the great theatre of judgment it will be made to appear, that there is no backwardness and no straitening on His part. The offer is not to this one man among you and to that other, to the exclusion of all the rest. It is to man in general; and if the word of salvation have reached you, the offer of salvation is made to you. To accept of that offer is to discern its reality

—it is to put faith in the honesty and good-will with which it is laid before you—it is to trust in the promise which is unto all and upon all who believe. In stating these matters we shall be as general in our address to the assembled multitude, as the apostle Peter was before us. He said repent every one of you—we say believe every one of you; and according to your faith so will it be done unto you. Be assured every one of you, that God has good-will towards each and towards all. There is no limitation with Him; and be not you limited by your own narrow and fearful and superstitious conceptions of Him.

III. But this leads us in the last place, to press home the lesson of the text, on you who are now sitting and listening around us. God, in the act of ushering the gospel into the world, declares good-will to man. He declares it therefore to you. You are not excluded from this general declaration. To you the word of salvation has come, for we are now addressing it to you—and we call you to give way to the impressive condition, of a God beseeching you to be reconciled—a God who intends your benefit—a God who professes Himself to be actuated by good-will to one and to all of you. You have read in a book of voyages, of the many expedients which are tried to gain the confidence of the natives in a before undiscovered country; and how mortifying it is, when every demonstration of good-will is misunderstood or resisted. They had never seen such a ship—they had never beheld such a people—and, kept back by terror, every attempt to woo their approach is in vain exhausted upon them. Would they only stand to receive our gifts, or to hear our assurances of kindness, we might soon ingratiate ourselves into their confidence. But no! they run to their woods, or to their lurking holes; and it is not till after many signs of invitation have been rejected—after many attempts to gain their confidence have proved ineffectual—after many expedients for bringing round a friendly intercourse with the natives have turned out to be fruitless and unavailing—It is not till after many repeated experiments of this kind, that the inhabitants begin at length to receive

their favours—to put faith in the professions of the strangers—and to rejoice in the assurance of their benevolence and good-will. Now, the rest of the world is not more strange to an undiscovered island, than Paradise and the beings who inhabit it are strange to the men of this sinful and banished world. The great errand from heaven to earth, of which the records have come down to us, was, not to destroy men's lives but to save them. It was altogether, if we may be allowed the expression, a voyage of benevolence—but this did not hinder the very first appearance of the heavenly visitors, from exciting the fears of weak and guilty and alienated man. When the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds, they were sore afraid—but they could not fly from his presence, and this gave him an advantage. He could talk to them. He could cheer them into confidence. He could force them to hear him, when he said—"fear not for I bring you glad tidings of great joy." He could act as a messenger of kindness, to prepare them for the more numerous host of visitors who were to follow—nor do we read of their being at all startled or dismayed, when this host joined the angel, and the whole multitude of them praised God, and said, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good-will to men. Their confidence was now gained. They gave up those fears and apprehensions which stood in the way of their faith; and we afterwards read of their glorifying and praising God, for all the things that they had heard and seen.

Now, you are liable to the same fears with these shepherds. You are guilty; and to you belong all the weakness, and all the timidity of guilt. The idea of God is apt to send terror into your hearts; and though we come over you, and over you again, with the assurance of God being gracious, of God being willing to take you all back again unto Himself, of God pressing your return with every offer of friendship and every feeling of tenderness—these fears are apt to stick to you—you cannot summon up confidence; and, in spite of the most solemn and earnest and repeated assurances of your Bible and your minister, you still keep away from God. Now tell us are these misgivings at all reason-

able? Do they not carry in them a most injurious reflection against God? Do they not evince a higher respect for your own fears and your own fancies of Him, than for the account of His own messengers, who came upon His errand, and left the presence of His glory, and appeared in the air to the shepherds at Bethlehem? Whatever be the dark and mysterious colouring of that imaginary veil, which hides the Deity from your observation—be assured that good-will is the real feeling which belongs to Him. Surely this is as kind a term as you can possibly wish. It carries every expression of endearment and cordiality along with it; and, try what we may, we could not devise another, more fitted to chase away your every fear, and to gain your whole confidence, and to cheer you amid all the vicissitudes of your life and all the terrors of your fancy. And, when like to lose the comfort of faith, we know no one expression, which, when summoned up to the memory, and dwelt upon with perseverance, and determinedly held by amid all the darkness and discomforts which meet the heart in the multitude of its thoughts, is more fitted than the single expression of good-will to restore light to my soul and make me say why art thou disquieted within me?

By bringing your minds to the delightful confidence, which a belief in the truth of all this is fitted to inspire, you are exceeding that very high faith with which God is well pleased. You cease from affronting Him by your suspicions. You do honour to His testimony. You set to your seal that God is true. He no longer grieves for the hardness of your hearts, when they give up their resistance to the impressive consideration of His good-will to you; and to the affecting proofs of His good-will, in His Son suffering for you, His Son dying for you, His Son bearing for your sakes a load of mysterious agony, and pouring out the blood of atonement to wash you from the guilt and the pollution of all your iniquities. We have experienced long enough the utter powerlessness of all human argument, to think that what we have said will open a way to your hearts, unless the Spirit interpose, and give His efficacy to the testimony of Christ's sufferings and death. He can

melt you. He can compel you to listen and to believe. He can make you feel the burden of those hateful sins by which you are encompassed. He can point your eye to the Saviour, that best pledge and evidence of God's good-will to you; and make you exclaim with joyful confidence, I have been in quest of a remedy, and here at length have I found it. Cherish no doubt as to its efficacy. Have your eye opened to the freeness of the offer, and to the value of the thing offered. If the power of God's grace go

along with the utterance of our direction—then He is doing by an instrument, what He is able to do without one—He is working faith in you with power—He is lifting that veil, which keeps out the entrance of the glorious gospel, from the minds of those who are blinded by the god of this world—He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is shining in your heart; to give you the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXXI.

On the Respect Due to Antiquity.

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”—JEREMIAH VI. 16.

It has been well said by Lord Bacon, that the antiquity of past ages is the youth of the world—and therefore it is an inversion of the right order, to look for greater wisdom in some former generation than there should be in our present day. “The time in which we now live,” says this great philosopher, “is properly the ancient time, because now the world is ancient; and not that time which we call ancient, when we look in a retrograde direction, and by a computation backward from ourselves.” There must be a delusion, then, in that homage which is given to the wisdom of antiquity, as if it bore the same superiority over the wisdom of the present times, which the wisdom of an old does over that of a young man. When we speak of the wisdom of any age, we mean the wisdom which at that period belongs to the collective mind of the species. But it is an older species at present than it was in those days, called by us, the days of antiquity. It is now both more venerable in years, and carries a greater weight of experience. It was a child before the flood; and if it have not yet become a man, it is nearer to manhood now than it was then. Therefore, when reviewing the notions and the usages of our forefathers we, instead of casting off the instructions of a greater wis-

dom than our own, may, in fact, be putting away from us childish things. It is in vain to talk of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle. Only grant that there may still be as many good individual specimens of humanity as before; and a Socrates now, with all the additional lights which have sprung up in the course of intervening centuries to shine upon his understanding, would be a greatly wiser man than the Socrates of a thousand years ago. It is therefore well, in the great master of the New Philosophy, to have asserted the prerogative, and in fact the priority, of our present age; that to it belongs a more patriarchal glory than to all the ages of all the patriarchs; that our generation is a more hoary-headed chronicler, and is more richly laden with the truths and the treasures of wisdom, than any generation which has gone before it—the olden time, wherewith we blindly associate so much of reverence, being indeed the season of the world's youth, and the world's inexperience; and this our modern day being the true antiquity of the world.

But, however important thus to reduce the deference that is paid to antiquity; and with whatever grace and propriety it has been done by him who stands at the head of the greatest revolution in Philosophy—we shall incur the danger of run-

ning into most licentious waywardness, if we receive not the principle, to which I have now adverted, with two modifications.

You will better conceive what these modifications are, by just figuring to yourself two distinct books, whence knowledge or wisdom may be drawn—one the book of the world's experience, the other, the book of God's revelation; the one, therefore, becoming richer, and more replete with instruction every day, by the perpetual additions which are making to it; the other, being that book from which no man can take away, neither can any man add thereunto.

Our first modification, then, is, that though, in regard to all experimental truth, the world should be wiser now than it was centuries ago, this is the fruit not of our contempt or our heedlessness in regard to former ages, but the fruit of our most respectful attention to the lessons which their history affords. In other words, as we are only wiser because of the now larger book of experience which is in our hands, we are not so to scorn antiquity, as to cast that book away from us; but we are to learn from antiquity, by giving the book our most assiduous perusal, while, at the same time, we sit in the exercise of our own free and independent judgment over the contents of it. Although we listen not to antiquity, as if she sent forth the voice of an oracle, yet we should look with most observant eye to all that antiquity sets before us. She is not to be the absolute mistress of our judgment, but still she presents the best materials on which the judgment of man can possibly be exercised. The only reason, truly, why the present age should be wiser than the past, is, that it stands on that higher vantage ground which its progenitor had raised for it. But we should never have reached the vantage ground, if, utterly heedless of all that has gone before, we had spurned the informations and the science of previous generations away from us. The man of three-score should not be the wiser of his age, did a blight come over his memory, to obliterate all the experience and all the acquisitions of his former years. The very remembrance of his follies makes him wiser—and thus it is, that every succeeding race gathers a new store of instruction, not from the dis-

coveries alone, but also from the devious absurdities and errors of all the races that had preceded it. The truth is, that an experiment may be as instructive by its failure as by its success—in the one case serving as a beacon, and in the other as a guide; and so from the very errors and misgivings of former days might we gather, by the study of them, the most solid and important accessions to our wisdom. We do right in not submitting to the dictation of antiquity; but that is no cause why we should refuse to be informed by her—for this were throwing us back again to the world's infancy, like the second childhood of him whom disease had bereft of all his recollections. Still we reserve the independence of our own judgment, while we take this retrospective survey, and ask for the old paths, and so compare them together as to separate the right from the wrong, and fix at length on the good way. And so, again, in the language of Bacon, "Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken then to make progression."

On pondering well the view that has been now given, you will come to perceive how there is in truth a perfect harmony between the utmost independence on the dictates of antiquity on the one hand, and on the other the most deferential regard to all its informations.

But there is a second modification, which, in the case of a single individual of the species, it is easy to understand, and which we shall presently apply to the whole species. There is a wisdom distinct from knowledge; and one rich in the acquisitions of the latter, may practically be driven from the way of the former, by the headlong impulse of his vicious and wrong affections. Now, a book of wisdom may be taught in very early childhood. It may, it is true, be the product of the accumulated experience of all ages; but it also may, as being a book of moral instructions, and so dictated by the inspiration of a higher faculty than that of mere observation—it may, instead of having been produced by a slow experience, have been produced by the enlightened conscience of its author, although afterwards all ex-

perience would attest the way of its precepts to be a way of interest and of safety, as well as a way of excellence. The lessons of such a book may be urged upon man, and with all a parent's tenderness, from the outset of his education. He may have been trained by it to observe all the infant proprieties, and to lisp the infant's prayer. It may have been the guide and the companion of his boyhood; and not, perhaps, till in the wild misrule of youthful profligacies and passions, did he shut his eyes to the pure religious light wherewith it had shone upon his ways. We may conceive of such a man, that, after many years of vicious indulgence, of growing and at length confirmed hardihood, of gradually decaying and now almost extinct sensibility,—we may conceive of this hackneyed veteran in the world and all its evil ways, that he is at once visited by the lights of conscience and memory; and that thus he is enabled to contrast the dislike, and the dissatisfaction, and the dreariness of heart, which now prey on the decline of his earthly existence, with all the comparative innocence which gladdened its hopeful and its happy morning. The wisdom of *his* manhood did not grow with his experience; for now that he looks back upon it, he finds it but a mortifying retrospect of wretchedness and folly; and the only way in which this experience can be of use to him now is that it may serve as a foil by which to raise in his eyes the lustre and the loveliness of virtue. And as he bethinks him of his first, his early home, of the Sabbath piety which flourished there, and that holy atmosphere in which he was taught to breathe with kindred aspirations, he cannot picture to himself the bliss and the beauty of such a scene, mellowed as it is by the distance, perhaps, of half a century, and mingled with the dearest recollections of parents, and sisters, and other kindred now mouldering in the dust, he cannot recall for a moment this fond, though faded imagery, without sighing in the bitterness of his heart, after the good old way.

Now, what applies to one individual, may apply to the species. As the world grows older, it may, by some sweeping obliteration of all its ancient documents, lapse again into second

infancy; or even though it should retain all its experimental truth, and grow every day richer therein, yet it is conceivable that, from various causes it may come to shut its eyes against that moral or that revealed truth, which both are the offspring of a higher source than mere human experience. The one, or moral truth, may be taught in all its perfection to man when an infant; and the other, or revealed truth, may have been delivered to the world when it was young. Neither can be added to by the faculty of observation; and, unlike to the lessons of philosophy, the lessons of morality and revelation do not accumulate by the succession of ages. And just as the individual man might deviate, in the progress of years, from the pure and perfect virtues that were inculcated upon his childhood, so the collective species might stray, in the progress of centuries, from that unsullied light which had been held forth to them by the lamp of revelation. In a prolonged course of waywardness, they may have wandered very far from the truth of heaven. They may have renounced all that docility and that duteous subordination which characterize the disciples of a former age. Like as the tyranny of youthful passions might overbear the authority of those instructions which had been given by an earthly parent, so the tyranny of prejudice might overbear the authority of the lessons and the laws which had been given to the world by our heavenly Father. And like as the great spiritual adversary of the human race might, by the corrupt ascendancy which he wields over the hearts of men, seduce them from the piety of their early days—so, by means of a priesthood upon earth, standing forth to their prostrate and superstitious worshippers, and exercising over them all the power of Satan transformed into an angel of light, might he delude whole successive generations from the pure and primitive religion of their forefathers. And after, perhaps, a whole dreary millennium of guilt and of darkness, may some gifted individual arise, who can look athwart the gloom, and descry the purer and the better age of Scripture light which lies beyond it. And as he compares all the errors and the mazes of that vast labyrinth into

which so many generations had been led by the jugglery of deceivers, with that simple but shining path which conducts the believer unto glory, let us wonder not that the aspiration of his pious and patriotic heart should be for the good old way.

We now see wherein it is that the modern might excel the ancient. In regard to experimental truth, he can be as much wiser than his predecessors, as the veteran and the observant sage is wiser than the unpractised stripling, to whom the world is new, and who has yet all to learn of its wonders and of its ways. The voice that is now emitted from the schools, whether of physical or political science, is the voice of the world's antiquity. The voice emitted from the same schools, in former ages, was the voice of the world's childhood, which then gave forth in lisping utterance the conceits and the crudities of its young unchastened speculation. But in regard to things not experimental, in regard even to taste, or to imagination, or to moral principle, as well as to the stable and unchanging lessons of divine truth, there is no such advancement. For the perfecting of these we have not to wait the slow processes of observation and discovery, handed down from one generation to another. They address themselves more immediately to the spirit's eye; and just as in the solar light of day, our forefathers saw the whole of visible creation as perfectly as we—so in the lights, whether of fancy or of conscience, or of faith, they may have had as just and vivid a perception of Nature's beauties; or they may have had as ready a discrimination, and as religious a sense of all the proprieties of life; or they may have had a veneration as solemn, and an acquaintance as profound, with the mysteries of revelation, as the men of our modern and enlightened day. And, accordingly, we have as sweet or sublime an eloquence, and as transcendent a poetry, and as much both of the exquisite and noble in all the fine arts, and a morality as delicate and dignified, and to crown the whole, as exalted and as informed a piety in the remoter periods of the world as among ourselves, to whom the latter ends of the world have come. In respect to these, we are not on higher

vantage ground than many of the generations that have gone by. But neither are we on lower vantage ground. We have access to the same objects. We are in possession of the same faculties. And, if between the age in which we live, and some bright and by-gone era, there should have intervened the deep and the long-protracted haze of many centuries, whether of barbarism in taste, or of profligacy in morals, or of superstition in Christianity, it will only heighten, by comparison, to our eyes, the glories of all that is excellent; and if again awakened to light and to liberty, it will only endear the more to our hearts the good old way.

We now proceed to the application of these preliminary remarks. We do not think that we presume too much, when we address ourselves to the majority of those who are here present, as if they were the friends and adherents of the Church of Scotland; and we shall endeavour, on the principles which we have just attempted to expound, first to appreciate the titles of the founders of that church to the respect and the confidence of its disciples—and, secondly, to consider how this respect should be qualified, so as not to degenerate into idolatry.

You will now perceive, how, in regard to all experimental truth, the moderns, furnished as they are with a larger and more luminous book of experience, should, in the language of the Psalmist, "understand more than the ancients,—and, secondly, how in regard to all theological truth, furnished as they are, with the same unaltered and unalterable book of revelation, they should at least understand as much as the ancients. Some would on this ground too, contend for the superiority of our modern day, because of the successive labours of that criticism wherewith the Sacred Volume is not amended or added to, but wherewith the obscurities which are upon the face of it, may be gradually cleared away. We do not lay great stress on this observation, for, without depreciating the worth of Scriptural criticism, we cannot admit that all the additional light which is evolved by it, bears more than a very small fractional value to the breadth

and the glory of that effulgence which shines from our English Bible, on the mind of an ordinary peasant. On either supposition, however, the most enlightened of our moderns, is, in regard to the one book, on fully equal, and in regard to the other, on a far higher vantage ground than the most enlightened of our ancients; and while it is our part to be as profoundly submissive as they, to all that has been said, and to all that has been done, by the God who is above us, here we sit in the entire right of our own independent judgment on all that has been said, and on all that has been done, by the men who have gone before us.

The great service then for which the Scottish and other reformers, in their respective countries, deserve the gratitude of posterity, is not that they shone upon us with any original light of their own, but simply that they cleared away a most grievous obstruction which had stood for ages, and intercepted from the eyes of mankind the light of the book of revelation. This they did, by asserting, in behalf of God, the paramount authority of his Scripture over the belief and the consciences of men; and asserting in behalf of man, his right of private judgment on the doctrine and the information which are contained in the oracles of God. This right of private judgment, you will observe, is a right maintained not against the authority of God, but against the authority of men, who have either added to the oracles of God, or who have assumed to themselves the office of being the infallible and ultimate interpreters of his word. It was against this that our reformers went forth and prevailed. Theirs was a noble struggle for the spiritual liberties of the human race, against the papacy of Rome, and nobly did they acquit themselves of this holy warfare. At first it was a fearful conflict; when, on the one side, there was the whole strength of the secular arm, and, on the other, a few obscure but devoted men, whose only weapons were truth and prayer, and suffering constancy. And it is a cheering thought, and full of promise both for the moral and political destinies of our world, that, after all, the great and the governing force which men ultimately obey, is that of Opinion—that the cause of truth and righteous-

ness, cradled by the rough hand of persecutors, and nurtured to maturity amid the terrors of fierce and fiery intolerance, is sure at length to overbear its adversaries—that contempt, and cruelty, and the decrees of arbitrary power, and the fires, of bloody martyrdom, are but its stepping stones to triumph—that in the heat and the hardihood of this sore discipline, it grows like the indestructible seed, and at last forces its resistless way to a superiority and a strength, before which the haughtiest potentates of our world are made to tremble. The reformation by Luther is far the proudest example of this in history—who, with nought but a sense of duty and the energies of his own undaunted heart to sustain him, went forth single-handed against the hosts of a most obdurate corruption that filled all Europe, and had weathered the lapse of many centuries—who, by the might of his own uplifted arm, shook the authority of that high pontificate which had held the kings and the great ones of the earth in thralldom—who, with no other weapons than those of argument and Scripture, brought down from its peering altitude, that old spiritual tyranny, whose head reached unto heaven, and which had the entrenchments of deepest and strongest prejudice thrown around its base. When we can trace a result so magnificent as this to the workings of one solitary spirit—when the breast of Luther was capable of holding the germ or the embryo of the greatest revolution which the world ever saw—when we observe how many kindred spirits caught from his the fire of that noble inspiration by which it was actuated, and how powerfully the voice which he lifted up in the midst of Germany, was re-echoed to from the distant extremities of Europe by other voices,—O! let us not despair of truth's omnipotence, and of her triumph; but rest assured that, let despots combine to crush that moral energy which they shall never conquer, or to put out that flame which they shall find to be inextinguishable, there is now a glorious awakening abroad upon the world, and, in despite of all their policy, the days of its perfect light and its perfect liberty are coming.

Our own Knox was one in the likeness of Luther; and, perhaps, by nature of a firmer and hardier temperament

than he. For it must be observed of the German reformer, that there were about him a certain softness and love of tranquillity, which inclined him more to the shade of a studious retirement, than to the high places of society. The truth is, that most gladly would he have hid himself in some academic bower from the strifes and the storms of the open world; and sore was the struggle in his bosom ere he did adventure himself into the scenes of controversy from which he afterwards came off so victorious. It was fortunate for mankind, that though his love of peace was strong, his sense of duty was yet stronger, and that with a force which he felt to be imperious, it bore him through the heats and the hazards of his great warfare. Still it was at the expense of a most painful conflict with the tender and the tremulous sensibilities of his nature; for really, the man's native element was contemplation; and then did he find himself at his most appropriate exercise, when by the weapons, whether of a spiritual or literary championship, he fought, as he did, most manfully, the battles of the faith. Our countryman was altogether of sterner mood; and with a certain rigidity of fibre which the other had not, could better sustain himself in the fray, and the onset, and the close encounter of more immediate assailants. It has been said of him, in virtue of his impregnable nervous system, that he never feared the face of clay, and thus was he admirably fitted for the conduct of a high enterprise, amid the terrors of scowling royalty, and among the turbulent nobles of our land. Each had a part to sustain; and each was singularly qualified by Providence for the performance of it,—the one, from his closet to spread the light of the principles of reformation over the face of Christendom—the other, in the boisterous politics of a court, or by the energy of his living voice from the pulpit, to do the executive work of reformation in one of the provinces of Christendom. It is obvious that Luther's was the superior station of the two; and that to him Knox was subordinate. And it is well in this bustling age, when there is so much of demand from the public functionaries of our Church for the labour of mere handiwork, and so little for that of literary

preparation—it is well to notice, in the present instance, that while the practical talent of Knox carried him to such high ascendancy over the affairs of men, the pure and the powerful intellect of Luther won for him a higher ascendancy still—that through the medium of the press, and by virtue of scholarship alone, he bore with greater weight than did all his coadjutors on the living history of the world—and that, after all, it was from the cell of studious contemplation, from the silent depository of a musing and meditative spirit, there came forth the strongest and the most widely felt impulse on the mechanism of human society.

This then is the first great service which our Reformers achieved for mankind, even freedom of access to the Scriptures of truth, and the right of private judgment, explained as we have already done over the contents of it. The second, which springs immediately from the first, but which deserves a separate consideration, is a theology not created by them, but a theology evolved by them and most eminently subservient both to the peace and the holiness of individuals, and to the general virtues of the world.

In Milner's Church History (a book that I would commend to the perusal of every devout and desirous Christian) we have a deeply interesting narrative of those mental processes through which Luther did at length find rest to his soul. There was nought whatever in all the penances of that laborious superstition wherein he had been educated, that could bring peace to his conscience, deeply stricken as it was by a sense of guilt, and of the holiness and awful majesty of that Being against whom he had offended. The Spirit of God seems, in the first instance, to have convinced him, and that most pungently and most profoundly, of the malignity of sin; and then it was that he felt how, in the whole round of the observances and absolutions of the Church of Rome he could meet with no adequate Saviour. Meanwhile the law pursued him with its exactions and its terrors, and long and weary was the period of his spirit's agitations ere he arrived at that hiding-place in which alone he could confidently feel that he was safe. He experienced, in regard to all the ceremonies of that corrupt ritual in which he had been

trained, what the apostle affirms in regard to the not impure, but still imperfect ritual of Moses. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." And thus, after the payment of all the debts and of all the drudgeries which his church had ordained for transgression, he felt that his sins were not taken away. He performed them, but he was not purged by them; and so a sense of his unexpiated guilt still adhered to him, like an arrow sticking fast. It was then that he was led to ask for the old paths that he might find out the good way, and walk therein. And it was not till the light of Scripture, beaming with its own direct radiance, and powerfully reflected from the pages of Augustine, shone upon his inquiry—not till he came within view of that great sacrifice which was made once for the sins of the world—not till the imaginary merit of human actions was all swept away, and there was substituted in its place the everlasting righteousness which Christ hath brought in—not till he saw the free and welcome recourse which one and all have upon this righteousness by faith; and how instead of springing from the toilsome but polluted obedience of man upon earth, it comes graciously down in a descending ministration from heaven, upon those who believe,—Not till then, could he behold the reparation that was commensurate with the demand and the dignity of God's violated law. Now was he made, and for the first time, to understand, that under the canopy of the appointed mediatorship, he might continue to hear the thunders of the law, yet feel that they rolled innocuous over him: and this, my brethren, was the place both of enlargement and of quietness, where he found rest unto his soul.

It is this doctrine of imputed righteousness that gives to the gospel message the character of a joyful sound, the going forth of which among all nations shall at length both reconcile and regenerate the world. That were indeed a gladsome land where this truth was preached with acceptance and with power from all the pulpits. It is, in fact, the great bond of re-union between earth and heaven. It is like a cord of love let down from the upper sanctuary among the sinful men who are below; and with every sinner

who takes hold, it proves the conductor along which the virtues of heaven, as well as the peace of heaven, descend upon him. This doctrine of grace is altogether a doctrine according to godliness, and as much fitted to emancipate the heart from the tyranny of sin as from the terrors of that vengeance which is due to it. O, it is an idle fear, lest the preaching of the cross should spread the licentiousness of a proclaimed impunity among the people. All experience assures the opposite; and that in parishes which are almost all plied with the free offers of forgiveness through the blood of a satisfying atonement, there we have the best and the holiest families.

But it may be suspected, that although such a theology is the minister of peace, it cannot be the minister of holiness. Now, to those who have this suspicion, and who would represent the doctrine of justification by faith—that article as Luther calls it, of a standing or falling church—as adverse to the interests of virtue, I would put one question, and ask them to resolve it. How comes it that Scotland, which, of all the countries in Europe, is the most signalized by the rigid Calvinism of her pulpits, should also be the most signalized by the moral glory that sits on the aspect of her general population? How, in the name of mystery, should it happen that such a theology as ours is conjoined with perhaps the yet most unvitiated peasantry among the nations of Christendom? The allegation against our Churches is, that in the argumentation of our abstract and speculative controversies, the people are so little schooled to the performance of good works. And how then is it, that in our courts of justice, when compared with the calendars of our sister kingdom, there should be so vastly less to do with their evil works? It is certainly a most important experience, that in that country where there is the most of Calvinism, there should be the least of crime,—that what may be called the most doctrinal nation of Europe, should, at the same time, be the least depraved—and the land wherein people are most deeply imbued with the principles of salvation by grace, should be the least dis-tempered either by their weekday proficiencies, or their Sabbath profanations.

When Knox came over from the school of Geneva, he brought its strict, and, at that time, uncorrupted orthodoxy, along with him; and with it he pervaded all the formularies of that church which was founded by him; and not only did it flame abroad from all our pulpits, but, through our schools and our catechisms, it was brought down to the boyhood of our land; and from one generation to another, have our Scottish youth been familiarized to the sound of it from their very infancy; and unpromising as such a system of tuition might be in the eye of the mere academic moralist to the object of building up a virtuous and well-doing peasantry, certain it is, that, as the wholesale result, there has palpably come forth of it the most moral peasantry in Europe notwithstanding. We know of great and grievous declensions, partly owing to the extension of our crowded cities being most inadequately followed up by such a multiplication of churches and parishes as might give fair scope to the energies of our ecclesiastical system; and principally, we fear to a declension from that very theology which has been denounced as the enemy of practical righteousness. But on this last topic we forbear to detain you; for vastly rather than expatiate on the degeneracies of what may be termed the middle age of the Church of Scotland, we incline to rejoice in the symptoms of its bright and blessed revival; and would therefore only say, that should, in mockery of these anticipations, the people of our land fall wholly away from the integrity of their forefathers—should there come a great and general deterioration in the worth of our common people, it will only be because preceded by a great and general deterioration in the zeal, and the doctrines, and the services of our clergymen. And if ever the families of our beloved land shall have apostatised from the virtues of the olden time, it will lie at the door of pastors who have been unfaithful to their trust, and of pastors who have apostatised from the good old divinity of other days.

But in this enumeration of Knox's services to Scotland, we must now pass on from the theology of this great reformer, to what may be called certain arrangements of ecclesiastical polity, which,

through his means have been instituted in our land. And this is the subject, we think, upon which the schemes and the settlements of a comparatively younger age lie most open to the animadversions of a now older world; for, while a perfect theology may be drawn at once from the now finished book of revelation, it is not a perfect ecclesiastical polity, but only one that admits of successive improvements, which can be drawn from the yet unfinished, but constantly progressive book of experience. On this ground, therefore, we shall consent to be enlightened by the venerable founder of our church, but we shall not consent to be enthralled by him; and, in fearlessly commenting both upon his excellencies and his errors, we feel ourselves to be only breathing in that element of liberty wherewith himself did impregnate the atmosphere of our now emancipated land—to be only following that noble example of independence which himself has bequeathed to us.

But in this part of our exposition, we must be very far shorter than the magnitude of the theme would require; for it is the misfortune of almost every occasional sermon, that the topics wherewith it stands associated, are far too unwieldy for one address—else we should have ventured to apply our introductory principles on the subject of ancient authorities and ancient times, more closely than we can now afford to the question, of that precise deference which is due to our illustrious Reformer. We should have especially urged it upon you, that neither he nor any other of the venerable Founders of our establishment, shone upon us in their own radiance, but only by a light reflected upon us from the pure and primary radiance of Scripture—and that, in fact, the great service which they rendered to posterity, lay in the removal of those obstructions which stood between the truths of revelation, and the private independent judgment of men. It is in virtue of their exertions, that each may now look to the Bible with his own eyes, and not with the eyes of another; and we only use the privilege which they have won for us, when we try even ourselves, either by that book of revelation, which shines as brightly upon us as upon them, or by that book of experience

to which every century is adding so many leaves, and which at present shines more brightly than ever on the men of our now older world. The man of the day that now is, if thoroughly and intelligently read in that book, is as much wiser than the man of a distant antiquity, as the hoary-headed sage is wiser than a stripling. And in utter reversal of the prevailing tendency to idolize the men of other days, as if they were the patriarchs of our species, we affirm, that the Luthers, and the Knoxes, and the Calvins, and the Zuingliuses of old, are but as the youths of this world's history; and if there be any individuals now gifted with as great a degree of mental vigour and sagacity, they with a larger book of experience before them, are, in truth, its bearded and its venerable patriarchs.

We shall now, however, confine ourselves to a very few sentences about three distinct matters of ecclesiastical polity—and that chiefly as specimens of the way in which a man of great authority and reputation may be deferred to when we think that he is in the right; and be questioned, when we doubt that he is in the wrong.

Our first, then, is a topic of the most cordial and unmixed eulogy. Knox was the chief compiler of the First Book of Discipline, and to him we owe our present system of parochial education. By that scheme of ecclesiastical polity, a school was required for every parish; and, had all its views been followed up, a college would have been erected in every notable town. On this inestimable service done to Scotland we surely do not need to expatiate. The very mention of it lights up an instant and enthusiastic approval in every bosom. And with all the veneration that is due on other grounds to our Reformer, we hold it among the proudest glories of his name, that it stands associated with an institution, which has spread abroad the light of a most beautiful moral decoration throughout all the hamlets of our land, and is dear to every Scottish heart as are the piety and the worth of its peasant families.

In the second topic, to which we shall advert, he was not so successful, but it argues not the less for his sagacity and his patriotism. We mean that contest, in which he failed, for the entire appro-

priation of the patrimony of the church to public objects, rather than that it should be seized upon by the rapacity of private individuals. On this matter I crave the reading of a short extract from the admirable biography of Knox by Dr. M' Crie—a work that should be enshrined in every public, and which is not sought after as it deserves, if it have not also a place in every private library of Scotland.

“Another source of distress to the Reformer, at this time, was a scheme which the courtiers had formed for altering the policy of the church, and securing to themselves the principal part of the ecclesiastical revenues. This plan seems to have been concerted under the regency of Lennox; it began to be put into execution during that of Mar, and was afterwards completed by Morton. We have already had an occasion to notice the aversion of many of the nobility to the Book of Discipline, and the principal source from which this aversion sprung. While the Earl of Murray administered the government, he prevented any new encroachments upon the rights of the church; but the succeeding regents were either less friendly to them, or less able to bridle the avarice of the more powerful nobles. Several of the richest benefices becoming vacant by the decease, or by the sequestration of the popish incumbents who had been permitted to retain them, it was necessary to determine in what manner they should be disposed of for the future. The church had uniformly required that their revenues should be divided, and applied to the support of the religious and the literary establishments; but with this demand the courtiers were by no means disposed to comply. At the same time, the total secularization of them was deemed too bold a step; nor could laymen, with any shadow of consistency, or by a valid title, hold benefices which the law declared to be ecclesiastical. The expedient resolved on was, that the bishoprics and other livings should be presented to certain ministers, who, previous to their admission, should make over the principal part of their revenues to such noblemen as had obtained the patronage of them from the court.”

This most grievous error in the conduct of the Scottish reformation, (but for

which Knox is not at all chargeable) is but little understood by the public at large, and in the statement of which therefore we do not expect to be greatly sympathized with. It was that compromise which took place between the ecclesiastics and the nobles of our land; and in virtue of which the former concurred, or rather were compelled to acquiesce, in both our church and our literary establishments being shorn of their patrimony. The effect has been that a revenue, which might have been applied to the exigencies of an increasing population, now unprovided with the means of Christian instruction; or which might have been applied to uphold, in strength and in splendour, those Universities of our land, which both in their endowments and their architecture are fast hastening to degradation and decay—is now wholly secularized, and serves but to augment the expense and the luxury of private families. And in the face of all that contempt and that common-place which the benefited priesthood of every establishment has to endure, we scruple not to say, that what Knox by his sagacity foresaw, and which he strove in vain to make head against, has been most fearfully realized,—and that the high interests both of religion and of learning suffer at this day, under the effects of that unprincipled, that truly Gothic spoliation.

We are aware of a fashionable political economy in this our day, which, for the sake of leaving untouched the splendour and the luxury of our higher classes, would suffer the public functionaries to starve; and in opposition to which we at present affirm (for we have no time to argue), that in the progress both of landed and of mercantile wealth, both the officers of religion and the officers of education have been left immeasurably too far behind in the career of an advancing society. On this topic we make common cause with all other public functionaries; and, in despite of the popular outcry against it, we hold, that from the highest judges in the land, to the humblest teacher of a village school, there ought to be one great and general augmentation—it being our first principle that every public functionary should do his duty well; and our second, that every

public functionary should be well paid for the doing of it.

The third topic to which we shall advert, is that in which we hold Knox to have been in error—though precisely such an error as I think that the book of our now larger experience, in which so many lessons are inscribed since his day, of the wisdom and efficacy of toleration, would have expelled from his mind.

It was an error, however, not confined to the reformers of any particular country; for, in truth, it was shared alike among all the theologians of all the denominations in Christendom. It consisted in the imagination, and it was an imagination quite universal in these days, that Christianity could not flourish, nay, that it could not exist, save in the one framework of one certain and defined ecclesiastical constitution; and hence with us, that there could be no light and no efficacy in the ministrations of the gospel, unless they were conducted according to the forms, and in the strict model and frame-work of Presbytery. And so, in the works of some of the older worthies of the Kirk of Scotland, we read about as often of black Prelacy, as we do of her who was arrayed in scarlet, and is the mother of all abominations. Now, it is surely better that this extreme and exclusive intolerance is almost wholly done away; and better still it would be, if the two co-ordinate establishments of our island, while they kept by their own respective frame-works, should acknowledge each of the other, that although by a different machinery, there may be the same right and religious principle to animate the movements, and the same high capacities for religious usefulness with both; that if the one, perhaps, have more thoroughly leavened with Christianity the bulk of her population, the other is more signalized by the prowess of her sons, in the high walks of Christian scholarship; that in her Clarkes, and her Butlers, and her Warburtons, and her Hurds, and her Horsleys, and her Paleys, and her Watsons, we behold the divines of a church, which of all others has stood the foremost, and wielded the mightiest polemic arm in the battles of the Faith.

I entreat to be forgiven if I make one allusion more, if not to an error on the

part of our old reformers, at least to a peculiarity of theirs, which is not, to say the least of it, so authoritatively enjoined by the book of God's revelation, as to stand exempted from all charge and reckoning on the part of those who, in our own modern day, have at least the benefit of a larger and more luminous book of experience than they had. We utterly refuse to go along with the ancients of our church in their stern and severe sentiment of Prelacy. And however right they may have been in their sentiment of another denomination, yet still it is, at the very least, a questionable thing, whether they were right in their stern and severe treatment of Popery. After having wrested from Popery its armour of intolerance, was it right to wield that very armour against the enemy that had fallen? After having laid it prostrate by the use alone of a spiritual weapon, was it right or necessary, in order to keep it prostrate, to make use of a carnal one?—thus reversing the characters of that warfare, which Truth had sustained, and with such triumph, against Falsehood; and vilifying the noble cause by an associate so unseemly, as that which the power of the state can make to bear on the now disarmed and subjugated minority. Surely the very strength which won for Protestantism its ascendancy in these realms is competent of itself to preserve it; and if argument and Scripture alone have achieved the victory over falsehood, why not confide to argument and Scripture alone the maintenance of the truth? It is truly instructive to mark, how, on the moment that the forces of the statute-book were enlisted on the side of Protestantism, from that moment Popery, armed with a generous indignancy against its oppressors, put on that moral strength, which persecution always gives to every cause that is at once honoured and sustained by it. O, if the friends of religious liberty had but kept by their own spiritual weapons, when the cause was moving onward in such prosperity, and with such triumph! But when they threw aside argument, and brandished the ensigns of authority, then it was that truth felt the virtue go out of her; and falsehood, inspired with an energy before unknown, planted the unyielding footstep, and put on the resolute defiance. And now that

centuries have rolled on, all the influences whether of persuasion or of power, have been idly thrown away on the firm, the impracticable countenance of an aggrieved population.

But we gladly hasten away from all these topics, on some of which, indeed, we ought not to have touched, but for the purpose of illustrating the distinction between those cases in which we should defer to the voice of antiquity, and prize its direction as the good old way; and those cases in which the lesson that hath come down to us from antiquity, should be regarded in no other light than as the puerility of a then younger species, the yet weak and unformed judgment of the world's boy-hood. The light of experience which feebly glimmers at the outset of History, brightens onward in its progress. But the same does not hold of the light of revelation, which shone with as pure and as clear a radiance on the patriarchs of our church, as it hath since done on any of its succeeding generations. Nay, it is a possible thing, that in the ages which followed the first establishment of Presbytery in Scotland, there may have been deviations from the spirit and simplicity of Scripture; that the pride of intellect, and of human speculation, may have carried it high against that authoritative truth, which hath come down to our world from the upper sanctuary; that from the exercise of a careless and a corrupt patronage, many of our parishes may have been exposed to the withering influence of a careless and a corrupt clergy; that thus, in the shape of cold and heartless apathy, a moral blight, or mildew, may have descended on our land; and that, what with a meagre theology on the one hand, and an extinct or nearly expiring zeal on the other, there may have been an utter degeneracy from that golden period, when the truths of the Bible shone full upon many an understanding, and the spirit of the Bible animated many a desirous and devoted heart. It is not that the wisdom of experience was greater then than it is now, but it is that the wisdom of faith and piety was greater then than it is now, that we should so much ameliorate our present age by calling back the genius of the olden time. And did we but revert as before to the strict guidance and authority

of Revelation; did we, renouncing our own imaginations, make our submissive appeal to the Law and to the Testimony; did we only suffer the word of God to carry it at all times over the wayward fancies of men, and so recur to the apostolic humility, and the apostolic zeal, of former periods—this, this is what is meant in our text by the good old way.

In conclusion, let me now address you as members of the Church of Scotland, which in principle is essentially Protestant; and which, though like other churches it has its articles and its formularies of doctrine, yet wants no such discipleship as that which is grounded on blind submission to her authority—but only the discipleship of those, who in the free exercise of their judgment and their conscience, honestly believe her doctrine to be grounded on the authority of the word of God. Both her Catechism and Confession of faith have been given to the public with note and comment, it is true, but with note and comment that consist exclusively of Bible texts; and so, like apples of gold in pictures of silver, they offer a list of dogmata, but of dogmata set, as it were, or embossed in Scripture.

The natural depravity of man; his need both of a regeneration and of an atonement; the accomplishment of the one by the efficacy of a divine sacrifice, and of the other by the operation of a sanctifying spirit; the doctrine that a sinner is justified by faith, followed up, most earnestly and incessantly followed up, through the pulpits of our land, by the doctrine that he is judged by works; the righteousness of Christ as the alone foundation of his meritorious claim to heaven, but this followed up by his own personal righteousness as the indispensable preparation for heaven's exercises and heaven's joys; the free offer of pardon even to the chief of sinners, but this followed up by the practical calls of repentance, without which no orthodoxy can save him; the amplitude of the gospel invitations, and, in despite of all that has been so unintelligently said about our gloomy and relentless Calvinism, the wide and unexcepted amnesty that is held forth to every creature under heaven, so as that the message of reconciliation may be made to circulate round the globe, and the overtures of welcome and good will from

the mercy seat above, be affectionately urged on all the individuals of all the families of earth below—these are the main credenda of a church that has often been reproached for its hard and unfeeling theology—but nevertheless, a theology which, deeply seated as it still is in the affections of our peasantry, hath approved itself by their virtues and their general habits, to be, after all, the fittest basis on which to sustain the moral worth and the moral energies of the nation.

In adhering then to such a church and to such a creed, you adhere to what we have no hesitation in characterising as the good old way of your forefathers—not the less dear, we trust, to many of you, that you have now separated from that interesting land, and perhaps look back through the dim and distant recollection of many years, to the days of your cherished and well-taught boyhood. In this house of wider accommodation, a far larger number of our countrymen than before, can realize the services of a Scottish Sabbath. And, when we think of the constant accessions which are making to this number, and that too, by the yearly influx of exposed and unprotected youth into this vast metropolis, the moral importance of such an erection as the present rises above all computation. We cannot look indeed to those who have recently quitted the parental roof, and now in the open world are in the midst of its snares and its fearful exposures, without regarding it as the most affecting of all spectacles, when any one of them gives up the comparative innocence of his tender years, and thence passes into the hardihood and the knowing depravity of vice. In the whole compass of nature, there is not a wreck more lamentable, or which presents an object of more distressful contemplation, than does the ruin of youthful modesty. And the flower that withers upon its stalk, and all whose blushing graces have now vanished into the loathsomeness of vilest putrefaction, is but the faint-emblem of so sad an overthrow. That indeed is one of the darkest transitions in the history of man, when he exchanges the simplicities of his early home for the riot, and the intemperance, and the daring excesses that are acted in haunts of profligacy—

when by the loud laugh of his forerunners in guilt, all his purposes of virtue are overborne; and he is at length tempted, among the urgencies and the contaminations of surrounding example, to cast his principle and his purity away from him. Be assured that, in the wild and lurid gleams of frantic dissipation, there is nought that can compensate for the calm, the beauteous lustre, which some have left behind you in the abode of domestic piety. And therefore, now that you have departed from the hallowed influences of an atmosphere so pure and so kindly, let me entreat you, by all the high interests which belong to you as immortal creatures, that you forget not the solemnity of a father's parting advice, that you forget not the tenderness of a mother's prayers.

One of the likeliest preservatives of conduct through the week, is a powerful religious application to the conscience upon the Sabbath. And we repeat it as matter of high gratulation to our Scottish families, that in a place so capacious as this, the lessons of Christianity are to be ministered according to the forms of our church, and by one of the most distinguished of her sons—a minister who has ever counted it a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but who is solemnized by the thought that He who judgeth him is God—a minister who combines with the utmost fearlessness for the creature, the utmost docility and reverence for the Creator,—one whose talents and whose colossal strength of mind could have borne him aloft to the most arduous heights of science, but who now holds it his more becoming, as indeed it is his more dignified part, to give himself wholly to the studies and the pursuits of sacredness,—one who is willing to spend and be spent for the eternity of his people, and who, after having survived the buffetings of a whole world of gainsayers, now sits down amongst you with the well-earned attachment of the thousands who know his worth, and who

have been awakened by his ministry. His are not the short-lived triumphs of a mere popular empiricism, but the fairly won distinction of one who possesses the stamina of worth and endurance, being alike gifted with great principle, and with great power. But it is not distinction that he seeks; for intent upon higher objects, we trust the paramount aim of his spirit to be, not his own glory, but the glory of the master whom he serves; and that actuated by motives which the world can neither understand nor sympathise with, he has received of that grace from above, which is given only to the humble, and the want of which would stamp an utter impotency on the ablest and most splendid ministrations. If thus upholden, he has nothing to fear. Already have the outrages of a rude and licentious press broken their strength upon him, and are dissipated. And now that the fume, and the turbulence, and the uproar of this temporary warfare have been all cleared away, does he stand forth with a moral dignity on his part, and a warranted confidence upon yours, which, under God, are the best guarantees for the success of his future labours.

May the spirit of all grace abundantly strengthen and uphold him in the arduous office to which he has been called. May living water from the sanctuary above descend on the ministrations of the word here below; and both fertilizing the soil of your hearts, and fructifying the good seed which is deposited there, may you be made to abound in all the fruits of righteousness. May this House in future years be the scene of many sound and scriptural conversions; and never, till in the course of generations its walls have mouldered into decay, and its minarets have fallen, never may it cease either in our own day, or in the days of our children's children, to be a gate to Heaven, a place of busy and successful preparation for Heaven's exercises, and Heaven's joys.

SERMON XXXII.

The Effect of Man's Wrath in the Agitation of Religious Controversies.

"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."—JAMES i. 20.

WITHOUT attempting, what we should feel to be impossible within the limits of one discourse, to expound the principle of our text in all its generality, we shall satisfy ourselves with adverting to but one or two special applications of it. We shall first consider the effect of man's wrath when interposed between the call of the gospel, and the minds of those to whom the gospel is addressed—and, secondly, consider the effect of man's wrath when interposed between a right and a wrong denomination of Christianity.

I. You are all aware of there being much wrathful controversy on the part of men relative to the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherein the righteousness of God is said, by the apostle, to be revealed from faith to faith. To understand the way in which this great message from heaven to earth may be darkened, and altogether transformed out of its native character, by the conflict and controversy of its interpreters, we ask you to conceive the effect, if a message of most free and unqualified kindness, from some earthly superior, were just to be handled in the same way. We may imagine that in his bosom, there is nought but the utmost good-will to us, in all its truth, and in all its tenderness; and that he sends forth the expression of it in writing, on purpose that we may read and may rejoice; and that if we but perused this precious document with the simplicity of children, we could not fail to be gladdened by the assurances of a love which shone most directly and most unequivocally from all its pages. But instead of this, we may further imagine, that between our minds and all the grace and goodness of this communication, there should spring up a whole army of expounders—and that in the pride, and the heat, and the bitterness of argument, they fell out among themselves—and that all were vastly too much

engrossed, each with his own special understanding about the terms of the message, ever to meet together in harmony, and in mutual felicitation, on the broad and unquestionable truths of it. Is there no danger, we ask, amid the acerbities of such a thickening warfare, that men should lose sight of the mildness and the mercy that lay in that embassy of peace by which it had been stirred? Is it not a possible thing, that many an humble spirit, whom the soft and the kind affection of the original message might else have wakened into confidence, shall feel itself disturbed and bewildered in the fierce and the fiery agitations of such an atmosphere as this? When we hear from one quarter, that such is the import of the message, and that we shall forfeit all the beneficence which it proffers, unless we so understand it,—when, in vehement resistance to this, we hear of another import, and even denounced upon them who refuse it, the wrath of Him whose good-will is the whole burden of the now disputed communication,—when moreover a third, and a different interpretation, is listed against each of the two former, and supported with acrimony, and backed by the same menaces of a displeasure on the part of that universal friend, who had set himself forth in the benignest attitude, and lifted the widely-sounding call of reconciliation,—Certain it is, that when the mind of an inquirer is involved among these, it is occupied with topics of another description, and another character altogether, from that of the calm and the kind benevolence which resides at the fountain-head, and which would have radiated from thence on the hearts of a delighted people, were it not for the intervening turbulence that serves to hide, or at least to darken it. It is thus, that by the angry and the lowering passions of these middle men, an obscuration might be shed on all the good-

ness and the grace which sit on the brow of their superior ; and that when stunned in the uproar of their sore controversy with the challenge, and the recrimination, and the boisterous assertion of victory, and all the other clamours of heated partizanship—that these might altogether drown the soft utterance of that clemency whereof they are the interpreters, and cause the gentler sounds that issue from some high seat of munificence and mercy to be altogether unheard.

Now, it is altogether worthy of our consideration, whether such might not be the effect of those manifold controversies that have risen, in regard to the terms and the truths of that gospel message which has come down from the sanctuary above to the men of our lower world. The love for mankind which resides in the bosom of the unseen and eternal God, is there most distinctly asserted ; and there is also most full and frequent declaration of His willingness to receive us ; and in every possible way of entreaty, and protestation, and kind encouragement, does He manifest the forth-puttings of His longing affection towards us ; and, rather than not reclaim us hapless wanderers to that blessedness with Himself, from which we had so widely departed, He lavished all the resources both of His omnipotence and of His wisdom, on a scheme of reconciliation, by which even the guiltiest of offenders might draw nigh ; and He sent the Son of His everlasting regards from Heaven to earth, who had to surrender all His glories, and to suffer all the vengeance of an outraged law, ere He could move away the obstructions which stood between sinners and the mercy-seat ; and, after having thus laboriously framed a pathway of access to that throne of righteousness, which is now turned into a throne of grace, did he lift up a voice of invitation to walk in it—a voice so diffusive, that it may go abroad over all, and yet so pointed, that it singles out and specializes each of the human family ; and now, with all the soul and sincerity of a Father's earnestness, does He ask, in the hearing of that world He has done so much to save, "What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it?" Such is the character of that direct, that primary demonstration, which has been

made to us from heaven. Such the felt love for our species which is honestly and genuinely there ; and well, we repeat, is it worthy of our full consideration, whether, across the dark, the troubled medium of human controversy, the sight of it is not tarnished to the eye—the sound of it, thus mingled with notes of harshest discord, is not lost upon the ear.

In one place, the gospel is called the ministration of righteousness—in another, the gift which it offers, is called the gift of righteousness ; and they are said to possess or to receive the righteousness of God, who have laid their confident hold upon that offer. But while the direct view of a benignant and a beseeching God, as He urges the offer upon their acceptance, is so well fitted to charm them into confidence, is there nothing, we ask, in the din of this posterior and subordinate controversy, that is fitted to disturb it? Surely the noise that arises from the wars and the wranglings of earth, falls differently upon the hearing to that sweetest music which descended from the canopy that is over our heads, and which accompanied the declaration of good-will to us in heaven. And so, altogether, that theology which shines immediate from his Bible on the heart of the unlettered peasant, may come with altered expression and effect on the mind of the scholastic, after it has been transmuted into the theology of the portly and polemic folio. The Sun of Righteousness may shed a mild and beauteous lustre upon the one, which, to the eye of the other, is obscured in the turbulence of rolling vapours, in the lurid clouds of an angry and unsettled sky. It is precisely thus, we fear, that the dogmatism on the one hand, and the defiance upon the other, which are associated with the conflicts and the championship of our profession, may have dimmed, to the vision of those who are below, the face of the benign and the beautiful sanctuary above ; and verily there is room for the question, whether, in this way too, we have not one exemplification of the text, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

When God beseeches us to be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus, there is placed before the mind one object of con-

templation. When man steps forward, and, in the pride or intolerance of orthodoxy, denounces the fury of an incensed God on all who put not faith in the merits and the mediation of His Son, there is placed before the mind another and a distinct object of contemplation. And just in proportion to the varieties of dogmatism or debate, will the mind shift and fluctuate from one contemplation to another. Certain it is, that it must feel a different sort of affection, when directly engaged with the love of God in heaven, from what it does when tost and alternated among the wrathful elements of human controversy upon earth. It then breathes in another atmosphere; and the whole sense and savour of the encompassing medium feel differently from before. And still it comes to the same important, but unhappy result, as if the music of the spheres had been drowned in the rude and resentful outcry of noises from beneath, and the ear had failed to catch the utterance of Heaven's inspiration, because lost and overborne amid sounds of earthliness. It is thus that the native character of Heaven's embassy may at length be shrouded in subtle, but most effectual disguise, from the souls of men; and the whole spirit and design of its munificent Sovereign be wholly misconceived by His sinful, yet much-loved children. We interpret the Deity by the hard and imperious scowl which sits on the countenance of angry theologians; and in the strife and clamour of their fierce animosities, we forget the aspect of Him who is upon the throne, the bland and benignant aspect of that God who waiteth to be gracious.

It is thus that men of highest respect in the Christian world have done grievous injury to the cause. Whether, we ask, would Calvin have found readier acceptance for his own favourite doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, (that only righteousness which God will accept in plea of our meritorious claim to the kingdom of heaven, and therefore called the righteousness of God,)—whether was it likelier that he should have gained the consent of men's minds to this method of salvation, by declaring it in the spirit of gentleness, and with the accents of entreaty, or by denouncing it in the spirit of an incensed polemic, and

with that aspect which sits on his pages of severe and relentless dogmatism? Would it not have strengthened his cause, had he, in propounding the message of reconciliation to his fellows upon earth, caught more upon his heart of the benignity which prompted the sending of that message from heaven?—and had the eye, the voice, the manner of this able expounder of the counsels of God represented more of the kindness which presided over these counsels, of the compassion felt in the upper sanctuary, and which there originated the forth-going of the Saviour on our guilty world? Certain it is, that there is nought to conciliate the spirits of men to the doctrine of Calvin, all true, and all momentous as it is, in that wrath which glares upon us so repeatedly from the dark and angry passages of his argument. That violence and vituperation, by which his Institutes are so frequently deformed, never do occur, we venture to affirm, but with an adverse influence on the minds of his readers, in reference to the truth which he espouses. In other words, that truth which, when couched in the language, and accompanied with the calls of affection, finds such welcome into the hearts of men, hath brought upon its propounders the reaction of stout indignant hostility, and just because of the stern intolerance where-with it has been proposed by them. This difference, in point of effect, between the meek and the magisterial style of instruction, makes it of the utmost practical importance, that neither the pride nor the passions of men should mingle in the discussion, when labouring either with or against each other in the common pursuit of truth. For much has it prejudiced the cause of truth in the world, that it has so oft been urged and insisted on with that wrath of man, which, most assuredly, worketh not the righteousness of God.

And, though not strictly under our present head of discourse, there is one observation more which we feel it of importance to make, ere we pass on to the next division of our subject. Apart from the transforming effect of human wrath to give another hue, as it were, to the complexion of the Godhead, and another expression than that of its own native kindness, to the message which has pro-

ceeded from Him, there is a distinct operation in the mind of an inquirer after religious truth, which is altogether worthy of being adverted to.

When the controversialist makes an angry demand upon us for our belief in some one of his positions, why, that position may be the offered and the gratuitous mercy of God in heaven, and yet the whole charm of such a proposal may be dissipated, just through that tone and temper of intolerance in which it is expounded to us upon earth. When entertained in the shape of a direct announcement from the Father of mercies himself it comes with a wholly different impression upon the heart from what it does when entertained in the shape of an article that has been fashioned by a system-builder and then fulminated against us by the hand of human combatants. All that hope and that happiness which might else have beamed from the doctrine of grace, and that instantly, upon the soul, may, as it were, be neutralized by the passionate and peremptory style of menace, wherewith faith in that doctrine is insisted upon. This we have already considered; yet it must not be overlooked, that even for the hope and the happiness, faith is indispensable—that ere we can rejoice in any truth, or take the salutary impression of it upon our hearts, the truth must be believed in; and, indeed, the Bible itself accompanies its statements of doctrine with the exaction of our faith in them. Without this faith in their reality, we can have no benefit from the objects of revelation. Faith is the avenue through which they come into contact with the inner man, and by which alone they can obtain an influence over the affections. It is not to be wondered at, then, that possessing, as it does, such vital importance, they who are in earnest after their salvation, should set such extreme value on the acquisition of faith. It is to them the pearl of great price. If, under the economy of the Law, men staked their eternity upon their works—under the economy of the Gospel, they stake their eternity upon their faith. The longings and the labourings of their hearts are now as much after the right belief, as formerly they were after the right obedience. And if while, “Do this and live,” was the reigning principle of

Heaven's administration, the natural anxiety for every expectant of Heaven, was to do properly—now that the reigning principle is, “Believe and be saved,” it is just as natural that it should be his intense and his unceasing anxiety to believe properly.

Now, observe the misdirection of which he is consequently in danger. It is apt to turn away his attention from the object of faith, to the act of faith. If faith be any where, it is in the mind, which is its proper habitation, its place of occupancy and settlement; and when he wants to ascertain the reality of his faith, it is indeed most natural that he should go in quest of the precious article through the secrecies of his dwelling-place. In other words, he looks inwardly, instead of outwardly. In place of gazing abroad among the objects of Revelation, and gathering from thence of that direct radiance which they might have streamed upon his soul, he seeks for the reflection of these objects within the soul itself; and, while so employed, his inverted eye shuts out all the illumination that is above him and around him. It is not by looking inwardly upon the eye's own retina, but by looking openly and outwardly on the panorama of external nature, that we see the glories of the summer landscape. It is not by casting a downward regard on the tablet of vision, but by casting an upward regard on the starry firmament, that the wonders of the midnight sky become manifest to the beholder. And it is not, let it ever be remembered, it is not by a painful, by a probing scrutiny amongst the mysteries or the metaphysics of the inner man, that we admit the light of heaven into the soul. The peace and the joy of a believer do not spring from the traces which he finds to be within him. They emanate and they descend upon his heart, from the truths which are suspended over him. The work of faith consists not in looking to himself, but in looking to the reconciled countenance of God. He fetches its gladdening assurances, not from any light that has been struck out among the arcana of his own spirit, but from that great fountain of light, the Sun of Righteousness—the spiritual luminary which has arisen to the view of a sinful world, that every one who looketh may be

saved. If you invert this order, if you look into yourself, without looking unto Jesus, then you suspend the exercise of faith at the very time that you are trying to make sure of its existence. You look the wrong way; and if by the former influence, even that of man's wrath interposed between you and God's kindness, you were disturbed out of confidence and of comfort—by the present influence you are at least distracted away from them, even because the eye of the mind, when inverted upon itself, is averted from the proper object of confidence.

Let us never cease then the presentation of the object before you; and, when visited by fears, whether in looking to one's own heart, and finding nought but darkness and destitution there; or on looking to the countenance of our fellow men, and beholding the menace and intolerance which are depicted there; let all be overborne by a direct view of the kindness of God. Let us lift ourselves above these turbid elements of earth, and be firmly and erectly confident of benevolence in Heaven. The good-will that is there towards the children of men, the joy that is felt there over every sinner who repenteth, the mild radiance there of the upper sanctuary, and the grace and the benignity which invest its glorious mercy-seat—these are the things which be above—these the stable realities of that place where God sitteth on His throne, and where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Yonder is the region of light and of undoubted love; and, whatever the mists or the obstructions may be of this lower world, there is welcome, free, generous, unbounded welcome to one and all in the courts of the Eternal. The sun of our firmament is still as gorgeously seated in fields of ethereal beauty and radiance as ever, when veiled from the sight of mortals by the lowering sky that is underneath. And so of the shrouded character of the Godhead, who, all placid and serene in the midst of elevation, is often mantled from human eye by the turbulence and the terror of those clouds which gather on the face of our spiritual hemisphere. The unchangeableness of that Deity, whose compassions fail not—the constituted Mediator, who is the same to-day,

and yesterday, and for ever—the promises, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus our Lord—the word of revelation whereof it has been said, that heaven and earth shall pass away ere it can pass away—These are the enduring, the unextinguishable lights in the palace of our mild and munificent Sovereign, and in which all of us are called upon to rejoice. There may be no comfort to draw up from the darkling recesses of our own spirits; but surely it may descend upon us in floods of brightness and beauty from a canopy so glorious. There may be nought to gladden, in the wrathful and the warring controversies of the men who stand betwixt us and heaven; but in heaven itself there are notes of sweeter and kinder melody, and well may we assure ourselves in the gratulation that is awakened there over every sinner who turns unto God.

We are aware, all the time, that the truth, as it is in Jesus, must be sustained by argument—that this is one of the offices of the church militant upon earth, whose part it is to silence gainsayers; and not only to contend, but to contend earnestly, for the faith which was delivered unto the saints. For this service, we stand deeply indebted to the lore and the laborious authorship of other days—to the prowess of those dauntless theologians, those gigantic men of war, who, skilled alike in the mysteries of the Bible, and in the mysteries of our common nature, have, in the vast and venerable productions which they left behind them, reared such bulwarks around the system of a sound and a settled orthodoxy, as have never yet been stormed. Yet the most prominent article of that system—that which Luther denominated the test of a standing or a falling church—even the doctrine of imputed righteousness by faith—although argument be the weapon by which to defend it against the inroad of adversaries, it is not the weapon of penetration or of power by which to force a way for its saving reception into the heart of a believer. It is not in the clangour of arms, or in the shouts of victory, or in the heat and hurry of most successful gladiatorship—it is not thus that this overture of peace and pardon from heaven falls with efficacy upon the sinner's ear. It is not so

much in the act of intellectually proving the truth of the doctrine, as in the act of proceeding upon its truth, when we affectionately urge the sinner to make it the stepping-stone of his return to God—it is then most generally that it becomes manifest unto his conscience, and that he receives in love that which in the spirit of love and kindness has been offered to him. In a word, it is when the bearer of this message of God to man, urges it upon his fellow-sinners in the very spirit which first prompted that message from the upper sanctuary—it is when he truly represents, not alone the contents of Heaven's overtures, but also that heavenly kindness by which they were suggested—it is when he entreats rather than when he denounces, and when that compassion, which is in the heart of the Godhead, actuates his own—it is when standing in the character of an ambassador from Him who so loved the world, he accompanies the delivery of his message with the looks and the language of his own manifest tenderness—it is then that the preacher of salvation is upon his best vantage-ground of command over the hearts of a willing people; and when he finds that charity, and prayer and moral earnestness have done what neither lordly intolerance nor even lordly argument could have done, it is then that he rejoices in the beautiful experience, that it is something else than the wrath of man which is the instrument of working the righteousness of God.

The apostle says, "covet earnestly the best gifts," and then adds, "but yet I show you a more excellent way"—even the way of charity. We are also bidden "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." But notwithstanding, there may be a still more excellent and effectual way, even to "speak the truth in love." It is thus that the gospel, sometimes in one passage, blends firmness of principle with the gentleness of kind affection, towards those who are its adversaries. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as

lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." "Now we exhort you brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded; support the weak, be patient towards all men. See that none may render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." The vehemence of passion is one thing. The vehemence of sentiment is another. There is a hatefulness in the first. There is a certain nobleness to be liked and admired in the second. The former vents itself in malice against the heretic. The latter urges and assails the heresy. The strength of irritation is wholly different from the strength of conviction; and a deep sensation of the importance of truth is wholly different from the strength of conviction; and a deep sensation of the importance of truth, is wholly different from a sensitive dislike towards him who resists or disowns it. The Bible makes the discrimination between these two; and it tells us to shun the one, and to crush the other to the uttermost. Under its guidance, we shall know both how to maintain an unyielding front of resistance to the error, and yet to have compassion and courtesy for him who is the victim of it. It is a triumph to conquer by the power of argument—but it is a greater triumph to conciliate and convert by the power of charity.

II. But this brings me to the second head of discourse, under which I shall now, very shortly, consider the effect of man's wrath, when interposed between a right and a wrong denomination of Christianity.

It can require no very deep insight into our nature to perceive, that when there is proud or angry intolerance on the side of truth, it must call forth the reaction of a sullen and determined obstinacy on the other side of error. Men will submit to be reasoned out of an opinion, and more especially when treated with respect and kindness. But they will not submit to be cavalierly driven out of it. There is a revolt in the human spirit against contempt and contumely, insomuch that the soundest cause is sure to suffer from the help of some auxiliaries. When passion is enlisted on one side of a contro-

versy, when provocation is awakened on the other side,—and the parties erecting themselves into stouter and loftier attitude than before, stand to each other in respective positions which are mutually impregnable. It is this infusion of temper by which the force even of mighty argument is paralyzed. It is when disdain meets with defiance, when exasperating charges meet with indignant recriminations, when the shouts of exulting victory may sting the bosom of adversaries with the humiliations, but never draw from their lips the acknowledgments of defeat,—it is when the war of words is animated with feelings such as these, that Truth, whose still small voice is all-powerful, falls from her omnipotence and her glory; and Falschood, resolute in the midst of such stormy agitations, is only riveted thereby more firmly upon her basis. To the perversity of human error, there is now superadded the still more hopeless perversity of human wilfulness—and on looking at the whole resulting amount from these fulminations of heated partisanship, one cannot fail to acknowledge, that indeed the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Nevertheless, it is the part of man, both to adopt and to advocate the truth, lifting his zealous testimony in its favour. Yet there is surely a way of doing this in the spirit of charity; and while strenuous, while even uncompromising in the argument, it is possible surely to observe all the amenities of gentleness and good-will in these battles of the faith. For example, it is not wrong to feel either the strength or the importance of our cause, when we plead the Godhead of the Saviour; when, in affirming this to be an article of our creed, we simply repeat a statement of Scripture, as distinct and absolute as it is in the power of vocables to make it; even that “the Word was God;” when, after that a sound erudition hath pronounced the integrity of this one passage, we should deem it a waste and a perversion of criticism, to suspend our belief, till we had adjusted all the merits of all the controversies on other and more ambiguous passages; when after being satisfied that the Bible is indeed the record of an authentic communication from Heaven to earth, we put faith in

this its clearest utterance, than which it is not within the compass of human language to frame a more un-quivocal, or a more definite; when contrasting the ignorance of a creature so beset and limited as man, with the amplitude of that infinite and everlasting light, from the confines of which the message of revelation hath broke upon our world, we count it our becoming attitude to listen to all its announcements even as with the docility of little children; when, more especially, in profoundest darkness as we are, about the nature or the constitution of the Deity, who, throned in the mystery of His unfathomable essence, pervades all space, and without beginning or without end, unites in His wondrous Being the extremes of eternity, we hold that one informant of Himself, and from His own authoritative voice, should rebuke and bid away all human imaginations; when placed, as we are, in but a corner of that immensity which He hath peopled with innumerable worlds, with nought to instruct us but the experience of our little day, and nought to guide our way to that region of invisibles which is all His own—we, surrendering each fond and favourite preconception of ours, defer to the teaching of Him, who is Himself the fountain-head of existence, and whose eye reaches to the furthest outskirts of the universe that He has formed. And should He but tell of Him who has made flesh, that He was in the beginning with God, and that He was God, surely on a theme so vastly above us and beyond us, it is for us to regulate our belief by the very letter of this communication; and on the basis of such an evidence as this, to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, is the soundest philosophy, as well as the soundest faith.

Yet with all these reasons for holding ourselves to be intellectually right upon this question, there is not one reason why the wrath of man should be permitted to mingle in the controversy. This, whenever it is admitted, operates not as an ingredient of strength, but as an ingredient of weakness. Let Truth be shrined in argument—for this is its appropriate glory. And it is a sore disparagement inflicted upon it by the hand of vindictive theologians, when, instead of this, it is shrined in anathema, or brandished as a

weapon of dread and of destruction over the heads of all who are compelled to do it homage. The terrible denunciations of Athanasius have not helped—they have injured the cause. The Godhead of Christ is not thus set forth in the New Testament. It is nowhere proposed in the shape of a mere dictatorial article, or as a naked dogma, for the understanding alone; and at one place it is introduced as an episode for the enforcement of a moral virtue. In this famous passage, the practical lesson occupies the station of principal, as the main or capital figure of the piece; and the doctrine on which so many would effervesce all their zeal, even to exhaustion, stands to it but in the relation of a subsidiary. The lesson is, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." And the doctrine, (here noticed by the Apostle, not to the end that he may rectify the opinion of his disciples, but primarily and obviously, to the end that he may rectify their conduct) the doctrine for the enforcement of the lesson is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In these verses there is a collateral lesson for our faith; but the chief, the direct lesson, is a lesson of charity, which is greater than faith. And would the heart of Trinitarian be but as obediently schooled as his head, by this passage—would Orthodoxy, instead of the strife and the vain-glory which have given her so revolting an aspect, both of pride and sternness, but put on her bowels of mercy, and to her truth add tenderness—would the champions of a Saviour's dignity but learn of His meekness and lowliness, and, while they assert Him to be God manifest in the flesh, meet the perversity of gain-sayers in the very spirit of gentleness that He did,—This were the way by which the Church militant might be borne on-

wardly and upwardly to the station of the Church triumphant in the world. This is the way in which, by the mechanism of our moral nature, to obtain ascendancy over the hearts of men. Truth will be indebted for her best victories, not to the overthrow of Heresy, discomfited on the field of argument, but to the surrender of Heresy, disarmed of that in which her strength and her stability lie,—of her passionate, because provoked, wilfulness. Charity will do what reason cannot do. It will take that which letteth out of the way—even that wrath of man, which worketh neither the truth nor the righteousness of God.

But our time does not permit of any further illustration—else we might have shown at greater length, how, by the oversight of this great principle, the cause both of truth and of righteousness has been impeded in the world. Theologians have forgotten it in their controversies. Statesmen have forgotten it in their laws. Never was there a greater blunder in legislation, than that by which the forces of the statute-book have been enlisted on the side of truth; and error, as was quite natural, instead of being subdued, has been thereby settled down into tenfold obstinacy. The glories of martyrdom have been transferred from the right to the wrong side of the question; and superstition, which, in a land of perfect light and perfect liberty, would hide her head as ashamed, gathers a title to respect, and stands forth in a character of moral heroism, because of the injustice which has been brought to bear upon her. She ought, in all wisdom, to have been left to her own natural decay—or, at least, reason and kindness are the only engines which should have been made to play upon her strong-holds. But with such an auxiliary as the mere authority of terror upon the one side, and such a resistance as that of generous and high-minded indignation upon the other—there have arisen the elements of an interminable warfare. And not till truth, relieved of so unseemly an associate, be confined to the use of her proper weapons, will she be reinstated on her proper vantage-ground. It is not in the fermentation of human passions and human politics, that the lessons of heaven can be with efficacy taught—and ere these les-

sons shall go abroad in triumph over the length and breadth of the land, we must recall the impolicy by which we have turned a whole people into a nation of outcasts. To exclude is surely not the way to assimilate. It is by pervading, instead of separating into an unbroken mass, and then placing it off at a distance from us—it is by extensively mingling with the men of another denomination, in all the walks of civil and political business—it is then, that the occasions of converse and of courtesy will be indefinitely multiplied—and then will it be found, that it is by an influence altogether opposite to the wrath of man, that we are enabled to work the righteousness of God.

But let us not make entrance on a field, to the verge of which we have now been conducted by the light of a principle that is abundantly capable of shedding most beautiful, as well as most beneficent illustration over the whole of it. Let us rather conclude with the application of our text, not to the affairs of an empire, or the affairs of a church, but rather to the affairs of a single congregation. Let us recur, though but for one moment, ere we shall have brought our address to its close, to that spirit of kindness and good-will, which prompted the original formation of the gospel message in the upper sanctuary, as being indeed the very spirit by which the expounder of that message ought to be actuated. He may have at times to engage in conflict with the infidels or the heretics around him. Nevertheless, let him be assured, that it is by other armour than that which is wielded on the field of controversy—by an influence more powerful still, than even that of overbearing argument, by the moral and affectionate earnestness of a heart that breathes the very charity and tenderness of heaven upon his audience,—it is thus that ministerial work is done most prosperously—the work of winning souls, of turning sons and daughters unto righteousness.

It is not so easy as may be thought, to dislodge the fears, or to win the confidence of nature in him who is nature's God. There is a certain overhanging sense of guilt, which forms the main ingredient of this alienation. It is this which darkens, to the eye of our world, the face of Heaven's Lawgiver; and

brings such a burden of dread and of distrust on the spirit of man, that he feels nothing to invite, but to repel and overawe, in the thought of Heaven's high sacredness. It is thus that the aspect of the Divinity is mantled and overshadowed to the human imagination; and instead of reading there the signals of welcome and good-will, we figure to ourselves a God dwelling in some awful and august sanctuary, or seated on a throne whence the fire of jealousy goeth forth to burn up and to destroy. It is sin which has laid this cold, this heavy obstruction, on the hearts of our outcast species. There is a strong, though secret, apprehension of displeasure in the countenance of Him who is above, which haunts us continually, and gives us the hourly, the habitual, feeling of outcasts. Man recoils to a distance from God, and regards God as placed at an inaccessible distance from him. There is between them a gulph of separation, across which man looks with disquietude and dismay, as he would to some spectral or portentous image shrouded in mystery, and all the more tremendous that he is invisible and unknown. The greatest moral revolution which the spirit of man undergoes, is when these clouds which overhang the hemisphere of his spiritual vision are all cleared away, and the Godhead shines upon him with a new and an opposite manifestation—when simply, because now seeing the Deity under an aspect of graciousness, he, instead of trembling before Him as an enemy, can securely trust in Him as a friend, and can rejoice in that Being of whom he has been made to know and to believe that He rejoices over him, to bless him and to do him good.

Now, it is by faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by it alone, that this great revolution is achieved. It is through the open door of His mediatorship, that the sinner draws nigh, and beholds God as a reconciled Father. It is because of that blood of atonement, wherewith the mercy-seat on high is sprinkled, that he is made to hear the voice of welcome and of good-will which issues therefrom. He now beholds no severity in the aspect of the Lawgiver; and yet, through the work of Him by whom the law was magnified, he there beholds the harmony of all the attributes. Such is the exquisite skill-

fulness of the economy under which we sit, that the truth, and the justice, and the holiness, which out of Christ were leagued against us for destruction—now that these have emerged, in vindicated lustre, from that hour of darkness, when the Saviour bowed down his head unto the sacrifice, they are the guarantees of pardon and acceptance to all who lay hold of this great salvation. It was in love to man that this wondrous dispensation was framed. It was kindness, honest, heart-felt, compassionate kindness, that formed the moving principle of the embassy from heaven to our world. We protest, by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, by the tears of Him who wept at Lazarus' tomb, and over the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, by every word of blessing that He uttered, and by every footstep of this wondrous visitor over the surface of a land on which he went about doing good continually,—we protest in the name of all these unequivocal demonstrations, that they do Him an injustice who propound this message in any other way than as a message of friendship to our species. He came not to condemn, but to save; not to destroy, but to keep alive. And he is the fittest bearer, he the best interpreter, of these overtures from above, who urges them upon men, not with wrath, and clamour, and controversial bitterness, but in the very spirit of that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated, and full of mercy.

In this way the moral power of the truth is superadded to its argumentative power. The kind affection of the speaker becomes an element of weight and influence in the demonstration which falls from him. He does more than barely utter the realities of the gospel—he pictures them forth in the persuasiveness of his own accents, in the looks as well as the language of his own manifested tenderness. He is the right person for standing between a people and heaven—seeing that Heaven's love to men is expressed visibly in his own countenance, audibly in the earnestness of his own voice. With a heart glowing in charity to his hearers, he is the fit representative, the best expounder, of that embassy, which has come from the dwelling-place of the Eternal on an errand of charity to

our world. And fraught as he is with the tidings of mercy, it is not more when he urges the truth, than when he affectingly sets forth the tenderness of these tidings, that he charms the acquiescence of men, and his message is felt to be “worthy of all acceptance.”

Before I leave you, I should like, even though at the end of our discourse, and by an informal resumption of its first topic, to possess the heart of each who now hears me with the distinct assurance of God's proffered good-will to him, of His free and full pardon stretched out for the acceptance of him. If heretofore you have been in the habit of contemplating the gospel as at a sort of speculative distance, and in its generality, I want you now to feel the force of its pointed, its personal application, and to understand it as a message addressed specifically to you. The message has been so framed, and couched in phraseology of such peculiar import, that it knocks for entrance at every heart, and is laid down for acceptance at every door. It is true, that you are not named and surnamed in the Bible; but the term “whosoever,” associated, as it frequently is, with the offer of its blessings, points that offer to each and to all of you. “Whosoever will, let him drink of the waters of life freely.” It is very true that this written communication has not been handed to you, like the letter of a distant acquaintance, with the address of your designation and dwelling-place inscribed upon it. But the term “all,” as good as specializes the address to each, and each has a full warrant to proceed upon the call, “Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved;” or, “Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is furthermore true, that Christ has not appeared in person at any of your assemblies, and, singling out this one individual, and that other, has bid him step forward with an application for pardon, on the assurance that he would receive it;—but the term “every” singles out each; and He has left behind Him the precious, the unexcepted declaration, that “every one who asketh receiveth,” that “every one who seeketh findeth.” And lastly, it is true that He disperses no special messengers of His grace to special individuals; but the

term "any," though occupying but its own little room in a single text, has a force equally dispersive with as many messengers sent to the world as there are men upon its surface. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." These are the words which, unlike the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, turn every way, carrying the message of salvation diffusively abroad among all, and pointing it distinctively to each of the human family. Their scope is wide as the species, and their application is to every individual thereof. And what I want each individual present to understand, is, that God in the gospel beseeches him to be reconciled—God is saying unto him, "Turn thou, turn thou, why wilt thou die?"

There are certain generic words attached at times to the overtures of the gospel, which have the same twofold power of spreading abroad these overtures generally among all, yet of pointing them singly at each of the human family. The "world," for example, is a word of this import; and Jesus Christ is declared to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. After this, man, though an inhabitant of the world, and, as such, fairly within the scope of this communication, may continue to forbid himself, but most assuredly God has not forbidden him. The term "sinner" is another example, as being comprehensive of a genus, whereof each individual may appropriate the benefits that are said in Scripture to be intended for the whole. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." Still it is possible, as before, that many a sinner may not hold this saying to be worthy,

or, at least, may not make it the subject of his acceptation. His demand perhaps is, that, ere he can have a warrantable confidence in this saying for himself, he must be specially, and by name, included in it: whereas the truth is, that to warrant his distrust, his want of confidence after such a saying, he should be specially, and by name, excluded from it. After an utterance like this, instead of needing, as a sufficient reason of dependence, to be made the subject of a particular invitation, he would really need, as a sufficient reason of despondency, to be made the subject of a particular exception. Is not the characteristic term, "sinner," sufficiently descriptive of him? as much so, indeed, as if he had been named and surnamed in Scripture. Does it not mark him as an object for all those announcements which bear on sinners, as such, or sinners generally? The truth is, if we but understood the terms of this great act of amnesty, and made the legitimate application of them, we should perceive that, to whomsoever the word of salvation has come, to him the offer of salvation has been made—that he is really as welcome to all the blessings of the New Testament, as if he had been the only creature in the universe who stood in need of them; as if he had been the only sinner of all the myriads of beings whom God hath formed; and as if to reclaim him, and to prevent the moral harmony of creation from being stained or interrupted by even so much as one solitary exception, for him alone the costly apparatus of redemption had been reared, and Christ had died, that God might be to him individually both a just God and a Saviour.

SERMON XXXIII.

On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Thompson.

“He being dead yet speaketh.”—HEBREWS xi. 4.

THERE IS ONE sense in which this text admits the utmost generality of application. Every man who dies, speaks a lesson to survivors—even that lesson which is the oftenest told, but which is also the oftenest forgotten. There is on this subject a cleaving and a constitutional earthliness, which stands its ground against every demonstration—giving way, for a moment perhaps, at each of the successive instances, but recovering itself on the instant when the scenes, and the companionships, and the business of the world again close around us. We are the creatures of sense, and the present, the sensible world is the only one that we practically acknowledge. Carnality is the scriptural term for this disease of fallen humanity—a disease of marvellous inveteracy and force; and not to be dislodged, we fear, by any assault whatever, whether ordinary or extraordinary, on the mere sensibilities of nature. We are never more assured, than to translate a man from the walk of sight to the walk of faith, is a work of supernatural energy, than when we witness the impotency of all natural appliances, and how the spell which binds him to the world is not to be broken by the loudest and most emphatic warnings of the world's vanity. A rooted preference of the interests of time to the interests of eternity—this is what arithmetic may disprove, but it is what arithmetic cannot dissipate. This is what the pathos and power of some affecting visitation may suspend, but which no visitation can ultimately quell; and after a brief season of sighs, and sensibilities, and tears, the man emerges again to as whole-hearted a secularity as before. Thus it is, that the thousand funerals which from childhood to age he may have attended, have only cradled him into a profounder spiritual lethargy; and that the frequent wrecks of mortality, through which he has ploughed his way on the ocean of life, have only

stamped a sort of weather-beaten hardihood upon his soul. The man is more and more seasoned, as it were, by every repetition of death, against its terrors, till, at last, himself dies in deep and hopeless apathy.

Such, we fear, is mainly the sad history of the world throughout its successive generations. Such is the infatuation of men walking in a vain show; and only more confirmed, by every instance of death, in false and fatal security. There is no question it ought to be otherwise. Every partaker of our nature who dies, should impressively remind us of our own mortality. Every exemplification of the unsparing and universal law, should be borne homeward in pointed and personal application to ourselves. There is not a human creature, however insignificant, who, simply by the act of expiring, should not speak to us in accents of deepest seriousness; and tell, with an eloquence not to be resisted, of our own approaching end, our own sudden arrest, or dying agonies. All the tokens and mementoes of death should have this effect upon us—as every funeral bell, every open grave, every procession that day after day moves along our streets, and scarcely arrests the eye of the heedless passenger. Nor is it necessary that he should be a man of rank, or talents, or commanding influence, or wide and general popularity, who is thus borne along. Enough, if he be flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. The humblest of menials is fitted to be our monitor on such an occasion. Even he when dead speaketh; and if he do not effectually convince, he will at least most emphatically condemn.

I need not say, to this assembly of mourners, in what more striking and impressive form the lesson has been given to us. It is just as if death had wanted to make the highest demonstration of his

sovereignty, and for this purpose had selected as his mark, him who stood the foremost, and the most conspicuous in the view of his countrymen. I speak not at present of any of the relations in which he stood to the living society immediately around him—to the thousands in church whom his well-known voice reached upon the Sabbath—to the tens of thousands in the city, whom, through the week, in the varied rounds and meetings of Christian philanthropy, he either guided by his counsel, or stimulated by his eloquence. You know, over and above, how far the wide, and the wakeful, and the untired benevolence of his nature carried him; and that, in the labours, and the locomotions connected with these, he may be said to have become the personal acquaintance of the people of Scotland. Insomuch, that there is not a village in the land, where the tidings of his death have not conveyed the information that a master in Israel has fallen; and I may also add, that such was the charm of his companionship, such the cordiality lighted up by his presence in every household, that, connected with this death, there is, at this moment, an oppressive sadness in the hearts of many thousands even of our most distant Scottish families. And so, a national lesson has been given forth by this event, even as a national loss has been incurred by it. It is a public death in the view of many spectators. And when one thinks of the vital energy by which every deed and every utterance were pervaded—of that prodigious strength which but gamboled with the difficulties that would have so depressed and overborne other men—of that prowess in conflict, and that promptitude in counsel with his fellows—of that elastic buoyancy which ever rose with the occasion, and bore him onward and upward to the successful termination of his cause—of the weight and multiplicity of his engagements; and yet, as if nothing could overwork that colossal mind, and that robust framework, the perfect lightness and facility wherewithall was executed,—when one thinks, in the midst of these powers and these performances, how intensely he laboured, I had almost said, how intensely he lived, in the midst of us, we cannot but acknowledge, that death, in seizing upon him, hath made full proof of a mas-

tery that sets all the might and all the promise of humanity at defiance.

But while in no possible way could general society have, through means of but one individual example, been more impressively told of the power of death—to you, in particular, it is a letter of deepest pathos. The world at large can form no estimate of the tenderness which belongs to the spiritual relationship, though I trust that on this topic, mysterious to them, yet familiar, I hope and believe, to many of you, I now speak to a goodly number who can own him as their spiritual father. But even they who are strangers to the power and reality of these things may comprehend the growing attachment of hearers to the minister, who, Sabbath after Sabbath, imparts to them of his own mental wealth, and excites in them somewhat of his own moral and religious earnestness. Even, apart from all personal acquaintance or intercourse, a sympathy with the personal ministrations of the clergymen under whom you sit, often draws a very close and binding affinity along with it. The man, with the very tones of whose voice you associate many of your most pleasing and hallowed recollections—the man to whom you feel yourselves indebted for the most delightful Sabbaths of other days—he who guided your devotions, and cleared away your difficulties, and pointed your path to heaven, and first opened the method of salvation, and by his expostulations and his arguments, was the instrument of determining you to forsake all, and follow after Christ,—every Christian can tell that to that man there attaches an interest of no ordinary tenderness and force. Even a general and unconverted hearer may share in this affection—although only his understanding was regaled by the pulpit demonstration; or his imagination by its splendour and eloquence; or his conscience, so far impressed, as at least to recognise the general truth of the principles, and the perfect moral honesty and earnestness of him who urges and expounds them. The man who is frank and fearless, and able, and, above all, whose heart was fully charged with what may be called, the brotherhood of our nature; whose every look and utterance bespoke the strength of his own

convictions, and the intensity of his zeal to plant them in the bosoms of other men,—that man would, in the course of months, or of years, become the general friend of the multitude whom he addresses; apart from all separate converse and fellowship with the individuals who compose it. Though only the pulpit acquaintance, and not at all the personal of the many hundreds who listen to him, yet in this capacity alone might obtain a mighty hold of their affections notwithstanding. At once the soul and mouth of the congregation, he is on high vantage-ground for such an ascendancy. He speaks as it were, from a pre-eminence, and, having all the moral forces of the gospel at command, it is incalculable with what sure and general effect, a minister, even of ordinary talents, if but of acknowledged honesty and worth, can subdue the people under him. But his was no ordinary championship; and although the weapons of our spiritual warfare are the same in every hand, we all know that there was none who wielded them more vigorously than he did, or who, with such an arm of might, and voice of resistless energy, carried, as if by storm, the convictions of his people. That such an arm should now be motionless, that such a voice should be for ever hushed in deep and unbroken silence, is to all a thought of profoundest melancholy. But he was the special property of his hearers, and to them it comes far more urgently and impressively home, than does any general object of touching or tragic contemplation. To them it is a personal bereavement,—and whether or not on the terms with him of individual converse, they droop and are in heaviness, because of their now widowed Sabbaths, their bereft and desolated sanctuary.

But the lesson is prodigiously enhanced, when we pass from his pulpit to his household ministrations. I perhaps do him wrong, in supposing that any large proportion of his hearers did not know him personally—for such was his matchless superiority to fatigue, such the unconquerable strength and activity of his nature, that he may almost be said to have accomplished a sort of personal ubiquity among his people. But ere you can appreciate the whole effect of this, let me advert to a principle of very ex-

tensive operation in nature. Painters know it well. They are aware, how much it adds to the force and beauty of any representation of theirs, when made strikingly and properly to contrast with the back-ground on which it is projected. And the same is as true of direct nature, set forth in one of her own immediate scenes, as of reflex nature, set forth by the imagination and pencil of an artist. This is often exemplified in those Alpine wilds, where beauty may, at times, be seen embosomed in the lap of grandeur,—as when, at the base of a lofty precipice, some spot of verdure, or peaceful cottage-home, seems to smile in more intense loveliness, because of the towering strength and magnificence which are behind it. Apply this to the character, and think how precisely analogous the effect is—when, from the ground-work of a character, that, mainly, in its texture and general aspect, is masculine, there do effloresce the forth-puttings of a softer nature, and those gentler charities of the heart, which come out irradiated in ten-fold beauty, when they arise from a substratum of moral strength and grandeur underneath. It is thus, when the man of strength shows himself the man of tenderness; and he who, sturdy and impregnable in every righteous cause, makes his graceful descent to the ordinary companionships of life, is found to mingle, with kindred warmth, in all the cares and the sympathies of his fellowmen. Such, I am sure, is the touching recollection of very many who now hear me, and who can tell, in their own experience, that the vigour of his pulpit, was only equalled by the fidelity and the tenderness of his household ministrations. They understand the whole force and significancy of the contrast I have now been speaking of—when the pastor of the church becomes the pastor of the family; and he who, in the crowded assembly, held imperial sway over every understanding, entered some parent's lowly dwelling, and prayed and wept along with them over their infant's dying bed. It is on occasions like these when the minister carries to its highest pitch the moral ascendancy which belongs to his station. It is this which furnishes him with a key to every heart,—and when the triumphs of charity are

superadded to the triumphs of argument, then it is that he sits enthroned over the affections of a willing people.

But I dare not venture any further on this track of observation. While yet standing aghast at a death which has come upon us all with the rapidity of a whirlwind, it might be easy, by means of a few touching and graphic recollections, to raise a tempest of emotion in the midst of you. It might be easy to awaken, in vivid delineation to the view of your mind, him who but a few days ago trod upon the streets of our city with the footsteps of firm manhood; and took part, with all his accustomed earnestness and vigour, in the busy concerns of living men. We could image forth the intense vitality which beamed in every look, and kept up, to the last moment, the incessant play of a mind, that was the fertile and ever-eddying fountain of just and solid thoughts. We could ask you to think of that master-spirit, with what presiding efficacy, yet with what perfect lightness and ease, he moved among his fellow-men; and, whether in the hall of debate, or in the circles of private conviviality, subordinated all to his purposes and views. We could fasten your regards on that dread encounter, when Death met this most powerful and resolute of men upon his way, and, laying instant arrest upon his movements, held him forth, in view of the citizens, as the proudest, while the most appalling of his triumphs. We could bid you weep at the thought of his agonized family—or rather, hurrying away from this big and unsupportable distress, we would tell of the public grief and the public consternation, and how the tidings of some great disaster flew from household to household, till, under the feeling of one common and overwhelming bereavement, the whole city became a city of mourners. We could recall to you that day when the earth was committed to the earth from which it came; and the deep seriousness that sat on every countenance bespoke, not the pageantry, but the whole power and reality of woe. We could point to his closing sepulchre, and read to you there the oft-repeated lesson of man's fading and evanescent glories. But we gladly, my brethren, we gladly make our escape from all these images, and all these sentiments, of oppressive

melancholy. We would fain take refuge in other views, and betake ourselves to some other direction. What I should like, if I could accomplish it, were to take a calm and deliberate survey of a character, the exposition of which would, in fact, be the exposition of certain great principles, that I might hold up to your reverence and your practical imitation. It is thus, in fact, that he, though dead, yet speaks unto you. In attempting the office of an interpreter between the dead and the living, I feel the whole difficulty of the task which has been put into my hands; and I have to crave the indulgence of my fellow-mourners for one, who, after a preparation of infirmity and sorrow, now addresses them in fear, and in weakness, and with much trembling.

My observations will resolve themselves into two heads—the *character of the theologian*, and the *character of the man*: and in the prosecution of which, I trust that both the influences of sound doctrine and of sound example may be brought to bear upon you.

First, then, in briefest possible definition, his was the olden theology of Scotland. A thoroughly devoted son of our Church, he was, through life, the firm, the unflinching advocate of its articles, and its formularies, and its rights, and the whole polity of its constitution and discipline. His creed he derived, by inheritance, from the fathers of the Scottish Reformation—not, however, as based on human authority, but as based and upholden on the authority of Scripture alone. Its two great articles are—Justification, only by the righteousness of Christ—Sanctification, only by that Spirit which Christ is commissioned to bestow,—the one derived to the believer by faith; the other derived by faith too, because obtained and realised in the exercise of believing prayer. This simple and sublime theology, connecting the influences of Heaven with the moralities of earth, did the founders of our Church incorporate, by their catechisms, with the education of the people; and, through the medium of a clergy, who maintained their orthodoxy and their zeal for several generations, was it faithfully and efficiently preached in all the parishes of the land. The whole system originated in deepest piety; and has resulted in the

formation of the most moral and intelligent peasantry in Europe. Yet, in spite of this palpable evidence in its favour, it fell into discredit. Along with the elegant literature of our sister country, did the meagre Arminianism of her church make invasion among our clergy; and we certainly receded for a time from the good old way of our forefathers. This was the middle age of the Church of Scotland, an age of cold and feeble rationality, when Evangelism was derided as fanatical, and its very phraseology was deemed an ignoble and vulgar thing, in the upper classes of society. A morality without godliness—a certain prettiness of sentiment, served up in tasteful and well-turned periods of composition—the ethics of Philosophy, or of the academic chair, rather than the ethics of the Gospel—the speculations of Natural Theology, and perhaps an ingenious and scholar-like exposition of the credentials, rather than a faithful exposition of the contents of the New Testament,—These for a time dispossessed the topics of other days, and occupied that room in our pulpits, which had formerly been given to the demonstrations of sin, and of the Saviour. You know there has been a reflux. The tide of sentiment has been turned; and there is none who has given it greater momentum, or borne it more triumphantly along, than did the lamented Pastor of this congregation. His talents and his advocacy have thrown a lustre around the cause. The prejudices of thousands have given way before the might and the mastery of his resistless demonstrations. The evangelical system has of consequence risen, has risen prodigiously of late years, in the estimation of general society—connected to a great degree, we doubt not, under the blessing of God, with his powerful appeals to Scripture, and his no less powerful appeals to the consciences of men.

But, in the doing of this great service to the Christianity of the nation, he has laid you, his individual hearers, under a heavy load of responsibility for yourselves. You will never forget, I trust, either the terror of his loud and emphatic denunciations; or, what is still more persuasive, the urgency of his beseeching voice. You will remember the powerful

and the pleading earnestness wherewith he hath so often dealt forth upon you, the impressive simplicities of the gospel—as, that Christ is the only Saviour; and the way of his prescribed holiness the only road to a blissful immortality. Your personal Christianity, my brethren, would be his best and noblest memorial—the most satisfactory evidence, that through the organs of recollection and conscience, he was still speaking to you. Often hath he plied you with the warnings of Scripture; and now, God himself hath interposed, and superadded to these the solemn warning of Providence. He hath recalled His ambassador, and you will soon follow him to the reckoning,—him to give account of his ministry; and you, on this principle of gospel equity, that to whom much is given, of him much will be required,—you to give account of the fruit of his ministrations.

I can afford to say no more on the character of his theology,—but, additional to this, and distinct from this, I would speak of what I term a characteristic of his theology. I beg you will attend for a moment to the difference of these two. The character is general, and that which he had in common with the members of a class,—the characteristic is special, or that by which his own individual theology was signalized, and by which I think it was ennobled. Could I make myself intelligible on this matter, it might furnish a cipher for the explanation of what many have called his peculiarities; but, instead of which you would at once see the great and the high principle which gave birth to them all.

The indispensable brevity of this explanation, both adds to the difficulty of my task, and forms a call on your more strenuous and sustained attention to me.

There is a distinction made by moralists, between the determinate and the indeterminate virtues. I will not attempt to define, but I will illustrate this distinction by an example.

Justice is a determinate virtue, and why?—because the precise line which separates it from its opposite, admits of being drawn with rigid and arithmetical precision; and he who transgresses this line by the minutest fraction, is clearly and distinctly chargeable with injustice. It is thus, that, in respect of this particu-

lar virtue, there may turn, on the difference of a single farthing, the utmost difference, or, I should rather say, the most distinct and diametric opposition between two characters. He who defrauds or steals, though but to the amount of a farthing, not only differs in degree, but differs in kind, or belongs to a distinct and opposite *genus* of character, from him whom no temptation could ever lead to swerve from the unbending and rectilinear course of virtue,—who would recoil with the utmost moral determination and delicacy from the slightest deviation; and would feel, as if principle had struck its surrender, and was now lying prostrate and degraded, should he enter by a single inch, or plant one footstep on the forbidden territory.

Generosity, again, is an indeterminate virtue, and why?—because there is no such definite line of separation between this virtue and its counterpart vice, as that you could pass by instant transition from it to its opposite. It does not proceed by arithmetical differences of a farthing more or less. You could not, as in the place of distinction between justice and injustice, put your finger at the point, where, in respect of this virtue of generosity, two men, by ever so little on the opposite sides of it, stood contrasted in diametric opposition to each other. The man who differs from his neighbour in withholding the farthing that is due, differs as much from him, as a vice does from its opposite virtue. The man who differs from his neighbour in withholding the farthing that would have brought his donation to an equality with the other's, only differs, not in kind but in degree and that very imperceptibly, being only a little less liberal, and a little less generous than his fellow. In the determinate virtue, one, by a single farthing, or a single footstep, might pass from a state of pure and exalted morality to a state of crime. In the indeterminate, there is what painters would call a shading off—a melting of hues into each other—a slow and insensible graduation.

It is not then with a determinate, as with an indeterminate virtue. You cannot tamper with it, even to the extent of the humblest fraction, without making an entire sacrifice. It has its palpable and precise landmark; and you cannot per-

mit the encroachment of a single hairbreadth, without a virtual giving up of the whole territory. This principle is fully recognised in the ethics of Scripture: “He who is unfaithful in the least, is unfaithful also in much.” Who would ever think of doing away the turpitude or the disgracefulness of theft, by alleging the paltriness and insignificance of the thing stolen? It is thus that the little pilferments of household service; the countless peccadilloes which go on in the departments of business, and confidential agency; the innumerable freedoms which are currently practised, and that without remorse, along the line which separates the just from the unjust,—do bespeak a fearful relaxation of principle in society. And it is thus also, on the other hand, that the purest and most honourable virtue, even to the extent of a moral chivalry, may be exemplified in littles. And, on the reverse position, that “he who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much,” may the Christian domestic, in the perfect sacredness and safety of all that is committed to her, even to the minutest articles of her custody and care, show forth the heroism of sublimest principle.

A determinate virtue can no more bear to be violated, even though only by one footstep of encroachment, than an independent country can bear an entrance upon its border, though only by half a mile, on the part of an invading army. It is enough, in either instance, if the line be only crossed, to call forth in the one case the remonstrances of offended principle, and in the other, the resistance and the fire of indignant patriotism. In neither example, needs the material harm to have been of any sensible amount, that in both there might be the utmost feeling of a moral violence.

Before applying this principle to the object of appreciating the character of our dear and departed friend, let me remark, that Scripture, all over, is full of the principle, and full of the most striking and pertinent illustrations of it. “Thou mayest not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” This was a determinate prohibition—and by the eating, though it had only been of one apple, complete and conclusive

outrage was done to it. The tree, uninjured by this act of disobedience, might, in the profusion of its golden clusters, have stood forth, to all appearance, in as great wealth and loveliness as before. But a definite commandment was broken; and therein it was that the whole damage and desecration lay. The jurisprudence of heaven was at stake; and so, on this solitary apple hinged the fate of our world. Infidels deride the history. Like those wretched arithmetical moralists, who make virtue an affair of product, and not of principle, they are unable to see how the moral grandeur of the transaction just rises, in proportion to the humility of its material accompaniments; and so, in the event of our earth burdened with a curse to its latest generations, do we behold at once the truth of our principle, and terrible demonstration given to the unbroken sanctity of the Godhead.

And the same principle ever and anon breaks forth in the subsequent dealings of God with the world. Let me only instance from the history of Israel's entrance into the promised land. The silver and the gold that were taken from their enemies, were all to be brought as consecrated things into the treasury of the Lord. This was a determinate precept; and just because of one violation, the progress of the Jewish victories was arrested, and the frown of Heaven's offended authority spread disaster and dismay over the hosts of Israel. It was Achan's accursed thing which distempered for a time, and was like to have blasted, the whole undertaking. They were his goodly Babylonish garment, and wedge of gold, and two hundred shekels of silver—secreted in the midst of an otherwise immaculate camp—that called forth the resentment and the reckoning of a God of vengeance; and, not till the whole burden of this provocation was swept away—not till the offence, and the offending household, were taken forth from the midst of the congregation and destroyed—did God turn Him from the fierceness of his anger, or was the jealousy of Heaven appeased, because of the injury done to a commandment intact and unviolable.

And, lastly, what has been so often exemplified in the history of the Old, is

alike exemplified in the doctrines and declarations of the New Testament. "A man," says the apostle, "is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." This is a determinate principle; but the Judaizing Christians would fain have introduced one slight and circumstantial exception to it. They made a stand for the rite of circumcision; and were willing that all the other works of the law should be discharged from the matter of our justifying righteousness, were there only, along with the faith of Christ, a place found for this distinguishing ordinance of their nation. It is against this demand and predilection of the Jews that the apostle sets himself, in his epistle to the Galatians—where he rejects the compromise; and proves, by admirable reasoning, that it would not only deform the faith of the Gospel, but destroy it.

Admit this, trifling though it may appear, and "Christ is dead in vain;" you have fallen from your dependence upon Him, and he has "become of no effect unto you." It is thus, that this bold, this uncompromising champion of the Church's purity, has bequeathed, in this epistle, a precious example to the Christian ministers of all ages. What Luther, after him, called the article of a standing or a falling church, is here defended from the contact and the contamination of every deleterious ingredient. The *materiel* of a sinner's justification with God, instead of being partitioned, as many would have it, between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of man, is strenuously contended for by the apostle in this argument, as being pure, unmixed, and homogeneous. The epistle to the Galatians is a composition charged throughout with the very essence of principle; and the thing to be noted is, that while in appearance Paul is only warding off from the religion of Christ a misplaced or incongruous ceremony, he embarks the whole of his apostolic strength and apostolic zeal upon the contest, and is, in fact, fighting for the foundation of the faith.

This will at once prepare you to understand, what I have taken the liberty of terming, a characteristic of his theology, whose general character I have described as being the theology of the Church of

Scotland. The peculiarity lay in this, that present him with a measure, and he, of all other men, saw at once, and with the force of instant discernment, the principle that was embodied in it. And did that principle belong to the class of the determinate, he furthermore saw, with every sound moralist before him, that he could not recede, by one inch or hair-breadth, from the assertion of it, without making a virtual surrender of the whole. The point of resistance then, it is obvious, must be at the beginning of the mischief—or at that part in the border of the vineyard, where it first threatened to make inroad. It was there he planted his footstep; and there, with the might and prowess of a champion, did he ward off from our Church, many a hurtful and withering contamination. His was never a puerile or unmeaning conflict—but a conflict of high moral elements. It was the warfare of a giant, enlisted on the side of some great principle; and, with a heart always in the right place, it was this which imparted a substantial rectitude to every cause, and threw a moral grandeur over his controversies.

You are aware that no two things can be more dissimilar, than a religion of points, and a religion of principles. No one will suspect his of being a religion of senseless or unmeaning points. Altogether, there was a manhood in his understanding—a strength and a firmness in the whole staple of his mind, as remote as possible from whatever is weakly and superstitiously fanciful. It is therefore, you will find, that whenever he laid the stress of his zeal or energy on a cause—instead of a stress disproportionate to its importance, there was always the weight of some great, some cardinal principle underneath to sustain it. It is thus, that every subject he undertook was throughout charged with sentiment. The whole drift and doings of the man were instinct with it; and that, too, sentiment fresh from the word of God, or warm with generous enthusiasm for the best interests of the Church and of the species.

There is one peculiarity by which he was signalized above all his fellows; and which makes him an incalculable loss, both to the Church and to the Country at large. We have known men of great

power, but they wanted promptitude; and we have known men of great promptitude, but they wanted power. The former, if permitted to concentrate their energies on one great object, may, by dint of a riveted perseverance, succeed in its accomplishment—but they cannot bear to have this concentration broken up; and it is torture to all their habits, when assailed by the importunity of those manifold and miscellaneous applications, to which every public man is exposed, from the philanthropy of our modern day. The latter again—that is, they who have the promptitude but not the power, facility without force, and whose very lightness favours both the exceeding variety and velocity of their movements,—why, they are alert and serviceable, and can acquit themselves in a respectable way of any slender or secondary part which is put into their hands; but then, they want predominance and momentum in any one direction to which they may betake themselves. But in him, never did such ponderous faculties meet with such marvellous power of wielding them at pleasure,—insomuch, that even on the impulse of most unforeseen occasions, he could bring them immediately to bear—and that, with sweeping and resistless effect, on the object before him. Such a combination of forces enlisted, as all within him was, on the side of Christianity, would have been of incalculable service in this our day. It is true, the land in which we live is yet free from the taint and the scandal of so gross an abomination; but you cannot fail to have remarked, how, mixed up with their rancorous politics, there have of late been the frequent outbreakings of a coarse and revolting impiety in the popular meetings of England. In the whole compass of the moral world, we know not a more hideous spectacle than plebeian infidelity, with its rude invectives, its savage and boisterous outcry against all the restraints and institutions of the gospel. If, indeed, our next war is to be a war of principles, then, before the battle is begun, the noblest of our champions has fallen. Yet we dare not give up in despondency, a cause, which has truth for its basis, and the guarantee of Heaven's omnipotence for its complete and everlasting triumph. In this reeling of the nations, this gradual loosening of all

spirits from the ancient holds of habit and of principle—still we cannot fear that the Church, the one and indestructible Church, though tossed and cradled in the storm, will not be riveted more securely upon its basis. “We are distressed, but not in despair; troubled, yet not forsaken; cast down, yet not destroyed.” “Help, Lord, when the godly man ceaseth, and the righteous fail from the children of men.”

But let me again offer one word of special address to the members of his congregation. I have spoken of his resistance to compromise in all the great matters of Christian faith and Christian practice. Let me entreat, that though dead, he may still speak this lesson to you. I would rather, and I am quite sure that all along he would, that your security before God rested altogether on works, or altogether on grace, rather than that, like the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, partly of clay, and partly of iron, it rested on the motley foundation of two unlike and heterogeneous ingredients. Hold fast what you have gotten from him on this subject; and be assured that if, forgetful of the decision and distinctness of his principles, you ever shall listen with pleasure to him who vacillates from the one to the other, or would attempt a composition between the righteousness of man, and the righteousness of Christ—there is not a likelier method in which shipwreck can be made both of the faith and the piety of this congregation. And you know, that while none more clear and confident than he in preaching the dogmata of his creed, he was far, and very far from being a preacher of dogmata alone. You recollect his earnest enforcement of duty in all that concerned the relation between God and man, and in all that concerned the relations of human society. But it was duty bottomed on an evangelical ground-work—even on those deep and well-laid principles of belief, by which alone the righteousness of the life and practice is upholden. He was truly a preacher of faith—yet his last words in this pulpit, may be regarded as his dying testimony to the worth of that charity which is greater than faith. I do not mean the charity of a mere contribution by the hand; but the charity of that love

in the heart, which prompts to all the services of humanity.*

I must now satisfy myself with a few slight and rapid touches on his character as a man. It is a subject I dare hardly approach. To myself, he was at all times a joyous, hearty, gallant, honourable, and out and out most-trustworthy friend—while, in harmony with a former observation, there were beautifully projected on this broad and general ground-work, some of friendship's finest and most considerate delicacies. By far the most declared and discernible feature in his character, was a dauntless, and direct, and right-forward honesty, that needed no disguise for itself, and was impatient of aught like dissimulation or disguise in other men. There were withal a heart and a hilarity in his companionship, that everywhere carried its own welcome along with it; and there were none who moved with greater acceptance, or wielded a greater ascendant over so wide a circle of living society. Christianity does not overbear the constitutional varieties either of talent or of temperament. After the conversion of the apostles, their complexional differences of mind and character remained with them; and there can be no doubt that, apart from, and anterior to the influence of the gospel, the hand of nature had stamped a generosity, and a sincerity, and an openness on the subject of our description, among the very strongest of the lineaments which belong to him. Under an urgent sense of rectitude, he delivered himself with vigour and with vehemence, in behalf of what he deemed to be its cause—but I would have you to discriminate between the vehemence of passion and the vehemence of sentiment, which, like though they be in outward expression, are wholly different and dissimilar in themselves. His was, mainly, the vehemence of sentiment, which, hurrying him when it did, into what he afterwards felt to be excesses, were immediately followed up by the relentings of a noble nature. The pulpit is not the place for the idolatry of an unqualified panegyric on any of our fellow-mortals—but it is impossible not

* His last sermon, preached with all his accustomed earnestness and zeal, was a pleading in behalf of the Infirmary of Edinburgh.

to acknowledge, that whatever might have been his errors, he was right at bottom—that truth, and piety, and ardent philanthropy formed the substratum of his character; and that the tribute was altogether a just one, when the profoundest admiration, along with the pungent regrets of his fellow-citizens, did follow him to his grave.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Blessedness of considering the Case of the Poor.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”
PSALM xli. 1.

THERE is an evident want of congeniality between the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the Christian. The term “wisdom,” carries my reverence along with it. It brings before me a grave and respectable character, whose rationality predominates over the inferior principles of his constitution; and to whom I willingly yield that peculiar homage which the enlightened, and the judicious, and the manly, are sure to exact from a surrounding neighbourhood. Now, so long as this wisdom has for its object some secular advantage, I yield it an unqualified reverence. It is a reverence which all understand, and all sympathise with. If, in private life, a man be wise in the management of his farm, or his fortune, or his family; or if, in public life, he have wisdom to steer an empire through all its difficulties, and to carry it to aggrandisement and renown—the respect which I feel for such wisdom as this is most cordial and entire, and supported by the universal acknowledgement of all whom I call to attend to it.

Let me now suppose that this wisdom has changed its object—that the man whom I am representing to exemplify this respectable attribute, instead of being wise for time, is wise for eternity—that he labours by the faith and sanctification of the gospel for unperishable honours—that, instead of listening to him with admiration at his sagacity, as he talks of business, or politics, or agriculture, we are compelled to listen to him talking of the hope within the veil, and of Christ being the power of God, and the wisdom of

God, unto salvation:—what becomes of your respect for him now? Are there not some of you who are quite sensible that this respect is greatly impaired, since the wisdom of the man has taken so unaccountable a change in its object and in its direction? The truth is, that the greater part of the world feel no respect at all for a wisdom which they do not comprehend. They may love the innocence of a decidedly religious character, but they feel no sublime or commanding sentiment of veneration for its wisdom. All the truth of the Bible, and all the grandeur of eternity, will not redeem it from a certain degree of contempt. Terms which lower, undervalue, and degrade, suggest themselves to the mind; and strongly dispose it to throw a mean and disagreeable colouring over the man, who, sitting loose to the objects of the world, has become altogether a Christian. It is needless to expatiate; but what I have seen myself, and what must have fallen under the observation of many whom I address, carry in them the testimony of experience to the assertion of the apostle, “that the things of the spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.”

Now, what I have said of the respectable attribute of wisdom, is applicable, with almost no variation, to another attribute of the human character, to which I would assign the gentler epithet of “lovely.” The attribute to which I allude, is that of benevolence. This is the burden of every poet’s song, and every eloquent and interesting enthusiast gives it his tes-

timony. I speak not of the enthusiasm of methodists and devotees, I speak of that enthusiasm of fine sentiment which embellishes the page of elegant literature, and is addressed to all her sighing and amiable votaries, in the various forms of novel, and poetry, and dramatic entertainment. You would think if any thing could bring the Christian at one with the world around him, it would be this; and that in the ardent benevolence which figures in novels, and sparkles in poetry, there would be an entire congeniality with the benevolence of the gospel. I venture to say, however, that there never existed a stronger repulsion between two contending sentiments, than between the benevolence of the Christian, and the benevolence which is the theme of elegant literature—that the one, with all its accompaniments of tears, and sensibilities, and interesting cottages, is neither felt nor understood by the Christian as such; and the other, with its work and its labour of love, its *enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, and its living, not to itself, but to the will of Him who died for us, and who rose again, is not only not understood, but positively nauseated, by the poetical *amateur*.

But the contrast does not stop here. The benevolence of the gospel is not only at antipodes with that of the visionary sons and daughters of poetry, but it even varies in some of its most distinguishing features from the experimental benevolence of real and familiar life. The fantastic benevolence of poetry is now indeed pretty well exploded; and, in the more popular works of the age, there is a benevolence of a far truer and more substantial kind substituted in its place—the benevolence which you meet with among men of business and observation—the benevolence which bustles and finds employment among the most public and ordinary scenes; and which seeks for objects, not where the flower blows loveliest, and the stream, with its gentle murmurs, falls sweetest on the ear; but finds them in its every-day walks, goes in quest of them through the heart of the great city, and is not afraid to meet them in the most putrid lanes and loathsome receptacles.

Now, it must be acknowledged, that this benevolence is of a far more respectable kind than that poetic sensibility, which

is of no use, because it admits of no application. Yet I am not afraid to say, that, respectable as it is, it does not come up to the benevolence of the Christian; and is at variance, in some of its most capital ingredients, with the morality of the gospel. It is well, and very well as far as it goes; and that Christian is wanting to the will of his Master, who refuses to share and go along with it. The Christian will do all this, but he would like to do more; and it is at the precise point where he proposes to do more, that he finds himself abandoned by the co-operation and good wishes of those who had hitherto supported him. The Christian goes as far as the votary of this useful benevolence; but then he would like to go further, and this is the point at which he is mortified to find that his old coadjutors refuse to go along with him; and that, instead of being strengthened by their assistance, he has their contempt and their ridicule, or, at all events, their total want of sympathy to contend with.

The truth is, that the benevolence I allude to, with all its respectable air of business and good sense, is altogether a secular benevolence. Through all the extent of its operations, it carries in it no reference to the eternal duration of its object. Time, and the accommodations of time, form all its object, and all its exercise. It labours, and often with success, to provide for its object a warm and a well-sheltered tenement; but it looks not beyond the few little years when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, when the soul shall be driven from its perishable tenement, and the only benevolence it will acknowledge or care for, will be the benevolence of those who have directed it to a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This, then, is the point at which the benevolence of the gospel separates from that worldly benevolence, to which, as far as it goes, I offer my cheerful and unmingled testimony. The one minds earthly things, the other has its conversation in heaven. Even when the immediate object of both is the same, you will generally perceive an evident distinction in the principle. Individuals, for example, may co-operate and will often meet in the same room, be members of the same society, and go hand in hand most cordially

together for the education of the poor. But the forming habits of virtuous industry, and good members of society, which are the sole consideration in the heart of the worldly philanthropist, are but mere accessories in the heart of the Christian. The main impulse of his benevolence, lies in furnishing the poor with the means of enjoying that bread of life which came down from heaven, and in introducing them to the knowledge of those Scriptures which are the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. Now, it is so far a blessing to the world, that there is a co-operation in the immediate object. But what I contend for, is, that there is a total want of congeniality in the principle; that the moment you strip the institution of its temporal advantages, and make it repose on the naked grandeur of eternity, it is fallen from, or laughed at, as one of the chimeras of fanaticism; and left to the despised efforts of those whom they esteem to be unaccountable people, who subscribe for missions, and squander their money on Bible societies. Strange effect, you would think, of eternity to degrade the object with which it is connected! But so it is. The blaze of glory, which is thrown around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher, is refused to the martyrdom of a Christian. When a statesman dies, who lifted his intrepid voice for the liberty of the species, we hear of nothing but of the shrines and the monuments of immortality. Put into his place one of those sturdy reformers, who, unmoved by councils and inquisitions, stood up for the religious liberties of the world: and it is no sooner done, than the full tide of congenial sympathy and admiration is at once arrested. We have all heard of the benevolent apostleship of Howard, and what Christian will be behind his fellows with his applauding testimony? But will they, on the other hand, share his enthusiasm, when he tells them of the apostleship of Paul, who, in the sublimer sense of the term, accomplished the liberty of the captive, and brought them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house? Will they share in the holy benevolence of the apostle, when he pours out his ardent effusions in behalf of his countrymen? They were at that time

on the eve of the cruellest sufferings. The whole vengeance of the Roman power was mustering to bear upon them. The siege and destruction of their city form one of the most dreadful tragedies in the history of war. Yet Paul seems to have had another object in his eye. It was their souls and their eternity which engrossed him. Can you sympathise with him in this principle; or join in kindred benevolence with him, when he says, that "my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved?"

But, to bring my list of examples to a close, the most remarkable of them all may be collected from the history of the present attempts which are now making to carry the knowledge of divine revelation into the Pagan and uncivilized countries of the world. Now, it may be my ignorance, but I am certainly not aware of the fact—that without a book of religious faith; without religion, in fact, being the errand and occasion, we have ever been able in modern times so far to compel the attention and to subdue the habits of savages, as to throw in among them the use and the possession of a written language. Certain it is, however, at all events, that this very greatest step in the process of converting a wild man of the woods into a humanized member of society, has been accomplished by Christian missionaries. They have put into the hands of barbarians this mighty instrument of a written language, and they have taught them how to use it.* They have formed an orthography for wandering and untutored savages. They have given a shape and a name to their barbarous articulations; and the children of men, who lived on the prey of the wilderness, are now forming in village schools to the arts and the decencies of cultivated

* As, for instance, Mr. John Elliot, and the Moravian brethren among the Indians of New England and Pennsylvania; the Moravians in South America; Mr. Hans Egede, and the Moravians in Greenland; the latter in Labrador, among the Esquimaux; the Missionaries in Otaheite, and other South Sea Islands; and Mr. Brunton, under the patronage of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, who reduced the language of the Susoos, a nation on the coast of Africa, to writing and grammatical form, and printed in it a spelling-book, vocabulary, catechism, and some tracts. Other instances besides might be given.

life. Now, I am not involving you in the controversy, whether civilization should precede Christianity, or Christianity should precede civilization. It is not to what has been said on the subject, but to what has been done, that we are pointing your attention. We appeal to the fact; and as an illustration of the principle we have been attempting to lay before you, we call upon you to mark the feelings, and the countenance, and the language, of the mere academic moralist, when you put into his hand the authentic and proper document where the fact is recorded—we mean a missionary report, or a missionary magazine. We know that there are men who have so much of the firm nerve and hardihood of philosophy about them, as not to be repelled from truth in whatever shape, or from whatever quarter, it comes to them. But there are others of a humbler cast, who have transferred their homage from the omnipotence of truth, to the omnipotence of a name; who, because missionaries, while they are accomplishing the civilization and labouring also for the eternity of savages, have lifted the cry of fanaticism against them; who, because missionaries revere the word of God, and utter themselves in the language of the New Testament, nauseate every word that comes from them as overrun with the flavour and phraseology of methodism; who are determined, in short, to abominate all that is missionary, and suffer the very sound of the epithet to fill their minds with an overwhelming association of repugnance, and prejudice, and disgust.

We would not have counted this so remarkable an example, had it not been that missionaries are accomplishing the very object on which the advocates for civilization love to expatiate. They are working for temporal good far more effectually than any adventurer in the cause ever did before; but mark the want of congeniality between the benevolence of this world and the benevolence of the Christian; they incur contempt, because they are working for spiritual and eternal good also: Nor do the earthly blessings which they scatter so abundantly in their way, redeem from scorn the purer and the nobler principle which inspires them.

These observations seem to be an ap-

pliable introduction to the subject before us. I call your attention to the *way* in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however useful for the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle within which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisible soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration*—Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor—a grave and prosaic exercise I do allow, and which makes no figure in these high-wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstasies of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognizance of a higher faculty—a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation as well as of sentiment; and, in so doing, it puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions, by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon

the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage, attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle. I want to press its advantages upon you, for I can in no other way recommend the Society whose claims I am appointed to lay before you, so effectually to your patronage. My time will only permit me to lay before you a few of their advantages, and I shall therefore confine myself to two leading particulars.

I. The man who considers the poor, instead of slumbering over the emotions of a useless sensibility, among those imaginary beings whom poetry and romance have laid before him in all the elegance of fictitious history, will bestow the labour and the attention of actual business among the poor of the real and the living world. Benevolence is the burden of every romantic tale, and of every poet's song. It is dressed out in all the fairy enchantments of imagery and eloquence. All is beauty to the eye and music to the ear. Nothing seen but pictures of felicity, and nothing heard but the soft whispers of gratitude and affection. The reader is carried along by this soft and delighted representation of virtue. He accompanies his hero through all the fancied varieties of his history. He goes along with him to the cottage of poverty and disease, surrounded, as we may suppose, with all the charms of rural obscurity, and where the murmurs of an adjoining rivulet accord with the finer and more benevolent sensibilities of the mind. He enters this enchanting retirement, and meets with a picture of distress, adorned in all the elegance of fiction. Perhaps a father laid on a bed of languishing, and supported by the labours of a pious and affectionate family, where kindness breathes in every word, and anxiety sits upon every countenance—where the industry of his children struggles in vain to supply the cordials which his poverty denies him—where nature sinks every hour, and all feel a gloomy foreboding, which they strive to conceal, and tremble to express. The hero of romance enters, and the glance of his benevolent eye enlightens this darkest recess of misery. He turns him

to the bed of languishing, tells the sick man that there is still hope, and smiles comfort on his despairing children. Day after day he repeats his kindness and his charity. They hail his approach as the footsteps of an angel of mercy. The father lives to bless his deliverer. The family reward his benevolence by the homage of an affectionate gratitude; and in the piety of their evening prayer, offer up thanks to the God of heaven, for opening the hearts of the rich to kindly and beneficent attentions. The reader weeps with delight. The visions of paradise play before his fancy. His tears flow, and his heart dissolves in all the luxury of tenderness.

Now, we do not deny that the members of the Destitute Sick Society *may* at times have met with some such delightful scene, to soothe, and to encourage them. But put the question to any of their visitors, and he will not fail to tell you, that if they had never moved but when they had something like this to excite and to gratify their hearts, they would seldom have moved at all; and their usefulness to the poor would have been reduced to a very humble fraction of what they have actually done for them. What is this but to say, that it is the business of a religious instructor to give you, not the elegant, but the true representation of benevolence—to represent it not so much as a luxurious indulgence to the finer sensibilities of the mind, but according to the sober declaration of Scripture, as a work and as a labour—as a business in which you must encounter vexation, opposition, and fatigue; where you are not always to meet with that elegance which allures the fancy, or with that humble and retired adversity, which interests the more tender propensities of the heart; but as a business where reluctance must often be overcome by a sense of duty, and where, though oppressed at every step, by envy, disgust and disappointment, you are bound to persevere, in obedience to the law of God, and the sober instigations of principle.

The benevolence of the gospel lies in action. The benevolence of our fictitious writers, is a kind of high-wrought delicacy of feeling and sentiment. The one dissipates all its fervour in sighs, and

tears, and idle aspirations—the other reserves its strength for efforts and execution. The one regards it as a luxurious enjoyment for the heart—the other, as a work and a business for the hand. The one sits in indolence, and broods, in visionary rapture, over its schemes of ideal philanthropy—the other steps abroad, and enlightens, by its presence, the dark and pestilential hovels of disease. The one wastes away in empty ejaculation—the other gives time and trouble to the work of beneficence—gives education to the orphan—provides clothes for the naked, and lays food on the tables of the hungry. The one is indolent and capricious, and often does mischief by the occasional overflowings of a whimsical and ill-directed charity—the other is vigilant and discerning, and takes care lest its distributions be injudicious, and the efforts of benevolence be misapplied. The one is soothed with the luxury of feeling, and reclines in easy and indolent satisfaction—the other shakes off the deceitful languour of contemplation and solitude, and delights in a scene of activity. Remember, that virtue, in general, is not to feel but to do—not merely to conceive a purpose, but to carry that purpose into execution—not merely to be overpowered by the impression of a sentiment, but to practise what it loves, and to imitate what it admires.

To be benevolent in speculation, is often to be selfish in action and in reality. The vanity and the indolence of man delude him into a thousand inconsistencies. He professes to love the name and the semblance of virtue; but the labour of exertion and of self-denial, terrifies him from attempting it. The emotions of kindness are delightful to his bosom, but then they are little better than a selfish indulgence. They terminate in his own enjoyment. They are a mere refinement of luxury. His eye melts over the picture of fictitious distress, while not a tear is left for the actual starvation and misery by which he is surrounded. It is easy to indulge the imaginations of a visionary heart in going over a scene of fancied affliction, because here there is no sloth to overcome—no avaricious propensity to control—no offensive or disgusting circumstance to allay the unmingled impression of sympathy which

a soft and elegant picture is calculated to awaken. It is not so easy to be benevolent in action and in reality, because here there is fatigue to undergo—there is time and money to give—there is the mortifying spectacle of vice, and folly, and ingratitude, to encounter. We like to give you the fair picture of love to man; because to throw over it false and fictitious embellishments, is injurious to its cause. They elevate the fancy by romantic visions which can never be realized. They embitter the heart by the most severe and mortifying disappointments, and often force us to retire in disgust from what heaven has intended to be the theatre of our discipline and preparation. Take the representation of the Bible. Benevolence is a work and a labour. It often calls for the severest efforts of vigilance and industry—a habit of action not to be acquired in the schools of fine sentiment, but in the walks of business; in the dark and dismal receptacles of misery; in the hospitals of disease; in the putrid lanes of our great cities where poverty dwells in lank and ragged wretchedness, agonized with pain, faint with hunger, and shivering in a frail and unsheltered tenement.

You are not to conceive yourself a real lover of your species, and entitled to the praise or the reward of benevolence, because you weep over a fictitious representation of human misery. A man may weep in the indolence of a studious and contemplative retirement; he may breathe all the tender aspirations of humanity; but what avails all this warm and effusive benevolence, if it is never exerted—if it never rises to execution—if it never carry him to the accomplishment of a single benevolent purpose—if it shrink from activity, and sicken at the pain of fatigue? It is easy, indeed, to come forward with the cant and hypocrisy of fine sentiment—to have a heart trained to the emotions of benevolence, while the hand refuses the labour of discharging its offices—to weep for amusement, and have nothing to spare for human suffering, but the tribute of an indolent and unmeaning sympathy. Many of you must be acquainted with that corruption of Christian doctrine which has been termed Antinomianism. It professes the highest reverence for the Su-

preme Being; while it refuses obedience to the lessons of His authority. It professes the highest gratitude for the sufferings of Christ; while it refuses that course of life and action which He demands of his followers. It professes to adore the tremendous Majesty of heaven, and to weep in shame and in sorrow over the sinfulness of degraded humanity; while every day it insults heaven by the enormity of its misdeeds, and evinces the insincerity of its repentance by its wilful perseverance in the practice of iniquity.

This Antinomianism is generally condemned; and none reprobate it more than the votaries of fine sentiment—your men of taste and elegant literature—your epicures of feeling, who riot in all the luxury of theatrical emotion; and who, in their admiration of what is tender, and beautiful, and cultivated, have always turned with disgust from the doctrines of a sour and illiberal theology. We may say to such, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." Theirs is, to all intents and purposes, Antinomianism—and an Antinomianism of a far more dangerous and deceitful kind, than the Antinomianism of a spurious and pretended orthodoxy. In the Antinomianism of religion, there is nothing to fascinate or deceive you. It wears an air of repulsive bigotry, more fitted to awaken disgust, than to gain the admiration of proselytes. There is a glaring deformity in its aspect, which alarms you at the very outset, and is an outrage to that natural morality, which, dark and corrupted as it is, is still strong enough to lift its loud remonstrances against it. But, in the Antinomianism of high-wrought sentiment, there is a deception far more insinuating. It steals upon you under the semblance of virtue. It is supported by the delusive colouring of imagination and poetry. It has all the graces and embellishments of literature to recommend it. Vanity is soothed, and conscience lulls itself to repose in this dream of feeling and of indolence.

Let us dismiss these lying vanities, and regulate our lives by the truth and soberness of the New Testament. Benevolence is not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It is a business with men as they are, and with human life as drawn by the rough hand of experience. It is a duty which you must per-

form at the call of principle; though there be no voice of eloquence to give splendour to your exertions, and no music of poetry to lead your willing footsteps through the bowers of enchantment. It is not the impulse of high and ecstatic emotion. It is an exertion of principle. You must go to the poor man's cottage, though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you by the gentleness of its murmurs. If you look for the romantic simplicity of fiction, you will be disappointed; but it is your duty to persevere, in spite of every discouragement. Benevolence is not merely a feeling, but a principle—not a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.

It must now be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributions of charity. You must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises. Will he husband your charity with care, or will he squander it away in idleness and dissipation? Will he satisfy himself with the brutal luxury of the moment, and neglect the supply of his more substantial necessities, or suffer his children to be trained in ignorance and depravity? Will charity corrupt him into slothfulness? What is his peculiar necessity? Is it the want of health, or the want of employment? Is it the pressure of a numerous family? Does he need medicine to administer to the diseases of his children? Does he need fuel or raiment to protect them from the inclemency of winter? Does he need money to satisfy the yearly demands of his landlord; or to purchase books, and to pay for the education of his offspring?

To give money, is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's sick bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. You must examine his accounts. You must try to recover those debts which are due to his family. You must try to recover those wages which are detained by the injustice or the rapacity of his master. You must employ

your mediation with his superiors. You must represent to them the necessities of his situation. You must solicit their assistance, and awaken their feelings to the tale of his calamity. This is benevolence in its plain, and sober, and substantial reality; though eloquence may have withheld its imagery, and poetry may have denied its graces and its embellishments. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but, if done under the influence of Christian principle—in a word, if done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity.

You have all heard of the division of labour, and I wish you to understand, that the advantage of this principle may be felt as much in the operations of charity, as in the operations of trade and of manufactures. The work of beneficence does not lie in the one act of giving money; there must be the act of attendance; there must be the act of inquiry; there must be the act of judicious application. But I can conceive that an individual may be so deficient in the varied experience and attention which a work so extensive demands, that he may retire in disgust and discouragement from the practice of charity altogether. The institution of a Society such as this, saves this individual to the cause. It takes upon itself all the subsequent acts in the work and labour of love, and restricts his part to the mere act of giving money. It fills the middle space between the dispensers and the recipients of charity. The habits of many who now hear me, may disqualify them for the work of examination. They may have no time for it; they may live at a distance from the objects; they may neither know how to introduce, nor how to conduct themselves in the management of all the details; their want of practice and of experience may disable them for the work of repelling imposition; they may try to gain the necessary habits; and it is right that every individual among us should each, in his own sphere, consider the poor, and qualify themselves for a judicious and discriminating charity. But, in the mean time, the Society for the

Relief of the Destitute Sick, is an instrument ready made to our hands. Avail yourselves of this instrument immediately; and, by the easiest part of the exercise of charity, which is to give money, you carry home to the poor all the benefit of its most difficult exercises.*

The experience which you want, the members of this laudable Society are in possession of. By the work and observation of years, a stock of practical wisdom is now accumulated among them. They have been long inured to all that is loathsome and discouraging in this good work; and they have nerve, and hardihood, and principle, to front it. They are every way qualified to be the carriers of your bounty, for it is a path they have long travelled in. Give the money, and these conscientious men will soon bring it into contact with the right objects. They know the way through all the obscurities of this metropolis; and they can bring the offerings of your charity to people whom you will never see, and into houses you will never enter. It is not easy to conceive, far less to compute the extent of human misery; but these men can give you experience for it. They can show you their registers of the sick and of the dying; they are familiar with disease in all its varieties of faintness, and breathlessness, and pain.—Sad union! they are called to witness it in conjunction with poverty; and well do they know that there is an eloquence in the imploring looks of these helpless poor, which no description can set before you. Oh! my brethren, figure to yourselves the calamity in all its soreness, and measure your bounty by the actual greatness of the claims, and not by the feebleness of their advocate.

I have trespassed upon your patience; but, at the hazard of carrying my address to a length that is unusual, I must still say more. Nor would I ever forgive myself if I neglected to set the eternity of the poor in all its importance before you. This is the second point of consid-

* A Society for the Destitute Sick, is not nearly liable to such an extent of objection, as a Society for the Relief of General Indigence. But it were well, if they kept themselves rigidly to their assigned object; and that the cases to which they administered their aid were competently certified.

eration to which I wish to direct you. The man who considers the poor, will give his chief anxiety to the wants of their eternity. It must be evident to all of you, that this anxiety is little felt. I do not appeal for the evidence of this to the selfish part of mankind—there we are not to expect it. I go to those who are really benevolent—who have a wish to make others happy, and who take trouble in so doing; and it is a striking observation, how little the salvation of these others is the object of that benevolence which makes them so amiable. It will be found, that, in by far the greater number of instances, this principle is all consumed on the accommodations of time, and the necessities of the body. It is the meat which feeds them—the garment which covers them—the house which shelters them—the money which purchases all things: these, I say, are what form the chief topics of benevolent anxiety. Now, we do not mean to discourage this principle. We cannot afford it; there is too little of it; and it forms too refreshing an exception to that general selfishness which runs throughout the haunts of business and ambition, for us to say any thing against it. We are not cold-blooded enough to refuse our delighted concurrence to an exercise so amiable in its principle, and so pleasing in the warm and comfortable spectacle which it lays before us.

The poor, it is true, ought never to forget, that it is to their own industry, and to the wisdom and economy of their own management, that they are to look for the elements of subsistence—that if idleness and prodigality shall lay hold of the mass of our population, no benevolence, however unbounded, can ever repair a mischief so irrecoverable—that if they will not labour for themselves, it is not in the power of the rich to create a sufficiency for them; and that though every heart were opened, and every purse emptied in the cause, it would absolutely go for nothing towards forming a well-fed, a well-lodged, or a well-conditioned peasantry. Still, however, there are cases which no foresight could prevent, and no industry could provide for—where the blow falls heavy and unexpected on some devoted son or daughter of misfortune, and where, though thought-

lessness and folly may have had their share, benevolence, not very nice in its calculations, will feel the overpowering claim of actual, helpless, and imploring misery. Now, I again offer my cheerful testimony to such benevolence as this; I count it delightful to see it singling out its object, and sustaining it against the cruel pressure of age and of indigence; and when I enter a cottage where I see a warmer fireside, or a more substantial provision, than the visible means can account for, I say that the landscape, in all its summer glories, does not offer an object so gratifying, as when referred to the vicinity of the great man's house, and the people who live in it, and am told that I will find my explanation *there*. Kind and amiable people! your benevolence is most lovely in its display, but oh! it is perishable in its consequences. Does it never occur to you, that in a few years this favourite will die—that he will go to the place where neither cold nor hunger will reach him, but that a mighty interest remains, of which, both of us may know the certainty, though neither you nor I can calculate the extent. Your benevolence is too short—it does not shoot far enough a-head—it is like regaling a child with a sweetmeat or a toy, and then abandoning the happy unreflecting infant to exposure. You make the poor old man happy with your crumbs and your fragments, but he is an infant on the mighty range of infinite duration; and will you leave the soul, which has this infinity to go through, to its chance? How comes it that the grave should throw so impenetrable a shroud over the realities of eternity? How comes it that heaven, and hell, and judgment, should be treated as so many nonentities; and that there should be as little real and operative sympathy felt for the soul, which lives for ever, as for the body after it is dead, or for the dust into which it moulders? Eternity is longer than time; the arithmetic, my brethren, is all on our side upon this question; and the wisdom which calculates, and guides itself by calculation, gives its weighty and respectable support to what may be called the benevolence of faith.

Now, if there be one employment more fitted than another to awaken this benevolence, it is the peculiar employment

of that Society for which I am now pleading. I would have anticipated such benevolence from the situation they occupy, and the information before the public bears testimony to the fact. The truth is, that the diseases of the body may be looked upon as so many outlets through which the soul finds its way to eternity. Now, it is at these outlets that the members of this Society have stationed themselves. This is the interesting point of survey at which they stand, and from which they command a look of both worlds. They have placed themselves in the avenues which lead from time to eternity, and they have often to witness the awful transition of a soul hovering at the entrance—struggling its way through the valley of the shadow of death, and at last breaking loose from the confines of all that is visible. Do you think it likely that men, with such spectacles before them, will withstand the sense of eternity? No, my brethren, they cannot, they have not. Eternity, I rejoice to announce to you, is not forgotten by them; and with their care for the diseases of the body, they are neither blind nor indifferent to the fact, that the soul is diseased also. We know it well. There is an indolent and superficial theology, which turns its eyes from the danger, and feels no pressing call for the application of the remedy—which reposes more in its own vague and self-assumed conceptions of the mercy of God, than in the firm and consistent representations of the New Testament—which overlooks the existence of the disease altogether, and therefore feels no alarm, and exerts no urgency in the business—which, in the face of all the truths and all the severities that are uttered in the Word of God, leaves the soul to its chance; or, in other words, by neglecting to administer any thing specific for the salvation of the soul, leaves it to perish. We do not want to involve you in controversies; we only ask you to open the New Testament, and attend to the obvious meaning of a word which occurs frequently in its pages—we mean the word *saved*. The term surely implies, that the present state of the thing to be saved, is a lost and undone state. If a tree be in a healthful state from its infancy, you never apply the term *saved* to it, though you see

its beautiful foliage, its flourishing blossoms, its abundant produce, and its progressive ascent through all the varieties incidental to a sound and a prosperous tree. But if it were diseased in its infancy, and ready to perish, and if it were restored by management and artificial applications, then you would say of this tree that it was *saved*; and the very term implies some previous state of uselessness and corruption. What, then, are we to make of the frequent occurrence of this term in the New Testament, as applied to a human being? If men come into this world pure and innocent; and have nothing more to do but to put forth the powers with which nature has endowed them, and so to rise through the progressive stages of virtue and excellence, to the rewards of immortality, you would not say of these men that they were *saved* when they were translated to these rewards. These rewards of man are the natural effects of his obedience, and the term *saved* is not at all applicable to such a supposition. But the God of the Bible says differently. If a man obtain heaven at all, it is by being *saved*. He is in a diseased state; and it is by the healing application of the blood of the Son of God, that he is restored from that state. The very title applied to Him proves the same thing. He is called *our Saviour*. The deliverance which He effects is called *our salvation*. The men whom He doth deliver are called the *saved*. Doth not this imply some previous state of disease and helplessness? And from the frequent and incidental occurrence of this term, may we not gather an additional testimony to the truth of what is elsewhere more expressly revealed to us, that we are lost by nature, and that to obtain recovery, we must be found in Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost? He that believeth on the Son of God shall be *saved*; but he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.

We know that there are some who loathe this representation; but this is just another example of the substantial interests of the poor being sacrificed to mismanagement and delusion. It is to be hoped that there are many who have looked the disease fairly in the face, and are ready to reach forward the remedy

adapted to relieve it. We should have no call to attend to the spiritual interests of men, if they could safely be left to themselves, and to the spontaneous operation of those powers with which it is supposed that nature has endowed them. But this is not the state of the case. We come into the world with the principles of sin and condemnation within us; and, in the congenial atmosphere of this world's example, these ripen fast for the execution of the sentence. During the period of this short but interesting passage to another world, the remedy is in the gospel held out to all; and the freedom and universality of its invitations, while it opens assured admission to all who will, must aggravate the weight and severity of the sentence to those who will not; and upon them the dreadful energy of that saying will be accomplished,—“How shall they escape if they neglect so great a salvation?”

We know part of your labours for the eternity of the poor. We know that you have brought the Bible into contact with many a soul. And we are sure this is suiting the remedy to the disease; for the Bible contains those words which are the power of God through faith unto salvation, to every one who believes them.

To this established instrument for working faith in the heart, add the instrument of hearing. When you give the Bible, accompany the gift with the living energy of a human voice—let prayer, and advice, and explanation, be brought to act upon them; and let the warm and deeply-felt earnestness of your hearts, discharge itself upon theirs in the impressive tones of sincerity, and friendship and good will. This is going substantially to work. It is, if I may use the expression, bringing the right element to bear upon the case before you; and be assured, that every treatment of a convinced and guilty

mind is superficial and ruinous, which does not lead it to the Saviour, and bring before it His sacrifice and atonement, and the influences of that Spirit bestowed through His obedience on all who believe on Him.

While in the full vigour of health, we may count it enough to take up with something short of this. But—striking testimony to evangelical truth! go to the awful reality of a human soul on the eve of its departure from the body, and you will find that all those rapid sentimentalities which partake not of the substantial doctrine of the New Testament, are good for nothing. Hold up your face, my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. Be not ashamed of its phraseology. It is the right instrument to handle in the great work of calling a human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the Word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science, must give way before its overbearing authority. Walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, in the twofold office of caring for the disease of the body, and administering to the wants of the soul; and though you may fail in the former—though the patient may never rise and walk, yet, by the blessing of heaven upon your fervent and effectual endeavours, the latter object may be gained—the soul may be lightened of all its anxieties—the whole burden of its diseases may be swept away—it may be of good cheer, because its sins are forgiven—and the right direction may be impressed upon it which will carry it forward in progress to a happy eternity. Death may not be averted, but death may be disarmed. It may be stripped of its terrors, and instead of a devouring enemy, it may be hailed as a messenger of triumph.

SERMON XXXV.

On Preaching to the Common People.

“And the common people heard him gladly.”—MARK XII. 37.

Two discourses might be framed on this text—one addressed to the preachers of sermons, and another to the hearers of sermons. The great topic of the first should be the example of our Saviour as a preacher; and the great topic held out should be that He preached to the delight and acceptance of the common people. There is no doubt the vanity of popular applause; but there is also the vanity of an ambitious eloquence, which throws the common people at a distance from our instructions altogether; which, in laying itself out for the admiration of the tasteful and enlightened few, locks up the bread of life from the multitude; which destroys this essential attribute of the gospel, that it is a message of glad tidings to the poor; and wretchedly atones by the wisdom of words, for the want of those plain and intelligible realities which all may apprehend and by which all may be edified. Now the great aim of our ministry is to win souls; and the soul of a poor man consists of precisely the same elements with the soul of a rich. They both labour under the same disease, and they both stand in need of the same treatment. The physician who administers to their bodies brings forward the same application to the same malady; and the physician who is singly intent on the cure of their souls will hold up to both the same peace-speaking blood, and the same sanctifying Spirit, and will preach to both in the same name, because the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. If he do otherwise, then is he preaching himself, instead of giving an entire and honest aim to the management of the case that is before him; and does the same provoking injustice to his hearers with the physician, who expends his visit in playing off the pedantry of airs and manners before the eyes of his agonizing patient—when he should be binding up his wounds, or letting him

know in plain language a plain and practicable remedy.

We hear of the orator of fashion, the orator of the learned, the orator of the mob. A minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ should be none of these; and, if an orator at all, it should be his distinction that he is an orator of the species. He should look beyond the accidental and temporary varieties of our condition; and recognise in every one who comes within his reach, the same affecting spectacle of a soul forfeited by sin, and that can only be restored by one Lord, one faith, one baptism. In the person of Nicodemus, it is likely, that both wealth and learning stood before the Saviour; but to His eye, these appear to have been paltry and perishable distinctions. He took up this case in precisely the same way that He would have done the case of one of the common people. They both laboured under the malignity of the same disease; and both, to be made meet for the inheritance, had to undergo the same regeneration. The varieties of fortune and accomplishment were of no importance at all in His argument. They were utterly insignificant as to the great purpose which He had in view. He reasoned on the great elements of flesh and spirit, in which rich and poor are alike implicated; and when he described the mighty transition from the one to the other, it was not a flowery path to heaven to which he pointed the eye of the Jewish ruler, to be trodden only by him and his companions in fortune and in fine sentiment. It is the one and universal path for every son and daughter of Adam, who have all to undergo the same death, and to stand before the same judgment-seat, and to inherit their undying portion, whether of weal or of woe, in the same eternity. In the view and consideration of such mighty interests as these, we should give up the partial and

insignificant distinctions of time and of society, between one member of the great human family and another. They are men and the souls of men that we have to deal with; and let it be our single aim to deal with them plainly, impressively, and faithfully.

It is true that ere we completed our lesson to the preachers of sermons, we behoved to advert to another principle, for which we have the sanction of apostolic example, even that of Paul, who was all things to all men, that he might gain some. But we must now hasten to address the hearers of sermons. It was saying more for the common people of Judea that they heard the Saviour gladly, than for the Scribes and Pharisees who heard him with envy, prejudice, and opposition; and it is saying more for the common people of this country, that they hear the doctrine of Christ gladly, than for those learned who call that doctrine foolishness, for those men of taste who call it fanaticism, for those men of this world who call it a methodistical reverie, for those men of fashion and fine sentiment, who shrink from the peculiarities of our faith, with all the disgust of irritated pride and offended delicacy. What the common people of Judea were in reference to the rulers of Judea, many of the common people of our day are in reference to the majority, we fear, of those who are to be met with in the walks of genteel and cultivated life—the scoffers and Sabbath breakers of the day, or the men perhaps who take a kind of religion along with them, but take it in moderation; who think that to strike the high tone of Christ and his apostles would be to carry the matter too far; who think that a great deal of what is said about sin and the sacrifice for sin is only meet for vulgar ears; who hear a sermon because it is decent to be exemplary; and who even read a sermon, and will read it to the end, if it carry them gently along through the rich and beauteous track of a polished composition; but who would be very ready to throw it aside if it alarm too much their fears, or tell too much with energy upon their consciences. Now, we are willing to acquit those who are here present of all these unchristian peculiarities. We are willing to think that both the doc-

trine of Scripture and the language of Scripture are agreeable to you, and that you do not feel as if either the one or the other could be carried too far; that there is no false taste, no lofty imagination about you, disposing you to resist the fullness or simplicity of the New Testament; and that the voice of the preacher never falls more sweetly upon your ears, than when he tells of the great things which the Saviour hath done for you.

Now, it is well that, like the common people of our text, you hear the word with gladness; but we want to impress it upon you that something more than this is indispensable. We are jealous over you, and we trust with a godly jealousy. We fear that there are many who are satisfied with a mere liking for the sound of Christian doctrine in their ears, while utter strangers to the influence of Christian doctrine in their hearts: who think it enough that they have a taste for the faith, while they give no proof of obedience to the faith; who are mere hearers of the word, but not doers of the word; who feel as if the great use of a sermon was to hear it, and to judge of it, and if they are pleased, to approve of it, and then, with them, the great purpose for which said sermon was delivered is forthwith accomplished. There is no more of it. It is like a business settled and set by. The minister preached, and the people were pleased, and there is an end of the affair. They go back to their homes and their merchandise; and they go just as they came, carrying along with them not one trace of a living impression on their hearts, their principles, or their consciences. What they have heard may be talked of for some days, or remembered for some months; but if in a week or a fortnight after it, the question is put, Can you tell of any actual or discernible fruit from this said sermon? any closer fellowship with the Saviour in consequence of it? any of the effects upon the man which never fail to accompany this fellowship? any dying unto sin? any fervent desires after righteousness? any pressing forward to the accomplishments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord? any greater devotedness to the business of sanctification? any reformation of thieves or drunkards? any visible influence on the

peace and order of families? any breaking down of that worldly spirit which is enough of itself to prove the enmity of man to his God, though there were no outward or declared profligacy in any of his actions? any dissolving of this enmity?—in a word, any one evidence that we can point our finger to, that this faith which is so much professed and so much talked of, is working by love?—is making the soul a fit habitation for God by His Spirit?—is bringing down the fulfilment of the promise upon it, even the Holy Ghost given to those who should believe? whereby the old man is destroyed, the body of sin is mortified, all former vanities have passed away; and the whole man, brought under the dominion of a new and a better principle, rises every day in purity and loveliness of character, to a meetness for the society of angels, for the presence of God, for the holy exercises of heaven, for the delights of an fading immortality.

Apply these questions to a very fond and delighted hearer; and how often may we find that the thing which gave so much pleasure to the itching ears of the man, has not had the weight of a straw on the man himself! It plays like music upon his ear; but it does not enter with the subduing energy of conviction into his heart. Follow him through all the business of his varied relations at home or in society, and you see him to be substantially the same man as before,—with all his old principles and practices about him—living his wonted life of indulgence to himself, and at as great a distance as ever from the new habit of living to the Saviour who died for him. His soul persists in all the unmoved obstinacy of its alienation from God. It still bends to the earth, and is earthly. Time and the interests of time retain all their wonted ascendancy over it. The Judge of the secrets of the inner man sees his heart to be as alive as ever to the world, and as dead in affection as ever to the things which are above. O, he is still the old man, and still persisting in the deeds of it. The love of the world, which is opposite to the love of the Father,—the selfishness of diseased nature, which is opposite to the charity of the gospel, are still the supreme and the urging principles of his constitution; and

they tell us that the voice of the preacher has had no more effect upon him, than the lullaby of a nurse's song.

We are forcibly carried to this train of reflection by the passage which lies before us. The common people heard our Saviour gladly; and what, we ask, became of these common people? To-day the mob of Jerusalem left the hosannahs of a far-sounding popularity—a few days more, and they call out to crucify Him. His admirers became His murderers: and they who at one time heard Him gladly, at another are gladly consenting unto His death. In a few years Jerusalem was given up to the avenging hand of the adversary; and these wicked men, who at one time hung with delight upon the preaching of the Saviour, were miserably destroyed. The plea that they had eaten and drunken in His presence, and that He had taught in their streets, was of no avail to them. It did not save them from the awful doom of the workers of iniquity; and they who at one time were the admirers and the delighted hearers of our Saviour's doctrine, were at another the victims of His wrath.

What was the principle of this wondrous revolution in their sentiments respecting Christ? We shall confine ourselves to one summary expression of it. The whole explanation of the matter lies here. They are willing enough for the time being to follow the Saviour; but they would not follow Him upon His terms, and when these terms came to be understood, they drew back from following Him. He had before said, that "he who followeth after me must forsake all;" and these Jewish hearers, when put to the trial, would not forsake their national vanity, would not forsake their worldly prospects of interest and aggrandisement, would not forsake their fond anticipations of a temporal prince to protect and to deliver them. While these agreeable prospects were full in their eye, they followed Him; but when these prospects vanished, and it came to denying themselves, and taking up their cross, they ceased from following Him. They listened to Him with delight when He told them how Christ was greater than David; but why? because they looked forward to the earthly felicities of a still more prosperous reign, and a still prouder

era in their history. It was all, it would appear, a matter of selfishness. They aspired after a share in the glories of their anticipated monarchy, and rejoiced in the near view of those privileges which they conceived to lie before them: but when, instead of privileges, it came to persecution,—when, instead of honour, it came to humiliation,—when, instead of soft and silken security, it came to sacrifices, to sufferings and self-denial,—they shrunk from it altogether; and, by falling away from the contest on earth, they forfeited the crown in heaven.

And there are other examples of the same thing in the Bible. It is said of Herod that he heard John the Baptist gladly, and that he observed him in many things. But he did not observe nor follow him in all things. He did not come up to the principle of forsaking all. He would not forsake his unhallowed connexion with his brother's wife; and when put to this proof of his self-denial, he imprisoned the prophet, and beheaded him.

The rich man who came with the question to our Saviour about the way to eternal life heard Him with pleasure, so long as He did not touch upon his favourite affection. There was no self-denial in keeping himself from those sins to which he felt no temptation; and he listened with patient satisfaction to the recital of those commandments, all of which he had been led by his circumstances or his natural disposition to keep from his youth up. But when the principle of "he that followeth after me must forsake all," was applied to his besetting sin, he could not stand it. He could not find it in his heart to slay or to renounce this idol. He could not give up the service of the one master, or make an entire and unexpected dedication of himself to the service of the other; and the same man who heard Him gladly at one part of His instructions, went away from the other question exceeding sorrowful, and withdrew his footsteps from that following of the Lord fully, by which alone we can obtain an entrance into the kingdom of God.

In the parable of the sower, there are men spoken of who heard the word with joy; but, as a proof that the joyful hearing of the word is one thing and the effectual receiving of it is another, these

men fell away. Persecution came, and by and by they were offended. They at first resolved to follow the Saviour; but the term of forsaking all was what they had not strength of purpose, nor depth of principle for acting up to. They gave way in the hour of temptation; and, rather than forsake their ease or their life or their fortune, they gave up all part and lot in the inheritance.

But, can there be a more striking example of this than at the preaching of the apostles after the resurrection? All Jerusalem was filled with their doctrine, and that doctrine was listened to with indulgence and pleasure. It is true that the interested men took the alarm at it; but set aside these, and we are told that they were in favour with all the people. If an apostle preached, he was at no loss for a multitude, and an approving multitude too, to gather around him, and hang upon him with admiration and delight. Had there been as many Christians as delighted hearers among them, Jerusalem would have been the most Christian city that ever flourished on the face of the earth. It looked so fair and so promising, when every street poured forth its multitudes, and they all ran together to the apostles, glorifying God for all which they heard and saw. Some were added to the church of such as should be saved. But they were a mere handful to the population of the devoted city. They were a mere gleanings among that number who kept in awe the high-priest and the council of Jerusalem, and restrained their violence against the first ministers of the New Testament. Yes, they were favourite ministers at that time, men of vast acceptance and popularity; and, if to hear the word gladly with the ear were the same thing as to receive the influence of that word into the heart, the vengeance of a rejected Saviour might have been averted from Jerusalem. But, alas! the hearers of that time must have been like many of the hearers of the present day. They heard, and they were pleased; but they would not forsake all to follow. They were afraid of excommunication, and they clung by their synagogues. They would not forsake the approbation of their priests, and the protection of their rulers. They clung by the superstitions, by the iniquities, by the bigotries of Je-

rusalem; and with Jerusalem they perished.

What does all this teach us? Let us come to the application. The gospel under which we sit has two great articles. By the one, we are invited to faith; by the other, we are called to repentance. By the one, we are offered the remission of our sins; by the other, we are called upon for the renunciation of our sins. By the one, we are told of a salvation, of which, if we accept, we shall be reconciled and taken into full acceptance with God. By the other, we are told of a salvation, of which, if we accept, we shall be regenerated by the operation of the Spirit of God. By the one, we are graciously assured that, if we turn to Christ as into a stronghold, we shall be safe; and the storm of the Divine wrath will utterly pass us by. By the other, we are solemnly warned that, in turning to Christ, we must turn from our iniquities—else if the Judge find us in these on the great day of reckoning, the fury both of a violated law and an insulted gospel will be let loose upon us, and we borne off as by a whirlwind to the horrors of an undone eternity. Now, the whole secret of such an exhibition as was made by the common people at Jerusalem, and as may still be realized by the people of the present day, is, that they like the one article, they dislike the other,—glad enough to take all that God offers, but not so glad to perform all that God requires,—giving their delighted consent to the one, refusing it to the other,—and thus running with delight after those men of popularity and acceptance who tell them of the faith of the New Testament, but falling away with disaffection and distaste when told of the repentance of the New Testament. They are joyful hearers of the word; but our question is, are they the obedient doers of it? O, it is pleasant to be told of heaven; and, amidst the agitations of this earthly wilderness, to have the eye carried forward to that place of quietness.

But are you willing to take, or rather are you actually taking the prescribed road to heaven—though that road should lead you through manifold trials and manifold tribulations?—It is soothing to listen to the preacher's voice, when he tells you to rest in the sufficiency of the

Saviour. Are you building any thing upon this foundation? If you rest on the sufficiency of Christ, you will receive of that sufficiency. He will make His grace sufficient for you; and, perfecting His strength in your weakness, He will make you run with delight in the way of new obedience.—It is delightful to be told of the privileges of the Christian faith. Are you proving yourselves to be in the faith? It is not a name, but a principle. It is not a thing to be merely talked of. It is like the kingdom of heaven to which it carries you—not in word, but in power; and then only does it work with power, when it works by love and keeps the commandments.—It is indeed a welcome sound upon a sinner's ear that he is justified by the righteousness of Christ. O, it is a faithful saying; and the only plea upon which we have access with confidence to God. But he who is justified is also sanctified, is another faithful saying; and let us come to close questioning with you—are you, or are you not, in the strength of God's promised Spirit, making the business of your sanctification a daily and hourly and ever-doing business?—You like to follow the minister who preaches Christ; and, in going after him, you have forsaken all the legalists, all the mere men of morality, all the self-sufficient expounders of that righteousness which is by the law. But what we ask is—do you follow Christ, and that with an entire devotedness to Him and to Him only? And, in following after Him, do you forsake all? In turning to Him, do you turn from your iniquities? In yielding yourselves up unto His service, do you renounce the service of sin and of the world?—for, if not, you are like the common people of Jerusalem, and you will share in the judgment that came over them. You may hear gladly; but what does it avail, if you do not follow faithfully? Jerusalem which they lived in was destroyed; and they were destroyed along with it. The world which you live in will be destroyed also; and when the Judge cometh, the plea which many of the lovers of orthodoxy may lift up, will not serve them—"Lord, we have eaten and drunken of thy sacraments, and pleasant to our souls was the voice of thy messengers." But then will I

answer to them, "I never knew you; depart from me all ye that work iniquity."

But, in sounding the alarm, it should be our care that it reach far enough; and we apprehend of this denunciation that we have now uttered against the children of iniquity—that many are the consciences, even of those now present, who may not be rightly or fully affected by it. When we speak of those who work iniquity, to the fair and passable men of society, they never once think of including themselves in this description; but their thoughts go abroad to thieves, and drunkards, and defrauders; and, applying to them the declaration of Scripture, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," they lull their own spirits into a deep slumber. But we fall short of our aim, if we do not awaken them too out of this fatal security; if we do not break up this prevalent delusion; if we do not reach conviction into other hearts than those of gross and notorious offenders. We look not for theft or drunkenness among men of honour and decency and respect in their neighbourhood—yet would we open their eyes too to their state of spiritual nakedness, and tell them how it is that even they are workers of iniquity. To them belongs that most damning of all iniquity, the iniquity of a heart alienated from God. It is the heart wherewith He has principally to do; and "give me thy heart" is the first and greatest of His commandments. The evil things which come out of it may be more or less visible to the eye of the world; but He does not need to look to the stream, for His penetrating eye reaches to the fountain-head. The world may not see you to be a thief or a drunkard; but He sees you, and takes note of you as an enemy of His. He sees in that heart of yours, the hourly, and the habitual guilt of spiritual idolatry. He sees the whole current of its affections and wishes to be away from Himself, and fully directed to the vanities and interests of the world. He sees the praise of men more sought after than is His praise; and, with the outside of plausibility which you maintain before the eye of your fellows, He, the discernor of your thoughts and intents, may see how other things are more loved and followed than God. It is the heart that He

looks to; and well does He see its bent and its tendency, through all the ambiguities by which you deceive and satisfy your own unfaithful conscience. He takes knowledge of it when you are too busy with your own way and your own counsel to take knowledge of it yourselves. He follows it through the secrecy of all its hidden movements; nor does it escape His notice when it disowns Him, and goes in quest of other Gods—when it casts Him off and worships idols—when it renounces the true God, and makes a God of wealth, a God of vanity, a God of pleasure, and as many more Gods as there are allurements from Himself in this deceitful world. Not a worker of iniquity, because you do not steal! Why, you rob God of the property which belongs to Him, of His own rightful property in the hearts and affections of His own children. Not a worker of iniquity, because, in the form or the outward matter of it, you break not the sixth or the eighth commandment? Why, you live in habitual violation of the first and greatest commandment, which is, "love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and strength, and mind." Not a worker of iniquity, because you do nothing which the world can point its finger to? Because you escape the finger of the world, does it follow that you can escape the eye of God? He sees you to be a rebel against Himself; and, with that heart of yours turned to its own vanities, with neither the enjoyment of God for its object, nor the love of God for its principle; be assured that it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and is fully set in you to do that which is evil.

The maxim, then, of forsaking all to follow after Christ, reaches a great deal farther than to the notoriously profligate. It must go round among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It is not confined to the visible doings, of the hand, but carries its authority over the whole man, and claims more especially an absolute dominion among the affections and wishes and tastes of the inner man. He who hears gladly to-day, and lies or steals or defrauds to-morrow, is not the only man that we are aiming at. He who hears gladly to-day, and to-morrow gives his soul to any of the perishable idols of time,

instead of devoting it with all its longings and energies to God, is fully included in the lesson which we are now giving to you. Delighted with the sermon, we grant you, but not one inch of progress made toward the clean heart and the right spirit. Lulled, Sabbath after Sabbath, as if by the sound of a pleasant song, or of one who can play well upon an instrument—and yet the old man persisting in all the unsubdued obstinacy of his deep and inborn principles. Rejoicing once a-week in the house of God, as if it were the gate of heaven—yet the whole week long, giving his entire heart to the world, and resting all his security upon the world's wealth, and the world's enjoyments. Running after gospel ministers, and sitting in all the complacency of approbation under them—and yet an utter stranger to the devotedness, to the spirituality, to the close walk, and the godly spirit of the altogether-Christian. O my brethren, it bids so flattering to hear the city bells, and to see every house pouring forth its family of worshippers—to look upon the avenue which leads to the house of prayer, and see it all in a glow with the crowd and bustle of passengers—to enter the church, and see every eye fastened attentively on the man of God, as he tells of the high matters of salvation, and presses home the preparations of eternity upon an arrested audience. O, if the charmed ear were a true and unfailling index to the subdued heart, the business of the minister would go on so prosperously! But there is a power of resistance within that is above his exertions and beyond them—there is a spirit working in the children of disobedience which no power of human eloquence can lay—there is an obstinate alienation from God, which God alone can subdue; and, unless He make a willing people in the day of His power, the influence of the preacher's lesson will die away with the music of his voice—the old man will be carried out as vigorous and entire as he was carried in—the word spoken may play upon the fancy, but it will not reach the deeply-seated corruption which lies in the affections and the will—the seriousness which sits so visible on every countenance, will vanish into nothing in half an hour—the men of the world, and the things of the world, will engross and occupy the room

that is now taken up with something like Christianity—and all will be dissipated into a thing of nought, when you go to your shops and your forms and your families and your market-places.

But we must now draw to a close, and will lay before you a few things in the way of practical application.

I. First, then, we have no quarrel with you because you are of the number of those who hear gladly. This is so far well. It is one of the deadliest symptoms of those who perish, that to them the preaching of the cross is foolishness. If such be your indifference or aversion to the word of God, if such be your contempt for the opportunities of hearing it—that, now when they are brought week after week within your reach, you will nevertheless turn in distaste and dissatisfaction away—if you prefer a Sabbath on the way-side, or a Sabbath in the fields, or a Sabbath in sordid indolence and dissipation at home, to a Sabbath in the solemn assembly of worshippers—Then will it sorely aggravate your condemnation in the great day of account, that you refused to listen to the word when the word was brought nigh unto you—that, rather than hear the word by which you and your families might have been saved, you chose to perish for lack of knowledge, even that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is life everlasting—that, when the ministers of the Most High lifted their beseeching voice, you regarded them not—that you preferred taking your own pleasure now, reckless of the awful day of account and of punishment that is to come afterwards, even that day when the Judge from heaven shall appear in flaming fire, “to take vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.” Better than this surely is it that you should hear the word gladly, and that you should rejoice when friends and companions say, “Let us go up to the house of God.” We have no quarrel, then, we repeat, with your being of the number of those who are the glad hearers of the word. Are there any here

present who recollect the day when the language of the gospel was offensive to them, but who now listen to it with eagerness and delight? A very promising symptom most assuredly; and it may evidence the beginning of a good work which God may carry forward and bring to perfection.

II. But secondly, though your hearing gladly be a promising symptom, it is not an infallible one. The common people of Jerusalem heard gladly; and we need not repeat the awful disaster and ruin which, in the course of a few years, overtook the families of that common people—so that their old and their middle-aged, and their little ones, were miserably destroyed. Herod heard gladly. The men who fell away in the parable of the sower heard gladly, and you may hear gladly yet fall short of the kingdom of God. “Be not high minded but fear.” “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The apostle tells how far a man might proceed in the characteristics and evidences of a seeming Christianity, and yet fall irrecoverably away. One of these characteristics is a taste for the good word of God; but this, so far from being of any avail to the presumptuous backslider serves the more to fix and to aggravate his doom—the doom of a perdition from which there is no possibility of a recall, it being impossible, he tells us, “to renew them again unto repentance.” Keep fast then what you have gotten, and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die.

III. But though to hear gladly be not an infallible symptom, yet to hear the whole truth gladly is a much more promising symptom than only to hear part of the truth gladly. We fear that it is this partial liking for the word which forms the whole amount of their affection for it, with the great majority of professing Christians. They like one part; but they do not like another. Some like to hear of the privileges of the gospel; but they do not like to hear of the precepts of the gospel, and that the soul in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory, will purify itself even as Christ is pure. This partial liking, so far from a promising symptom, we count to be a very dangerous one. It is dividing

Christ. It is putting asunder the things which God hath joined. It is giving the lie to his testimony; and making our own taste and our own inclination take the precedency of God's word and of God's way. Make it a high point of duty to listen with equal reverence and satisfaction to all God's communications. Do you listen with delight to the minister, when he tells you to follow after Christ? Listen with equal delight to the minister, when he tells you that in following after Christ you must forsake all. If this truth offend you merely when it is spoken, how much more will it offend you when you have a call for its being acted on?—and thus will you fall precisely under that description of hearers, who hear with joy, but when temptation comes, by and by they are offended. Do you listen with delight to a sermon upon the privileges of faith, and how that all who have it shall inherit the kingdom? Listen with equal delight to a sermon on the properties and influences of faith; and when it tells you how it is a faith which worketh, working by love, purifying the heart, overcoming the world. Do you listen with delight to a sermon on the freeness of grace; and when it tells you how it is offered to all, and that all who will may take of it without money and without price? Listen with equal delight to a sermon on the power and efficacy of grace—telling how it frees all who are under it from the dominion of sin, how it worketh mightily in the souls of believers, how it raises them to newness of life, and strengthens them for all the duties and performances of the new creature—not only teaching all men, but enabling all men who lay hold of it, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. It looks as if it were to guard us against this partial liking for the word of God, that these two great articles of Christianity, what man receives from God and what God requires of man, under the dispensation of the gospel,—that both of these are often placed together, side by side, within the enclosure of one and the same verse; so as both to be taken up at one glance of the eye by him who reads the verse, or expressed at one breath by him who ut-

ters it. The call of our Saviour at the commencement of Mark is, "Repent and believe the gospel." The apostolic description of the great subjects of preaching is "repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." The office of the ascended Saviour is to "give repentance and the remission of sins." The privileges of the believer are that to him "there is no condemnation;" and he walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit." As many as receive Christ, we are told, receive along with him "power to walk as God's children." They who are in Christ we are again told are "new creatures." And lastly do we read of God being faithful and just—not only "to forgive our sins but to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. Such passages are innumerable. Let us have our eye alike open upon them all. Let us proceed upon them all—combining delight in the securities of the Christian faith, with diligence in the Christian practice.

IV. But lastly, if it do not follow that because a man is a delighted hearer of the word, he is therefore an obedient doer of it, how is he to become one? What is there which can bring relief to this melancholy helplessness? How wretched to think that the impression, so quick and lively in the house of God, should be so easily put to flight out of it; and should fall away into forgetfulness, when brought into actual collision with the influences of the world. The man's warmth and his elevation, and his swelling purposes of better things, look so promising; but bring him to the trial, and it all turns out like the vapouring of a coward. The one shows himself in the day of battle—the other in the day of temptation. He goes to his family after a sermon that he has heard, and becomes peevish, though one fruit of the Spirit be gentleness—he goes to an entertainment and becomes luxurious, though one fruit of the Spirit be temperance—he goes to a company and becomes censorious, though one fruit of the Spirit be the love that worketh no ill. In a word, he goes to any one scene of the world; and he loses all sense and feeling of the ever-present God—though the solemn requirement under which he lives is to do all things to His glory. Are we not speak-

ing to your own experience; and may not the personal remembrance of every one of you spare us the task of any further argument, when we assert that the glow of a warm and affecting impression is one thing, and the sturdiness of an enduring principle is another?

We again then recur to the question, how shall we give the property of endurance to that which in time past has been so perishable and so momentary? The strength of your own natural purposes, it would appear, cannot do it. The power of argument cannot do it. The tongue of the minister, though he spake with the eloquence of an angel, cannot do it; and unless some power above and beyond all these be made to rest on you, he may speak to the delight of a crowded assembly, and it will be of no more avail than if he lifted up his voice in the wilderness. But you have met together in the name of one who has promised to be in the midst of you; and He can do it. He alone can deposit in your hearts that seed which remaineth; and come down upon you with an unction from the Holy One never to be obliterated. What He puts in you will abide in you; and it will enable you to stand amid the conflicts of the world, and the rudest shock of its temptations. If the Spirit of Christ be in you, then greater will be He that is in you than he that is in the world; and let your experience of the past, and the feeling of your former helplessness, shut you up into the faith of Him. If you commit yourself in faith to Him, He will not fail you. His promises are yea and amen; and if they are not realized upon you, it is because you do not believe in them, because you do not depend on them, because you do not wait and pray for the performance of them.

Mark here, my brethren, the efficacy and the indispensableness of prayer. It is the link which cements and binds together the sermon of the minister, with its living and practical effect on the consciences and conduct of the people. Of such essential importance is it, that the apostles made as great account of prayer, as they did of the ministry of the word; and so they gave themselves wholly to both. But for prayer, all our anticipations of a great Christian blessing in the midst of this people and from the services

of this Church will come to mockery. It is right that these means should be provided; but the whole enterprise will be a miserable abortion, if we devolve not the work upon God—so as both to seek from Him the blessing, and give to Him all the glory of it. More especially, if at all in earnest about your personal Christianity, I would have you to understand—that, without prayer, prompted by a sense of your own helplessness, and a confidence in the sufficiency of Christ Jesus as your strength and your sanctifier, it will be impossible to realize it. The way is to make an hourly and habitual commitment of yourself to Him; and He will keep in hourly and habitual safety that which is so committed. He hath obtained for you a great blessing, and to which all of you are most welcome, in having purchased forgiveness for you; but, in the fulness of His treasury, there is still another blessing in store for all who believe on Him. He came to bless every one of you by turning you from your iniquities. Keep closely and constantly by Him in faith; and he will keep closely and constantly by you with the power of His grace—giving not only merey to pardon, but grace to help in every time of need. He will carry you in safety through the concerns and companies of the world. He overcame the world himself; and He will enable you to forsake all, and to overcome it also. Abide in Him, and the promise is that He will abide in you. Separate from Him, you become a withered branch without fruit and without loveliness. But, abiding in Him, you are formed into His image—you rise in the likeness of His pure and perfect example—you will at all times hear gladly, but not after the example of the common people of Judea. Yours will be a sincere thirst after the milk of His word, not that you may be pleased with the taste of it, but that you may grow thereby—and thus will you give evidence both to God and man of your interest in the Saviour, by being not merely the hearers of the word but the doers also.

We now proceed to the collection of the funds for this our new undertaking; and, in order to engage your affections the more to our cause, we should like

that you fully and precisely understood the object of it. The place of worship in which we are now assembled for the first time, is not adequately described to you, by its being merely told, that, like other and ordinary chapels heretofore, it forms an addition to the means of Christian instruction in or about Edinburgh. It has a far more special destination than this; and such as we should like to see extended over town and country, till there was not only Sabbath-room enough, but week-day service enough for one and all of the families of our land. It is a church then erected, mainly and primarily, for the accommodation of the people who reside within the limits of the district in which it is placed. They have the choice of its seats in the first instance; and our only regret is, that till government do its duty, we shall not be able to afford them at rents so low, as to admit of their being taken in greater numbers, and, if possible, in household pews, not only for the men and women, but even for the children of the working classes—that the people might come, not merely by individuals, but in whole families to the house of God; and the spectacle be again realized in towns, which might still be witnessed in country parishes, where high and low meet together, and the congregation, though sprinkled over with a few of rank and of opulence, is chiefly made up of our men of handicraft and of hard labour. There is none we think of correct moral taste, and whose heart is in its right place, that will not rejoice in such a spectacle, as far more pleasing in itself, and, if only universal in our churches, far more indicative of a healthful state of the community, than the wretched system of the present day, when the gospel is literally sold to the highest bidders among the rich, and not preached to the poor. And the melancholy consequence is, the irreligion, the ignorance, the reckless habits, and prostrate morality of a neglected population—of a population at the same time sunk both in comfort and character, only because they are neglected; and who would nobly repay, as our experience in this place abundantly testifies, any justice that was done, or any attentions that were rendered to them. The process of our operations is an exceed-

ingly simple one. Instead of leaving this church to fill as it may from all parts of the town, we first hold out the seats that we have to dispose of, at such prices as we can afford to its own parish families—which families, at the same time, have previously opened their doors, and given their welcome to those ministerial yet household services, those visits of Christian charity to the sick and the dying, those labours for the best because the spiritual interests of themselves and their little ones, wherewith they are incessantly plied through the week; and, in consequence of which, it is our fond expectation and desire, that the attention of the house-going minister will be followed by the attendance of a church-going people. We do hope that this plain statement will recommend itself to your liberality; and that we shall be helped by you to clear away the debt, and to overcome the difficulties which still attach to our undertaking. The original subscribers look for no return, no remuneration to themselves. Theirs has been an unreserved gift; and not one farthing of repayment, whether in principal or in interest, has ever been looked for by any of them. By the generosity of their individual offerings, the main expense of the erection has been defrayed; and, for the liquidation of the remaining expense we now cast ourselves on the collective offerings of those who desire to see a good cause placed on the footing of a permanent and secure establishment, and freed from all the embarrassments of a still unfinished and unpaid-for operation. Our fond wish for Edinburgh and for its environs is—that, district after district, new churches may arise and old ones be thrown open to their own parish families, till not one house remains which has not within its walls some stated worshipper in one or other of our Christian assemblies; and not one individual can be pointed to, however humble and unknown, who has not some man of God for his personal acquaintance, some Christian minister for his counsellor and friend.

The afternoon service is postponed till evening; and the reason of this postponement may be well called a very singular one, on which certainly we were not

at all counting, when we had resolved to open our church this day—an annular eclipse of the sun, and where the greatest amount of darkness would happen in the very middle of the exercise, or precisely at three o'clock; and so we fear as both to incommode the minister, and to disturb the congregation. We are unwilling to let this extraordinary event pass without some religious improvement; and what work or manifestation of Nature's God, who at the same time is the God of Christianity—sitting on a throne of grace as well as on the throne of creation and providence—the God who, in the language of the apostle's prayer in the book of Acts, "made heaven and earth and sea and all that is therein,"—what exhibition of this wonder-working God is not capable of being turned to the account of practical godliness? We should like you then to recognise it as one and the same lesson—that He who has established so much certainty in Nature, most true to Himself, hath established the like certainty in Revelation; that the one economy will be characterized by the same unchangeableness as the other—inasmuch that, if we meet with so much constancy, so much to be relied upon in the works of God, there is at least as great a constancy and as much to be firmly and fully relied upon in the word of God. The covenant of the rainbow which marks the dispersion of the clouds, and clearing up of the weather, is not more sure, than that covenant of grace which forms the great charter of a Christian's hope, and of which we are told in the Bible that it is ordered in all things and sure. The eclipse of this day is one of the most rare and marvellous description, not what is termed a partial and not a total but an annular eclipse, in which the moon passes not over the edge, but centrally or almost centrally over the sun's disk—and so that, instead of covering that disk altogether and making the eclipse a total one, it leaves, and for four minutes only, a little ring of the solar orb peering out on all sides of the moon's darkened hemisphere—causing a fine and beauteous circle of light, all that is left for the brief space of four minutes to lighten up our world. The marvellous thing is, that all this should be known to men beforehand; that astronomers can tell the whole that is to

happen with such unfailling accuracy; that within a second of time they can announce when it is that the darkness will make its first entrance on the south-west edge of the sun, and when it is to a precise second that the last remainder of darkness will pass away from the north-east edge of it—and when and how long it is that the golden circuit will continue, of one delicate and unbroken line re-entering upon itself, and so completing for a few evanescent minutes an entire orb of luminousness in the heavens. It may well be marvelled at—the certainty of the science of man, or of him who is but the observer of the phenomenon. But remember well, that in order to this, there must be a previous certainty—the unchangeable certainty of Him who is the Creator of the phenomenon; and the unchangeableness of whose ordinances in the heavens, is the sure token and demonstration of the like unchangeableness of His purposes in the word. The calendar of prophecy is in every way as sure, as the almanac whether of history or of nature; and, in the unerring fulfillments of both, we may read alike the immutability and the faithfulness of God; of Him who hath said it, and shall He not do it?—and with whom is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning.

Think not, my brethren, that we entertain you with any fancy of our own. In Psalm cxix. 89, we are told of God's constancy in the heavens, being the sure guarantee of a like constancy in the word. Nay, my brethren, the one has a more unviolable constancy than the other—for heaven and earth shall pass away; but the word of God endureth for ever, and shall not pass away. What an emphasis then does it give to the lesson we have been labouring to urge, of attention, solemn and steadfast attention to that word—what firm, what unflinching dependence should it establish in the mind of the believer, when he rests on the word of promise as an anchor of the soul both

sure and steadfast—and with what a fearful looking for and certainty of the coming judgment should it fill the heart of the impenitent, when he thinks of the threatenings of God being as sure as His promises; of the laws of the divine government being in every way as certain of fulfilment, as the laws of nature which is the divine workmanship; and more especially, when he thinks of the law of revelation and the law of conscience with all the power and terror of their denunciations, against the children of iniquity—when he thinks of these in connexion with the saying of the Saviour, that “Heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail.” When you look then to the spectacle of this day, lift up your heads ye faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and rejoice—for as sure or surer than the prediction of which you are now to witness the accomplishment, is the glorious prediction of Holy Writ that the day of your restoration draweth nigh: And O take warning ye careless and stout-hearted who are far from righteousness—for as sure or surer than that on this day the sun in the firmament will be shrouded in blackness, is the announcement of the apostle Peter who tells us of another day “when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” May you all be enabled to say with well grounded confidence in the language of the next verse, “Nevertheless we according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

SERMON XXXVI.*

On the Superior Blessedness of the Giver to that of the Receiver.

“I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—ACTS XX. 35.

JOHN, at the end of his gospel, spoke of the multitude of other things which Jesus did, and which he could not find room for in the compass of His short history. Now, what is true of the doings of our Saviour, I hold to be equally true of the sayings of our Saviour. There are many thousands of these sayings not recorded. The four gospels were written within some years after His death, and though I have no doubt of the promise being accomplished upon the apostles, that the Spirit would bring all things to their remembrance, in virtue of which promise, we have all things told of Jesus necessarily for our guidance here, and our salvation hereafter—yet I have as little doubt, when I think of the length and frequency of His conversations with the people around Him, that many, and very many of the gracious words which fell from His mouth, have not been transmitted to us in any written history whatever. They may have been kept alive by tradition for a few years. They may have been handed from one to another by mere oral communication. There is no doubt that they served every purpose for which they were uttered—but, in the lapse of one or two generations, they ceased to be talked of, and have now vanished from all earthly remembrance.

But there is one, and only one, of these sayings, which, though not recorded in any of the gospels, has escaped the fate of all the rest. In the course of its circulation among the disciples of that period, it reached the apostle Paul, and he has thought fit to preserve it. It seems to

have obtained a general currency among Christians; for he speaks of it to the elders of Ephesus, as if they had heard of it before. He quotes it as a saying known to them as well as to himself. We have no doubt that it was held in reverence, and referred to, and might have been talked of for many years, in the churches. But it would at length have sunk into forgetfulness, with the crowd of other unrecorded sayings, had not Paul caught hold of it in its progress to oblivion; and, by placing it within the confines of written history, he has made it imperishable. It has got within the four corners of that book, of which it is said, “If any man take away from the words of it he shall be accursed.” He was the Son of God who uttered it; and it is striking enough, that, when unnoticed and unrecorded by all the evangelists, the apostle of the Gentiles, born out of due time, was the instrument of transmitting it to posterity. Precious memorial! There was no chance of its ever being lost to the Christian church, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and without it the volume of inspiration would not have been completed. But surely the very circumstances of its being overlooked by the professed historians of our Saviour—of its being left for a time to fluctuate among all the chances, and all the uncertainties of verbal communications—of its being selected by the revered apostle of the Gentiles, from among the crowd of similar sayings which were suffered to perish for ever from the memory of the world—of his putting his hand upon it,

* This sermon was preached first for a Female Society in Dunfermline, in 1814; then for an Orphan Hospital; and lastly, for the society of The Sons of the Clergy, in Glasgow, in April, 1815.

The three different conclusions of this sermon, mark the three different occasions on which it was preached; and also the sentiments of the author, in regard to the distinct objects which he was called upon to advocate. He may remark, that, after the experience of twenty-four years, he should feel disinclined to plead for the first of these objects, and even be doubtful in regard to the second—which he thinks occupies a mid-way or ambiguous place between the cases which might, and those which ought not to be provided for by public institutions.

and arresting its march to that forgetfulness to which it was so fast hastening—All these have surely the effect of endearing it the more to our hearts, and should lead the thoughtful Christian to look upon the words of my text, with a more tender and affecting veneration.

In discoursing from these words, I shall first direct your attention to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they may give; and, secondly, to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they must receive.

I will not attempt to draw the precise boundary between these two conditions. Each individual among you must determine the question for himself. It is not for me to sit in judgment upon your circumstances; but know that a day is coming, when all these secrets shall be laid open—and when the God who seeth every heart shall tell with unerring discernment, whether the selfishness of diseased nature or the charity of the gospel, had the rule over it.

I. First then, as to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they may give. It is more blessed for them to give than to receive. (1.) Because in so doing, they are like unto God; and to be formed again after his image, is the great purpose of the dispensation we sit under. We have nothing that we did not receive, but we cannot say so of God. He is the unfailing fountain out of which every thing flows. All originates in Him. A mighty tide of communication from God to His creatures, has been kept up incessantly from the first hour of creation. It flows without intermission. It spreads over the whole extent of the universe He has formed. It carries light, and sustenance, and enjoyment, through the wide dominions of Nature and of Providence. It reaches to the very humblest individual among His children. There is not one shred or fragment in the awful immensity of His works which is overlooked by Him; and, wonderful to tell, the same God whose arm is abroad over all worlds, has His eye fastened attentively upon every one of us, compasses all our goings, gives direction to every footstep, sustains us and holds us together through every minute of our existence—and, at the very time that we are living in forgetfulness of

Him, walking in the counsel of our own hearts, and after the sight of our own eyes—is the universal Creator at the right hand of each and of all of us, to give us every breath which we draw, and every comfort which we enjoy.

Oh! but you may think it is nothing to Him, to open His hand liberally. He may give and give, and be as full as ever. He loses nothing by communication. But we cannot part with any thing to another, without depriving ourselves. Such an objection as this proceeds from an unscriptural view of God. In the eye of a cold natural theology, He is regarded as a Being who has nothing in Him answering to that which we feel in ourselves—when, by a laborious exercise of self-denial, we perform some great and painful act of liberality.

The theology of nature, or rather of the schools, makes an orderly distribution of the attributes of God; and, conceiving His power to be some kind of physical and resistless energy, it also conceives that He can accomplish every deed of benevolence however exalted it may be without so much as the feeling of a sacrifice. Now this I think is not the lesson of the Bible. He who hath seen the Father, and is alone competent to declare Him, gives me a somewhat different view of what I venture to call the constitution of the Deity. Does not He tell us, that to be kind to our friends is no great matter; and then He bids us be kind to our enemies, and upon what principle?—That we may be like unto God. Now in the exercise of kindness to enemies, there is something going on in our minds totally different, from what goes on in the exercise of kindness to friends; and I do not see the significance of the argument at all, unless you grant me, that there must be a difference corresponding to this in the mind of the Deity. In the exercise of kindness to the man who hates you, there is a preference of his good to the indulgence of your own resentment—there is a victory over the natural tendencies of your constitution—there is a struggling with these tendencies—there is an act of forbearance—there is a triumph of the principle of love, over a painful and urgent sense of provocation. Now, if in all this we are like unto God, must there not be something similar to all

this in the benevolence of God? Or, in other words, there must be something in His character, corresponding to that which imparts a character of sublime elevation, to the meek and persevering charity of an injured Christian.

But again. When we are told that God so loved the world, as to send His only begotten Son into it, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life—what is the meaning of the emphatic *so*? It means nothing at all, if God, in the act of giving up His Son to death, did not make the same kind of sacrifice with the parent, who, amid the agonies of his struggling bosom, surrenders his only child at some call of duty or of patriotism. If it was at the bidding of God that Abraham entertained strangers, this was some proof of his love to Him. But it was a much higher proof of it that he so loved Him, as to be in readiness at His requirement, to offer up Isaac. Now there is something analogous to this in God. It proves His love to men, that He opens His hand, and feeds them all out of the exuberance which flows from it; but it is a higher proof of love that He so loved them as to give up His only begotten Son in their behalf.

And the argument loses all its impression, if God did not experience a something in His mind, corresponding to that which is felt by an earthly parent—when, keeping all the struggles of his natural tenderness under the control of principle, he gives up his son at the impulse of some pure and lofty requirement. Dismiss then my brethren all your scholastic conceptions of the Deity; and keep by that warm and affecting view of Him, that we have in the Bible. For if we do not, we will lose the impression of many of its most moving arguments; and our hearts will remain shut against its most powerful and pathetic representations of the character of God. To come back then upon this objection, that it is nothing to God to open His hand liberally, for He may give and give and be as full as ever. And does God make no sacrifice in the act of giving unto you? A pure and unfallen angel would not detract from the praises of His Creator—by language such as this. And what are you? A rebel to His laws, who will yet persist in saying,

that God, by feeding you with His bounty, is making no sacrifice. Why, He is holding you up though you be a spectacle injurious to His honour. He is grieved with you every day, and yet every day He loads you with His benefits. Every sinner is an offence to Him, and what restrains Him from sweeping the offence away from the face of His creation altogether. It is of His mercies that you are not consumed—that He still bears with you—that He keeps you in life and in all that is necessary to life—that He holds on with you a little longer and a little longer—that He plies you with warnings and opportunities; and brings the voice of a beseeching God to bear upon you, calling you to turn and be reconciled and live—What! Has He never for your sakes, given up any thing that is dear and valuable to Himself? Did not He give up His Son to the death for you? All your gifts to the poor are nothing to this. When Abraham lifted up the knife over his son Isaac—he felt that he was making a mightier and more painful sacrifice, than by all his alms-deeds and hospitalities. God had compassion on the parental feelings of Abraham, and He spared them. But He spared not His own Son. He gave Him up for us all. And shall we when we give up a trifling proportion of our substance to the relief of our poorer brethren, talk of the sacrifice we are making—as if there was nothing like it in the benevolence of God? Talk not then of your deprivations and your sacrifices. But “be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Under this particular, I have one practical direction to come forward with. When you do an act of benevolence, think of the extent of the sacrifice you have made by it. It is a delightful exercise to be kind among people who have a sense of your kindness—to give away money, if you get an ample return of gratitude back again—to pay a visit of tenderness to the poor family, who load you with their acknowledgments and their blessings—when you are received with the smile of welcome; and soothed by the soft accents of the widow who prays for a reward upon you, or of the children who hail you as an angel of mercy. Oh, it is easy to move gently along, through such scenes and families

as these. But have a care, that you are not ministering all the while to your own indulgence and your own vanity; for then verily I say unto you "you have your reward." The charity of the gospel is not the fine and exquisite feeling of poetry. It is a sturdy and enduring principle. It carries you through the rough and discouraging realities of life, and it enables you to stand them; and it is only, my brethren, when you can be kind in spite of ingratitude—when you can give to the poor man, not because he thanks you, but because he needs it—when you can be unwearied in well-doing, amid all the bitterness of envy, and all the growlings of discontent—Then, and then only is it, that you endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ Jesus; or can be called the children of the Highest, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and sendeth down his rain on the just and on the unjust.

(2.) It is more blessed to give than to receive—for to give as a Christian, is to part with that which is temporal, and to show a preference for that which is eternal. By an alms-deed you give up part of this world's goods. By a piece of service, you give up a part of this world's ease. By an act of civility, you give up to another that time which might have been employed in the prosecution of some design or interest of your own. But, lest I flatter you into a delusive security, I again recur to the question "What is the extent of the sacrifice?" For I am well aware, that the part thus given up, may be so small, as to be no evidence whatever of a mind bent upon eternity. You may gratify your feelings of compassion at an expense so small, that you cannot be said to have made any sacrifice. You may gain the good-will of all your neighbours by this act of kindness, and count the purchase a cheap one. You may gratify your love of ostentation by an act of alms-giving, and do it upon as easy terms, as you gratify your love of amusement by an act of attendance upon the ball-room or the theatre. You may lay out your penny a-week, and be amply repaid for the sacrifice, by the distinction of being one of a society, and by the pleasure of sharing in the business of it. In all this you have your reward; but I

do not yet see any evidence of a soul setting its affections upon the things above in all this. Oh! no my brethren! A benevolent society is a very pleasurable exhibition; and I trust that in the one I am now pleading for, there is much of that genuine principle which shrinks from the pollution of vanity. But were I to bestow that praise upon the mere act which only belongs to the principle, I might incur all the guilt of a lying prophet. I might be saying "Peace, peace when there is no peace." I might be proclaiming the praise of God, to him who had already sought and obtained his reward in the praise of man. I might be regaling with the full prospect of heaven, him whose heart tends to the earth, and is earthly—whose trifling charity has not the weight of a straw upon the luxury of his table, or the yearly amount of that accumulating wealth upon which he sets his confidence. Were I, my brethren, who have come from a distance, to adopt the language of a polite and insinuating flattery, and send you all away so safe and so satisfied with the charities you have performed—I might be doing as much mischief, as if I travelled the country, and revived the old priestly trade of the sale of indulgences. None more ready than a Christian to enter into a scheme of benevolence; but let it never be forgotten, that a scheme of benevolence may be entered into by many, who fall miserably short of the altogether Christian. Oh what a multitude of men and of women may be found, who can give their pennies a-week with the hand, while their heart is still with the treasures of a perishable world. Our Saviour was rich and for our sake He became poor. Here was the extent of His sacrifice. Now we may give in a thousand directions for the sake of others; and yet be sensibly as rich as ever. I am not calling upon you to make any great or romantic sacrifice. I do not ask you, in deed and in performance, to forsake all; but I say that you are short of what you ought to be, if you are not in readiness to forsake all upon a clear warning. I say that you may give your name to every subscription-list, and bestow your something upon every petitioner; and yet stand at an infinite distance from the example you are called upon to imitate.

The great point of inquiry should be, "Is the heart right with God?" Now I want to save you from a common delusion, when I tell you, that, out of your crumbs and fragments, many a Lazarus may be fed—while yet, like Dives, your heart may be wholly set upon the meat that perisheth. It is well, and very well, that you are a member of a benevolent society; and I shall rejoice to think of it as one of the smaller fruits of that mighty principle which brings the whole heart under its dominion—which makes you willing to renounce self and all its earthly interests at the call of duty—which sinks the pursuits and enjoyments of time in the prospects of eternity—Such a principle as would not merely dictate the surrender of a penny for the poverty of a neighbour, but would dictate the surrender of every earthly distinction and enjoyment on the clear call of conscience or Revelation—Such a principle as has often been put to the trial in those woful seasons, when a sweeping tide of bankruptcy sets in upon a country; and the sanguine speculations of one man, on the false statements of another, have involved many an innocent sufferer, in the loss of all that belongs to him. Could I obtain a view of his heart now, I might collect a more satisfying evidence of the way in which it stands affected by the things of another world, than I possibly could do, from all the odd fractions of his wealth, which he made over to his poorer brethren in the day of prosperity. When stripped bare of his earthly possessions, is the hope of eternity enough for him? Is his heart filled with the agonies of resentment and despair; or with peaceful resignation to the will of God, and charity to the human instrument of his sufferings? Now is the time for the fair trial of his principles; and now may we learn if to him belongs the blessedness of enduring it. And it will go further to prove his claim to the kingdom of heaven, than all the charities of his brighter days—if trust in Providence, and prayer for the forgiveness of those who have injured him, shall be found to occupy and to sustain his heart under the fallen fortunes of his family.

There may be no call upon you to surrender all, in which case you are spared the very act of a surrender. But

God who is the discerner of the heart, sees whether yours is in such a state of principle, as to be in readiness for the surrender, so soon as a clear requirement of conscience is upon you. Were persecution again to light up its fires in this land of quietness—it is to be hoped, that there are many who would cheerfully take the spoiling of their goods, rather than abandon the cause of the gospel. They have not the opportunity of manifesting themselves to the world; but the discerning eye of God stands in no need of such a manifestation. He can fathom all the secreties of the inner man; and, in the great day of the revelation of hidden things, it will be seen who they are that would have forsaken all to follow after Christ.

Such as these, may have no opportunity of showing the whole extent of their devotion to Christ, by any actual performance. But though we cannot speak to their performance, we can speak to their principle. They sit loose to the interests of this world, and their heart is fully directed to the treasure which is in heaven. They have the willing mind; and, whenever their means and their opportunities allow, they will show that they have it. The thing given may be in itself so very small, as to be no evidence whatever of the preference of eternity over time. Think not then that by the giving of this thing, you will obtain heaven. Heaven, my brethren, is not so purchased. You are made meet for heaven by the Spirit working in your soul a conformity to the image of the Saviour; and if the charity which filled his heart, actuate and inflame yours, it will carry you forward with a mighty impulse to every likely or practicable scheme for the interests of humanity, and for the alleviation of all its sufferings.

Before I pass on to the second head of discourse, I shall give my answer to a question, which may have been prompted by some of the observations I have already come forward with.

Does not the very object of this society, it may be asked, furnish the opportunity we are in quest of? May it not put the whole extent of a Christian's principles to the test? Has he it not in his power to forsake all in following the injunction of Christ, "Be willing to distribute, and

ready to communicate?" What is to hinder him from selling all his goods to feed the poor? And if his penny-a-week be no decisive evidence of the Christian principle which actuates him, may not the evidence be made still more decisive, by throwing his all into the treasury of our beneficence?

When a Christian has a clear and urgent call of conscience upon him, it is his duty to obey that call in the face of every sacrifice, however painful, and however mortifying. But it is also his duty to inform and to enlighten his conscience; and if, with this view, he were to cast about for advice, and do me the honour of making me one of his advisers, I would submit to him the following short representation.

There are many ways in which a man may show, that he has less value for this world's wealth, than his neighbours around him. Why? He may do so by putting forth his hand to destroy it. He may set it on fire. He may strip himself of all that belongs to him by throwing it away: but none will give to such fanatical extravagancies as these, the credit which is only due to the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind.

It is not enough, then, that you prove your indifference to this world's wealth by parting with it; you must have an object in parting with it, and the question is, what should that object be? Now the feeding of the poor is only one of the many objects, for which you are entrusted with the gifts of Providence. You are called upon to love your neighbour as yourself; but you are not called upon to love him better than yourself. Your own subsistence is an object, therefore, which it is not your duty to surrender. This is one limit; and there are many others. If you provide not for your own family, you are worse than an infidel. Your parents have a claim upon you. You may be rich; and though I do not speak of it as a positive duty, to maintain the rank and distinction which belong to you, yet you are allowed by Christianity to do so. The New Testament recognises the gradations of society; and it numbers the rich and the noble among the disciples of the Saviour. Add to all this, that if the whole disposable wealth of the country was turned to the one direction of

feeding the poor—what would become of the others, ay, and of the worthier objects of Christian benevolence? Have not the poor souls as well as bodies? Must they not be taught as well as fed? Are the narrow limits of our own parish, or even our own island, to be impassable barriers to our charity? Did not the same Saviour who said, Give to him that asketh, say also, Go and preach my gospel to every creature under heaven; and that the labourer is worthy of his hire? Those who cannot preach may at least hire; and if the whole stream of our disposable wealth were turned to the one object of relieving the temporal necessities of others—what would become of those sublime enterprises, by which, under the promise of heaven, we send the light of Christianity, and all its blessings, over the wide and dreary extent of that moral wilderness, that is every where around us—by which we carry the message of peace into the haunts of savages, and speed the arrival of those millennial days, when the sacred principles of goodwill to men shall circulate through the world; and when the sun, from its rising to its going down, shall witness the people of all the countries it shines upon, to be members of one great and universal family?

But more than this—if every shilling of the disposable wealth of the country, were given to feed the poor, it would create more poverty than it provides for. It would land us, in all the mischief of a depraved and beggarly population. That subsistence, which they could obtain from the prodigal and injudicious charity of others, they would never think of earning for themselves. Idleness and profligacy would lay hold of the great mass of our peasantry. Every honourable desire after independence, would be extinguished; and the people of the land, thrown loose from every call to the exertions of regular industry, would spread disorder over the whole face of the country. It does not occur to the soft daughters of sensibility, but it is not on that account the less true; that if every purse were emptied in the cause of poverty—there would be more want and hunger and hardship in our neighborhood, than there is at this moment. With the extension of your fund, you would just multiply the crowd of

competitors—each pressing forward for his share, and jostling out his more modest and unobtrusive neighbour, who would be left to pine in secret over his untold and unnoticed indigence. The clamorous and undeserving poor, would in time spread themselves over the whole of that ground, which should only be occupied by the children of helplessness: and, after the expenditure of millions, it would be found that there was more unrelieved want, and more unsoftened wretchedness in the country, than ever.

II. I now come to a far more effectual check upon the mischiefs I have alluded to, than even the judgment and cautious inquiry of the giver. I proceed, in the second place, to the duties of those who are placed in such a situation of life, as to become receivers; and the first thing I have to propose to them is, that, if it be more blessed to give than to receive, then it is merely putting this assertion of my text into another form, when I say that it is less blessed to receive than to give. There may be something in this to startle and alarm the feelings of the poor. What! they may say, is our poverty a crime in the eye of Heaven? Are we to be punished for our circumstances? Are we to be degraded into an inferior degree of blessedness, because our situation imposes upon us the painful necessity of receiving from another, what, with all our industry we cannot earn for ourselves? We always understood the gospel to be a message of glad tidings to the poor; that its richest consolations were addressed to them; that through it God hath chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of the promised kingdom. And shall we now be told, that the man who gives, because his situation enables him to do so, is more blessed than he who is forced by his situation to be a receiver?

In answer to this I have to observe, that man is neither punished nor rewarded for his circumstances—that the kingdom is only withheld from the rich, when they set their confidence and their affections on the world, and despise the offered salvation; and the poor obtain an interest in the gospel, not because they are poor, but it is because they are rich in faith, that they are heirs of that kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him.

How often shall we have to repeat it, that it is not the deed of the hand that God looks to, but the dictates of the heart which gave rise to it? On this simple principle I undertake to prove, that the very poorest among you, though you have not a penny to bestow on the necessities of others, may obtain, not the lower blessedness of him who accepts of charity, but the higher blessedness of him who dispenses it; and that even though so humble in situation as to be a daily dependant on another's bounty, you may stand higher in the book of God's remembrance, than even he whose liberality sustains you, and by the crumbs and fragments of whose table you are kept from starvation.

Let me first take the case of those poor, who are really not able to give; but who, by the struggles of a painful and honourable industry, have just kept themselves above the necessity of receiving. Had they been a little more idle, and a little more thrifless—a thing which very often they might easily have been without censure and without observation, they behoved to come upon your charity. They could have made good a legal claim to a part at least of their maintenance. They could have drawn a certain sum out of your poor's fund. But no, they would not. Before they will take this sum they try what they can do by more work and better management. They will not take a fraction from you, so long as they can shift for themselves. They do as Paul the Apostle did before them; they labour with their own hands rather than be burdensome to others; and that sum which they might have gotten, they suffer you to keep entire for the relief of other wants still more urgent, and of other families still more helpless.

Now, the question I have to put to you is—"Who is the giver of this sum?" I may take a list of them. I may put down the names of the original contributors, who make it up by their pennies and their sixpences. But there is one name which does not appear in the catalogue, yet nobler than them all—even the hard-working and the honest-hearted labourer, who might have obtained the whole sum, but refused to touch a single fraction of it—who shifted it from himself and let it pass unimpaired to the lightening of a burden

still heavier than his own—who declined the offer; or to whom the offer was never made, because it was known to all, that his own hands ministered unto his own necessities. He is the giver of this sum. Others may have parted with it out of their abundance. But he has given it out of the sweat of his brow. He has risen up early and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself. It was first gotten from the easy liberalities of those who scarcely felt it to be a sacrifice. But it was gotten a second time out of the bones and muscles of a generous workman. I trust there are hundreds of such in this town and neighbourhood. I offer them the homage of my respectful congratulations; nor am I doing them a greater honour, than the sincerity of my admiration goes along with, when I say that they are the best friends of the poor, they are their kindest and most generous benefactors.

But let me go still further down—even to the case of those who are really not able to give; but who, burdened with the infirmities of age or of disease or of sickness and deformed children, have at length given way to the pressure of circumstances, and come under the painful necessity of receiving. They may still carry the same noble principle along with them; and though in outward deed, they are receivers—to them may belong all the generosity of the giver, and all his blessedness. You may not be able so to labour, as not to be burdensome; but all of you are able to do your best—and if you so work and so manage, that you are as little burdensome as you can, your names may be recorded in the book of Heaven among the most benevolent of the species. I love the poor, and I have this very thing to record of them; and I have no doubt that there are some now present, who have witnessed it along with me. Have you never offered any of them a sum, out of the public charity; and received part of it back again? Our necessities force us to take something; but we shall not take to the whole extent of your offer. We request that you will keep a part, and leave us to make a fend with the remainder. Who, I ask again, has given me the sum that is so returned to me? Who is it that has fed the poor and clothed the naked out of it? To whose account am

I to put down this sum, more honourable to him who has given it—than the golden donation to be seen on the forehead of many a subscription paper? O, it is easy for us who sit at our warm fire-sides, and our plentiful tables, to throw a gift into the treasury, and live as softly and luxuriously as ever; but when a man of poverty submits to voluntary hardships, and fears to be burdensome—he may have a receiving hand but he has a giving heart; and the eye of the great Discerner may there see the sacred principle of charity, in its purest and most heavenly exercise.

Now, it is not necessary to make the supposition of so much money being offered, and a part of it being given back again by each individual in these circumstances. Enough that the individual, by his labour and his frugality and his honest wish to serve others, makes a less sum necessary to be offered than would otherwise have been sufficient for him. I trust that there are many such individuals; and be assured that though they get out of the parish fund, though they get out of the produce of your society, though they get out of the liberality of their wealthier acquaintances, though to the outward and undiscerning eye of the world they are one and all of them receivers—in the sight of that high and heavenly Witness who pondereth the heart of man, they are givers—they are put down as givers in the book of His remembrance—and, if what they do and suffer in this way be done unto Jesus and suffered for His sake—to them will be assigned all the blessedness of givers in the day of reckoning.

The duty which I am now pressing upon the poor of being as little burdensome as they can, is the very lesson to be drawn from the passage now before us. On what occasion is it that Paul says in my text—"It is more blessed to give than to receive?" It is true that he gave the people of Ephesus christian instruction, he ministered to them in spiritual things; but he is speaking of the way in which he obtained a temporal subsistence for himself and for his companions. In reference to meat and to clothing he did not give to the Ephesians; but he wrought for it to himself and his own company, and it was doing this which brought down upon him the blessedness of giving. Think

not then, my brethren, that your poverty shuts you out from the same reward. Thou ~~do~~ you do not give with the hand, you ~~may~~ earn the blessedness of giving that Paul earned; and you may do it in the very same way that he did. You may covet no man's silver or gold or apparel; and, in as far as age or disease or the pressure of a numerous and sickly offspring will let you, you may say with the apostle "Yea you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that are with me."

In this age of benevolent exertion, it is delightful to see the number of societies, and the ready encouragement which comes in upon them from the liberality of the public—an encouragement which I trust will never be withdrawn, till Bibles are circulated through all countries, and till missionaries have planted in every land the faith of a crucified Saviour. But while witnessing the splendid names, and the princely donations which appear in the printed lists of these societies, I cannot forbear the reflection that there are many others whose labour of love is unnoticed and unrecorded, who will be registered in the book of heaven as fellow-helpers to the cause. There are poor who cannot afford to give; but who, struggling manfully with the necessity of their circumstances, keep themselves from being burdensome to others—and God, who judgeth righteously, will put down in part to their account, the sum which they have suffered to go untouched and unencroached upon to the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. There are others who cannot afford to give; but who strive to the uttermost—and, by dint of sobriety and of frugal management, reduce the supply of charity to a sum as small as possible. God will not treat them as receivers. He will put down to their account all that they have saved to the givers; and He will say, that, by the whole amount of what is thus saved, they have fed the stream of that benevolence which is directed to other objects. The contributors, whose names are presented every year to the eye of the public, are not the only contributors to our Bible and Missionary Societies. I could tell you of more; and though I cannot point my finger to those of them who occupy this town and neighbour-

hood, I am sure that many of my hearers can do it for me. There is the industrious labourer, who nobly clears his way among all the difficulties which surround him. There is the frugal house-wife, who lends her important share to the interests of the young family. There is the seryant, who ministers out of her own wages—to those parents whom age has bowed down in helpless dependence upon the gratitude of their offspring. In the eye of the world, they may not have given a penny to the cause; but substantially and in effect, they have supported it. They have circulated Bibles; they have sent forth missionaries; through them the stream of Christian light has been poured more copiously on the wilds of Paganism; and many a converted Indian who meets them in heaven, will bear them witness, that they have added to the number of the redeemed by giving the message of peace a speedier circulation.

I now conclude, and I do it with one observation. Ask the giver if he would not feel more disposed to be liberal, and to open a wider hand to the distresses of those around him, were he assured that all he gave went to the alleviation of real distress. It is the experience of imposition which shuts many a heart—and this is a lesson both to the receivers and the visitors of this society. How much is it in the power of the lower classes, to befriend their poorer brethren, by the rigid observance of the duty I have now been pressing upon them. They would bring down upon them an aid and a sympathy from the rich, which they have never yet experienced. The counterfeit and the worthless poor, do a world of mischief to the cause of beneficence. They obtain for themselves that, which the unfortunate and deserving poor should have gotten. And, what is still more than this, they stifle in the hearts of the rich, those emotions of sympathy which would otherwise have kindled in them. They throw the cold damp of suspicion over their charities. The money, which would have circulated as freely as the light of day among the habitations of the wretched, is detained, as by an iron grasp, in the hands of men who have at one time been misled by the dissimulations of the poor, and at another provoked by their

ingratitude. Ye amiable and humane visitors of this society, it lies upon you to remedy this evil. Convince the givers around you, of the judicious application of the money in your hands; and more will flow in upon you. Be vigilant, be discerning, be impartial. Your judgment must be brought into action, as well as your sympathy. There is as much of the coolness of principle as of the high ecstasy of feeling in the benevolence of a Christian; and my prayer is, that the kind office you are engaged in may be blessed to your own souls—that a single aim to the glory of God may animate all your exertions—that the glittering parade of ostentation may not deceive you—that, instead of seeking the honour which cometh from one another, you may seek the honour that cometh from God only—that the tenderness you feel for others, may be the genuine fruit of that spirit which is given to them who believe—that the labour you have undertaken may indeed be undertaken in the Lord—and then, I can assure you, it will not be in vain; and I call upon you to be steadfast and immovable, and always abounding therein.

To conclude. It is our duty to relieve actual suffering in all its forms; and, be it ignorance, or disease, or age, or lunacy, or hunger, or nakedness, the claim upon our beneficence is made out in one and all of these cases, if it just be made out that they exist—and with the same tone of earnestness by which I call upon you to instruct the ignorant, and to harbour the deranged, and to minister to the diseased, do I call upon you to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, and to give of your abundance to him who is in need. There is no difference among all these cases in the obligation to grant relief; and the only difference I ever contended for, is in the way of going about it. Do the thing in such a way, as shall relieve the present case; and do not the thing in such a way, as shall have the effect of multiplying the future cases. Now you do not multiply the future cases of disease, or derangement, or dumbness, or blindness by giving the utmost publicity to your plans for relieving them, by pleading for them from the pulpit, by building hospitals and asylums, and blazoning the names and the payments of

subscribers in the columns of a newspaper.

But you do multiply the future cases of indigence, by all this noise and all this parading, about a plan or a society which has for its object the general relief of indigence. And the plain cause of the difference between the former and the latter is, that a man almost never becomes a voluntary object for the charity of an hospital; but he may, and in point of fact he often does, become a voluntary object for the charity of alms: And therefore it is, that the less he knows about the existence of the last kind of charity the better; and a want of attention to this principle is, I am sorry to say, ripening or preparing the population of our great towns, for that system which now obtains with such full and mischievous operation in England—and that delicacy, to keep alive which Paul gave up a portion of his apostolical labours, a minister now-a-days is called upon also to leave his parish duties, but for the very different purpose of breaking it down: And thus it is, that, under the soft guise of humanity, a system may be instituted, which, with kindness for its principle, may carry cruelty in its operation—ay, and when the yearly assessment comes to be established, and the provision of a mistaken benevolence is made known, and the poor have found their way to it—they will set in upon you by thousands; and the money which is withheld from the endowment of more schools and more churches and more ministers to meet the moral and religious wants of an increasing population—will be as nothing to the hungry and unquenchable demands of a people, whom you have seduced from that principle of independence which Christianity teaches, and which the despised exertions of the Christian minister alone can keep alive.

And is the cause of indigence then to be altogether abandoned? This does not follow. The duty of relieving want is unquestionable, but there is a way of going about it; and while I honestly wish it were carried to a ten old greater extent than it is at this moment—all I contend for is, that it shall be invested with the good old scriptural attribute of secrecy. Let societies be multiplied and pled for and publicly made known for the improvement of the mind, and the re-

lief of every one species of involuntary suffering—but do let the relief of want be more confided than it is, to the discernment and discretion and active benevolence of individuals. It is my earnest desire that every man among you were a Cornelius, and every woman among you were a Dorcas—but I should like the alms of the one unseen by human eye to ascend as a memorial before God; and the making of coats and garments by the other to remain unknown, till the hand of death shall discover it. Were every individual among you, to give up one-tenth of his income to the comfort of those in your neighbourhood, I am sure I should be among the first to rejoice; but let each of you give one-hundredth of his income to some published and proclaimed charity for bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked; and a fearful suspicion of the consequences would chill my every feeling of benevolent approbation. It is true that concert carries an advantage along with it; but is not concert consistent with secrecy? Is it necessary that the trumpet be sounded upon the subject, either in the pulpit or out of it? Would not the gradual abolition of the public charities, for like the abolition of every established mischief I fear it must be gradual, give an impulse to individual benevolence to replace the want of them; and, after almsgiving had taken this salutary direction, are there not Christians to be found in every street, who, unknowing and unknown to all but themselves, could meet together in the name of Christ; and, under the eye of their heavenly Witness, could give their attention and their charity and their wisdom to that work and labour of love which he Has assigned to them?

I feel myself oppressed by the want of time and of space, for I am aware of many questions which I must leave unresolved behind me; but there is one which I cannot pass over. Does a published and proclaimed plan for the relief of orphans come under the animadversions which I have felt it my duty to advance, against any such plan for the relief of indigence in general? O no, my brethren. A public charity for the relief of general indigence, may tempt many a father to the relaxation of his industry, and many a mother to the relaxation of her manage-

ment; but a charity for the relief of orphans will neither tempt the one nor the other to a voluntary martyrdom. Carry the former system to a certain extent; and you will witness many a parent providing not for those of his own house; but carry the latter system to the full extent of its object, and you never can have such a spectacle as this to freeze and to discourage you. In the one case, many of the children you feed and you educate, may be devolved upon you by the wilful negligence of a parent. In the other case they are devolved upon you by the will of God. He has called away the parents to another scene; and He has left to you the care of their helpless family. If you are officious enough to do that which is more the duty of another, you may have performed his work; but by tempting him to a dereliction of his principles, you have done it at the expense of his soul. This language is surely not too strong, if by your injudicious charity you have made a single parent let down the industriousness of his habits—for by so doing you have made him worse than an infidel. But such is the wisdom of the object to which you have attached yourselves, that though you do all which you propose—you interfere with no man's duty; you tempt and you corrupt no parents, for alas, where are they?—you stifle no one feeling of parental tenderness, for this is what the cold hand of death hath already done—you withdraw no children from father's or mother's care, for fathers and mothers are by the mysterious Providence of God withdrawn from them: And that duty which at one time belonged to another, has become singly and entirely yours. O how I rejoice, when the lessons of wisdom are at one with the best and the most delightful of our sympathies—when compassion may give full vent to its tenderness, and no one principle or maxim of prudence is trenced upon—when the sweet movements of pity may be cherished and indulged to the uttermost, and truth brings no one severity to scowl upon us, or tell us with stern authoritative voice that we expatiate on a forbidden territory. Keep by your professed object, my brethren; and if you do so, let your liberality know no other limit, than that the object be provided for.

And let me not dismiss you without at least an observation, which I pray God may bless by the enlightening influences of His Spirit, so as to undeceive many who build their confidence upon their charities. A man, under the impulse of natural feeling, may do many a deed of tenderness; and yet may have a mind totally unfurnished with a sense of God, and a life totally polluted by conformity to the world. It is well that God has provided society with so many natural securities for its existence, in the constitution of the members who compose it—just as it is well for the preservation of the other tribes of animals, that He has endowed them with the instinct of affection for their young. But ever remember that feeling is one thing and principle is another; and to give the stamp of religion to your doings, a sense of God and of His will, must mingle and give the tone and the direction to every one of them. And thus while it is true that part of pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, it is only when this is done with a reference of the heart to God and the Father. And yet how many, because endowed with the constitutional tenderness, think that upon this single peculiarity, they may walk in the sight of their own eyes here, and be translated with all the waywardness of a heart alienated from God and devoted with every one of its affections to the creature, to the joys and the rewards of an unfading hereafter: And therefore it is, that I call upon you not to put asunder what God has joined—not to found your confidence upon a single half-text of a record, which in the vast majority of its contents, you despise and put away from you—not to open your eye to one clause of a verse, and shut your eye to the other clause of it; but know that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

I have hitherto confined myself to general principles; but let me not forget the claims of that institution which I have been appointed to advocate before you. Nor have I forgotten them. In this age of benevolent institutions, when some of

them are so legalized by the strong hand of authority, and some of them are so paraded before the eyes of the public, as to be counted upon by the receiver; as to tempt him from the virtue of the text; as to relax his economical habits, and of course to create and to multiply more cases of distress than it is in the power of human contrivances ever to provide for—I say, in these circumstances, one feels a comfort in attaching himself to the cause of an endowment, which may be supported to any extent you please, without its ever being possible to realize the mischief I am now alluding to. Why, my brethren—the very confinement of the object to a limited number of families, is of itself a security, against that mischief which our soundest economists apprehend from the number and the publicity of our benevolent institutions. Were the country, upon the spontaneous movement of its own kindly and religious feelings, to take upon itself the care of our destitute orphans, it just resolves itself into an augmentation of the clerical patrimony. It is only adding a little to the provision of the legislature in our behalf; and it is such an addition as will not give one single luxury to our table, or tempt us to the pride of life by enabling us to tack one vanity more to the splendour of our establishment. I am not aware of a single hurtful effect, that can be alleged against the charity for which I am contending. I know of nothing that should throw the cold damp of suspicion over it—and therefore it is that I feel no restraint whatever, in laying it before you as an open field, on which the benevolence of the public may expatiate, without fear and without encumbrance. It is true that the sympathies of a man are ever most alive to those distresses which may fall upon himself—and that it is for a minister to feel the deepest emotion, at the sad picture of the breaking up of a minister's family. When the sons and the daughters of clergymen are left to go, they know not whither, from the peacefulness of their father's dwelling—never were poor outcasts less prepared by the education and the habits of former years, for the scowl of an unpitied world; nor can I figure a drearier and more affecting contrast, than that which obtains between the blissful security of their earlier days, and

the dark and unshielded condition, to which the hand of Providence has now brought them. It is not necessary, for the purpose of awakening your sensibilities on this subject, to dwell upon every one circumstance of distress which enters into the sufferings of this bereaved family—or to tell you of the many friends they must abandon, and the many charms of that peaceful neighbourhood which they must quit for ever. But when they look abroad, and survey the innumerable beauties which the God of nature has scattered so profusely around them—when they see the sun throwing its unclouded splendours over the whole neighbourhood—when, on the fair side of the year, they behold the smiling aspect of the country; and at every footstep they take, some flower appears in its loveliness, or some bird offers its melody to delight them—when they see quietness on all the hills, and every field glowing in the pride and luxury of vegetation—when they see summer throwing its rich garment over this goodly scene of magnificence and glory, and think, in the bitterness of their souls, that this is the last summer which they shall ever witness, smiling on that scene which all the ties of habit and of affection have endeared to them—when this thought, melancholy as it is, is lost and overborne in the far darker melancholy of a father torn from their embrace, and a helpless family left to find their way unprotected and alone through the lowering futurity of this earthly pilgrimage—Do you wonder, that their feeling

hearts should be ready to lose hold of the promise, that He who decks the lily fair in flowery pride, will guide them in safety through the world, and at last raise all who believe in Him to the bloom and the vigour of immortality? The flowers of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your Heavenly Father careth for them—and how much more careth He for you, O ye of little faith.

O, it is kind in you, my brethren, to set yourselves forward as the instruments of this promise—to house these unprotected wanderers—to shield them from the blast they are far too soft and tender to endure—and to lighten the severity of that fall which they have suffered, by the premature loss of a father, who now only lives in the memory of a revering people, and the affections of a despairing family. Do, my brethren, give out of your abundance. You know not what the hand of death may ere long bring upon your own habitations. Work then while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work. If the Discerner of the heart, who counts even a cup of cold water given to the least of His little ones, sees of your offering that it is done unto Him, and that it is for the love you bear His gospel, and the value you have for His ministers—if He can recognise it as the fruit of that mighty principle which purifies the heart, and sends forth the copious streams of all that is good and kind and generous into the walk and conversation, then verily I say unto you that you shall by no means lose your reward.

SERMON XXXVII.

*On Religious Establishments.**

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”—2 TIMOTHY ii. 2.

THE apostle, by this verse, makes provision for the continuance of a gospel ministry upon earth. If he do not enact the mode of succession for all ages, he at

least exemplifies it from his own age, down to a third generation of Christian teachers in the church. He ordained Timothy to this office, who was also to

* A Sermon preached in St. George's church, Edinburgh, before the Society for the daughters of the clergy, in May, 1829.

ordain others—which last, we may well conjecture, were not only to minister, but in their turn to ordain ministers who might come after them. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is marvellously little of express enactment in Scripture for an ecclesiastical constitution; and that this fertile controversy chiefly turns upon apostolical example, and the lights of ecclesiastical history—thus leaving it more in the shape of an indeterminate or discretionary question, and to be decided by considerations of expediency—a term, which, in the Christian sense of the word, is of far loftier bearing than in the vulgar sense of it—as pointing, not to what makes most for the good of self or the good of society, but as pointing to what makes most for the prosperity of religion in the world, for the extension and the glory of our Redeemer's kingdom. Expediency, wherewith we commonly associate a certain character of sordidness, instantly acquires a sacredness of character, when its objects are thus made sacred; and its high aim is more thoroughly to Christianize a land, and to ensure a fuller and more frequent circulation of the gospel among its families.

Now there is one question of ecclesiastical polity, which, in the lack of aught in the New Testament that is very distinct or authoritative upon the subject, we should feel much inclined to decide upon this ground—we mean the question of a religious establishment. The truth is, that Christianity, for three centuries, was left to find its own way in the world—for during the whole of that period, none of this world's princes did it reverence. All this time, it was treated as an unprotected outcast, or rather as a branded criminal. Yet the execrable superstition, as it was then called, neither withered under neglect, nor was quelled by the hand of persecuting violence. It grew and gathered into strength, under the terrible processes that were devised for its annihilation. Disgrace could not overbear it. Threats could not terrify it. Imprisonment could not stifle it. Exile could not rid the world of it, or chase the nuisance away. The fires of bloody martyrdom could not extinguish it. They could not all prevail against a religion, which had the blessing of heaven upon its head, and in its bosom

the silent energies of conviction. And so it spread and multiplied among men. And, signal triumph of principle over power, of the moral over the sentient and the grossly physical! was the indestructible church nurtured into might and magnitude, and settled more firmly on its basis, amid the various elements which had conspired for its overthrow. Throughout the whole transition—from the time that the fishermen of Galilee tended its infancy, to the time that the Emperors of Rome did homage to its wondrous manhood—it had neither the honours nor the revenues of an establishment. This change did not, and could not, originate with the ecclesiastical. It originated with the civil authority. It took effect by the state holding out to the church the right hand of fellowship. The advance was made by the former; and we should hold it tantamount to the vindication of a religious establishment, could we demonstrate, how, without the compromise of principle, but rather in obedience to its purest and highest behests, the advance might be met and consented to by the latter.

Let me suppose then a society of Christians, great or small, actuated, as Moravians now are, by the spirit and zeal of devoted missionaries—pressed in conscience by the obligation of our Saviour's last saying, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature"—bent on an expedition to the heathen of distant lands, if they had but an opening for the voyage and the means of defraying it. Hitherto, it will be admitted, that all is purely apostolical; and that, as yet, no violence has been done to the high and heaven-born sanctities of the gospel. Now what we ask is, whether there be aught to vitiate this holy character, in the next indispensable step of the means being provided; of money being raised, for the essential hire and maintenance of the labourers; of the vessel being equipped, that is to bear them onward in this errand of piety; of the wealth being transferred to their hands from the hands of willing contributors, for the support of the missionary household, for the erection of the missionary church and missionary dwelling-places. Is there aught of earthly contamination in this? Is the *Unitas Fratrum*, that church of spiritual men, at all brought

down from its saintliness, by those annual supplies, without which their perils among the heathen could not have been encountered—their deeds of Christian heroism could not have been performed? They maintain their own independence as a church notwithstanding. Their doctrines and discipline and mode of worship, are left untouched by the proceeding. In all matters ecclesiastical, they take their own way. It is true they are subsisted by others; but in no one article, relating to the church's peculiar business, are they controlled by them. They are maintained from without; but they need not, because of this, suffer one taint of desecration within. There is a connexion, no doubt, established between two parties; but I can see nothing in it, save a pecuniary succour rendered upon one side, and a high service of philanthropy rendered upon the other—yet rendered according to the strict methods, and in rigid conformity with the most sacred principles of those who are embarked on this high and holy vocation. The transaction, as we now relate it, is of purest origin; and has been nobly accredited by the blessed consequences which have followed in its train—for by means of these *hireling* labourers, the out-posts of Christianity have been pushed forward to the very outskirts of the human population; Christian villages have been reared in the farthest wilds of Paganism; the prowling savages of Greenland and Labrador have been reclaimed to the habits and the decencies of civilized life; and, greater far than any bliss or beauty which can be made to irradiate this fleeting pilgrimage, successive thousands of before untaught idolaters (under the effective tuition that has been brought to bear upon them) have lived in the obedience, and died in the triumphs, of the faith.

Now the essential character of this whole transaction is the same—whether we conceive these gospel-labourers to be employed in the business of a home, or in the business of a foreign mission. By the one process, you carry the lessons of our religion beyond; by the other you circulate them within the territory of Christendom. The effect of the one is to spread Christianity externally abroad, and so perhaps as to sprinkle many nations. The effect of the other is to fill

up the internal vacancies, and so perhaps as thoroughly to saturate with Christianity one nation. It is not enough reflected on, that, under the latter process, a vastly greater number of human spirits may be medicated into spiritual and immortal health, than under the former; and, at all events, that this latter also must have its accomplishment—ere the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth even as the waters, which, in their collapse admit of no internal vacancy, cover the sea. But the position which I chiefly want to fix at present is, that, whether the missionary movement be in an outward or in a homeward direction, its whole economy and character may remain essentially the same. The enterprise may be supported in its expenses by one party. It may be executed in its work and labour by another party. Each may be distinct of the other, and give no disturbance to the other. The secular men may provide the means; yet the ecclesiastical men, in their proper department, may have the entire and uncontrolled management. They may take their support from others in things temporal; yet suffer no invasion by them, on their inviolable prerogative of determining and ordering in things spiritual. Their maintenance cometh from others; but their worship, and their creed, and their formularies, and their sacraments, and their ministrations, both of word and of ordinances, are all their own. We yet see no compromise of principle in such a connexion as this. There is support given upon the one side. But there is no surrender, in the least article either of faith or holiness, made upon the other side. The only submission that we can perceive on the part of these missionaries or ministers to other men, is a submission to be fed by them; and that, that they might wait without distraction on the business of their own unshackled and uncontrolled ministry. In this instance then, as in the former, there is the like pure origin, and there may be a like or perhaps a surpassingly-glorious result. If by the foreign mission, stations are planted along the margin of our peopled earth—by the home mission stations may be multiplied over the territory of our own land. If, as the effect of the one, we now behold villages of peace and piety in the distant

wilderness—as the effect of the other, the moral wilderness around us may be lighted up and fertilized; and we may be made to witness both a holier Sabbath and purer week-days than heretofore, in all our parishes. If, in virtue of the missionary doings abroad, we read that hundreds of families in some before untrodden field of heathenism have been Christianized—let us not forget, that many are the cities of our own island, where, without one mile of locomotion, we might have converse with thousands of families, which, but for the same doings at home, would be sunk in the apathy and the grossness of practical heathenism. If, as the fruit of the one service, we can appeal to humanized savages, and rudest wanderers of the desert, transformed into Christian and companionable men—let not the splendour of this achievement eclipse the equal importance of the other service, if we can appeal to an effectiveness as mighty and momentous, in our own cottage patriarchs, our own virtuous and well-taught peasantry.

Now, we think it is not by a fanciful, but by a sound generalization, that we pass from the case of a home mission, to that of an establishment—which is neither more nor less, in fact, than a universal home mission. At its first institution, in the days of Constantine, the very work remained to be done, which we have now specified. Its proper object, is not to extend Christianity into ulterior spaces, but thoroughly to fill up the space that had been already occupied. It is a far mightier achievement than may appear at first view, completely to overtake the whole length and breadth of a land. All the itineracies and the traverse movements of the many thousand missionaries, who, during the three first centuries, lived and died in the cause, fell short of this accomplishment. They did much in the work of spreading the gospel externally; but they left much undone in the work of spreading it internally. They had Christianized the thousands who lived in cities; but the millions of pagans, or of peasantry, who were yet unconverted, evince the country to have been every where a great moral fastness, which, till opened up by an establishment, would remain impregnable. Now this very opening was presented to the ministers of Christ, when

the Roman Emperor, whether by a movement of faith, or a movement of philanthropy and patriotism, made territorial distribution of these over his kingdoms and provinces; and assigning a territorial revenue for the labourers of this extensive vineyard, enabled each to set himself down in his own little vicinity—the families of which he could assemble to the exercises of Christian piety on the Sabbath, and among whom he could expatiate through the week in all the offices and attentions of Christian kindness. Such an offer, whether Christianly or but politically made upon the one side, could most Christianly be accepted and rejoiced in by the other. It extended inconceivably the powers and the opportunities of usefulness. It brought the gospel of Jesus Christ into contact with myriads more of imperishable spirits; and with as holy a fervour as ever gladdened the heart of the devoted missionary, when the means of an ampler service to the Redeemer's cause were put into his hands, might the church in these days have raised to heaven its orisons of purest gratitude, that kings at length had become its nursing fathers, and opened up to it the plenteous harvest of all their population. There is just as little of the essentially corrupt in this connexion between the church and the state, as there is in the connexion between a missionary board and its pecuniary supporters. Each is a case of the Earth helping the Woman; but, whatever of earthliness may be upon the one side, there might be none, and there needs be none, upon the other. The one may assist in things temporal—while the other may continue to assert its untouched and entire jurisdiction, as heretofore, in things spiritual. There might thus be an alliance between the Altar and the Throne—yet without the feculence of any earthly intermixture being at all engendered by it. The state avails itself of the church's services; and the church gives back again no other than the purest services of the sanctuary. Its single aim, as heretofore, is the preparation of citizens for heaven, but, in virtue of the blessings which Christianity scatters on its way, do the princes of this world find that these are the best citizens of earth—and that the cheap defence of nations, the best safeguard of their prosperity and their power, is a universal

Christian education. There needs be nought, we repeat, of contamination in this. The state pays the church; yet the church, in the entire possession of all those privileges and powers which are strictly ecclesiastical, maintains the integrity of her faith and worship notwithstanding. She might be the same hallowed church, as when the fires of martyrdom were blazing around her—the same spirituality among her ministers—the same lofty independence in all her pulpits. The effect of an establishment is not necessarily to corrupt Christianity, but to extend it—not necessarily to vitiate the ministrations of the gospel, but certainly to disseminate those ministrations more intimately amongst, as well as to bear them more diffusively abroad over the families of the land.

But just as in philosophy and politics, there are mistakes upon this subject of a religious establishment, from the very common error of not assigning the right effect to its right cause. There is a kind of vague and general imagination, as if corruption were the invariable accompaniment of such an alliance between the civil and the ecclesiastical; and this has been greatly fostered, by the tremendously corrupt Popery, which followed in historical succession after the establishment of Christianity in the days of Constantine, and which certainly holds out, in vivid contrast, the difference between this religion in the period of its suffering, and this religion in the period of its security and triumph. But it were well to discriminate the precise origin of this frightful degeneracy. It arose not from without; it arose from within. It was not because of any ascendancy by the state over the church whom it now paid, and thereby trenched upon its independence in things spiritual. It was because of an ascendancy by the church over the state, the effect of that superstitious terror which it wielded over the imaginations of men, and which it most unworthily prostituted to the usurpation of power in things temporal.

The fear that many have of an establishment, is, lest through it, the state should obtain too great power over the church, and so be able to graft its own secularity, or its own spirit of worldliness, on the pure system of the gospel,—whereas the

actual mischief of Popery, lay in the church having obtained too great power over the state; and in the false doctrines which it devised, to strengthen and perpetuate a temporal dominion which should never have been permitted to it. There is no analogy between the apprehended evils of Christianity from an establishment now-a-days, and the actual evils inflicted on Christianity by the corrupt and audacious hierarchy of Rome. The thing dreaded from that connexion between the church and state which an establishment implies, is lest the state, stepping beyond its own legitimate province, should make invasion upon the church; and so, by a heterogeneous ingredient from without, in some way adulterate the faith. The thing experienced, on the contrary, was that the church, stepping beyond its legitimate province, made an invasion upon the state; and all the adulteration practised, either on the worship or the lessons of Christianity, was generated from within. So far from the state having too much power, so that it could make unlawful invasion on the church—it had too little power, so that it could not resist the unlawful invasion made by the church upon itself. The theoretical fear is, lest the state should meddle with the prerogatives of the church; the historical fact is, that the church meddled with the prerogative of the state. So far from the apprehended corruption having experience to rest upon, it is precisely the reverse—of the actual corruption. But the truth is, that, after many conflicts, the matter is now better understood; and the understanding is, that neither should meddle with the prerogatives of the other. The state may pay the church; yet without conceding to it one particle of temporal sovereignty. The church may serve the state; yet without the surrender of one spiritual prerogative. To teach the people Christianity—that is the church's service. To teach them no other than what itself judges to be the Christianity of the Bible—that is the church's prerogative. To deal out among our parish families the lessons of faith and of holiness—this is the church's incumbent duty. But that these shall be no other than what itself judges to be the very lessons of that Scripture whose guidance in things spiritual it exclusively follows, and that in this

judgment no power on earth shall control it,—this is the church's inviolable privilege. The state might maintain a scholastic establishment; but, without charging itself with the methods of ordinary education, leave these to the teachers. Or the state might maintain an ecclesiastical establishment; but, without charging itself with the methods of Christian education, leave these to the church. In both cases it would multiply and extend over the land the amount of instruction. Yet the kind of instruction it might leave to other authorities, to other boards of management than its own; and this were the way to secure the best scholarship, and the best Christianity. For the sake of an abundant gospel dispensation, we are upheld in things temporal by the state. For the sake of a pure gospel dispensation, we are left in things spiritual to ourselves; and on ourselves; and on ourselves alone does it depend, whether the church now might not be the same saintly and unsullied church, that it was in the days of martyrdom—as spiritual in its creed, as purely apostolic in its spirit, as holy in all its services.

We will not allege the infallibility of our own church; for this were Popery though in the dress of Protestantism. We will not contend for the wisdom and the rectitude of all its doings; for we hold that there is neither individual nor corporate perfection upon the earth. But let the distinction be made between the acts of an establishment and the powers of an establishment; and we know not, if, through the whole of Christendom, there be one more happily devised in any other country for the religious good of its population. The fitness of a machine is one thing; the working of it is another. We feel as if it were no more than a warrantable confidence, when we stand up for the former—though we should feel it a most tremendous presumption, did we, in every instance and upon all occasions, stand up for the latter. In regard to the fitness of the mechanism, it may be the best possible. In regard to the actual working of the mechanism, one would need to side with all the majorities which have occurred for two centuries, and under all the changes of ecclesiastical policy, ere he could conscientiously af-

firm, that it has at all times been the best possible. Still, amid all the imputations and the errors which its greatest enemies may have laid to its door, we hold, that, upon the alternative of its existence or non-existence, there would hang a most fearful odds to the Christianity of Scotland. Let us admit it as true, that the apparatus might be made greatly more effective,—still it is true that a deadly effect would follow, and be felt to her remotest parishes, were the apparatus taken down. It were tantamount to a moral blight over the length and breadth of our land; and though we have not time to demonstrate, what now we have only time to affirm—yet, with all the certainty of experimental demonstration we say it, that the ministrations of our church then done away would never be replaced, to within a tenth of their efficacy, by all the zeal and energy and talent of private adventurers. There would arise no compensation for the present regular supply. There would arise no compensation for its fulness. Instead of the frequent Parish Church (that most beautiful of all spectacles to a truly Scottish heart, because to him the richest in moral association; and to whom therefore its belfrey, peeping forth from among the thick verdure of the trees which embosom it, is the sweetest and the fairest object in the landscape)—instead of this, we should behold the bare and thinly-scattered meeting-houses. For the large intervening spaces, we should have nothing but precarious and transient itineraries to trust to. The well established habit of Sabbath attendance, now as constant with many of our families as the weekly recurrence of the parish bell, would necessarily disappear. In a moral sense, they would become the waste and the howling wildernesses of Scotland. We feel quite assured, that, under this withering deprivation, a hard and outlandish aspect would gather on the face of our people. The cities might be somewhat served as heretofore, but the innumerable hamlets would be forsaken; and, just as it was anterior to an establishment at all, our peasants would again become Pagans, or, under the name and the naked ritual of Christianity, would sink into the blindness and the brutality and the sad alienation of Paganism.

But, without enlarging on this consideration, in which however there lies much of the strength of our cause, let us briefly recur to the leading argument of the day. It is not true that corruption must adhere, in virtue of its very nature and as by necessity, to an establishment. There will be corruption in fact; but rightly to estimate the quarter it comes from, distinction should be made between the nature of the institution and the nature of man. In virtue of the former, there may be no contamination; while in virtue of the latter, there may be a great deal. An establishment may in this case be the occasional, but not the efficient cause of mischief. The machine may be faultless; but exposed, as it must be, while the species lasts, to the intromission of hands, which to a certain degree will taint and vitiate all that they come in contact with. The remedy is not to demolish the machine, and transfer the hands which wrought it to other managements and other modes of operation—There will still be corruption notwithstanding. It will prove a vain attempt at escape, if you think to make it good by transferring human nature from the economy of an establishment to the economy of any of our sectaries. The human nature which you thus transfer, will carry its own virus along with it; and, while that nature remains there will be corruption in both, and which is strictly chargeable neither on the one economy nor on the other. It follows not therefore, because of this one or that other abuse, that the framework of our establishment should be destroyed. To make head against an abuse, we should direct our efforts to the place where the abuse originated—not to the machinery therefore in the present instance but to the men who work the machinery. It is not to a constitutional or political change in any of our establishments, that we should look for the coming regeneration of our land. It is to a moral and spiritual change in those who administer them. It is there, and not in the framework, where the change and the correction ought to be made. This is the way by which to get rid of corruption, and not by putting forth upon our national institutions the innovating hand of a destroyer. There is corruption in the civil government of our empire—yet

that is no reason why it should be brought to dissolution. There is corruption in the municipal government of our towns—yet what fearful anarchy would ensue, should that be made the pretext for another overthrow; and every populous community in our land were left without a presiding magistracy to check and to control them. There is corruption, we will say it, in every family government throughout the nation—yet who can tell the numerous ills that would fester in every household, and flow over in innumerable streams upon society, were the rights and the restraints of parental authority therefore put an end to? And there may be corruption in the ecclesiastical government of our own church. This may be true, and yet it be just as true, that if, either by the policy of infatuated rulers or by the frenzy of an infatuated people, this church were swept away—it would inflict a most deleterious blow on the character of Scotland and the Christianity of Scotland's families. It is not by the violence of public hostility against our church that the nation is to be reformed—it is rather by the control of the public opinion upon her ministers; and most of all, by the answer from Heaven to the people's prayers, that her priests may be clothed with salvation. Were the establishment, and that, too, under the pretext of its corruption, destroyed—this would do nothing, and worse than nothing. Were the establishment, either in the whole, or in certain parts of its constitution reformed—this, of itself, would do little; and so little, as to stamp insignificance on many a contest of ecclesiastical policy. Were the establishment to have the Spirit of God poured forth upon its clergy—then, with the multiplication of its churches and parishes made more commensurate to the wants of our increasing population—this, and this alone, would do every thing. A conscientious minister, even with the establishment precisely as it is, has within its borders, the liberty and the privilege of unbounded usefulness. He has scope and outlet there, for the largest desires of Christian philanthropy. He has a parish within which he might multiply his assiduities at pleasure; and with no other control, but of the word of God over his doctrines, and his services, and his

prayers. Should he quarrel with the reigning policy of our church, he has a place for the utterance of his testimony, against all he might esteem to be its defections and its errors. He can give his eloquence and his vote to the strength of its minorities. He can, by the contribution of his own name, and of his own proclaimed or recorded opinion, add to the moral force which always lies in an opposition of principle, and which numbers cannot overbear. All this he may do, and without forfeiting the respect, nay even the kindness, of his adversaries. But to go back from the courts of our establishment to its parishes, where after all he is on his best vantage-ground for the services of Christian patriotism, he can there expatiate without restraint in all the deeds and the devices of highest usefulness. It is on this precious home-walk of piety and peace, that he can acquit himself of his noblest ministrations for the interests of our immortal nature, and the good of human society. It is there where he sheds the purest influences around him, whether by the holiness of his pulpit or the kindness of his household ministrations. I cannot imagine a stronger yet happier ascendant, than that which belongs to a parish minister, who, throned in the cordialities of his people, finds unbounded welcome at every cottage door; and by his unwearied attention at sicknesses, and deaths, and funerals, has implicated the very sound of his name and idea of his person with the dearest interests of families. We positively know not, if any where else than under this mild patriarchal economy, a scene of so much moral loveliness can be found—or one where the hopes of heaven, and the best and kindest affections of earth, are so beautifully blended to uphold a system which covers all the land with so bland and benignant an economy as this, may well be termed the cheap defence of the nation. To uproot it, is the Gothic imagination of certain unfeeling calculators, whose sole principle, in the science of their politics, is a heartless arithmetic; but who, in the midst of their plodding computations, have overlooked what that is which constitutes the chief element of a nation's prosperity and a nation's greatness.

It is our part to vindicate the worth

and importance of a church establishment to society; and this is best done by the worth and importance of our services. This will form our best security, infinitely better than any which statesmen can devise. There were certain recent alarms in which I could not participate, because I felt that any apprehended danger from without, might be greatly more than counteracted by a moral defence from within. This is the reaction by which we have hitherto stood our ground, against infidelity on the one hand and sectarianism on the other; and with such an effect, that, with enough of energy and conscientiousness and enlightened zeal on the part of her ministers, all the menaces and agitation by which we are surrounded, will only rivet the Church of Scotland more firmly upon her basis, and rally more closely around her cause the wise and the good of our nation.

In regard to an establishment, it makes all the difference in the world to a conscientious man, whether it exposes the church to the evil of an overbearing constraint from without; or, in common with every other Christian society, to the evil of a spontaneous corruption from within its own bosom. If not to the former, he may carry entire into the establishment, all his powers and his liberty of usefulness. If only to the latter, he may personally have no share in the corruption; and politically, if such be the constitution of the church that he is vested with the privilege, he may resist, and if overcome, may lift his testimony against it. In all these respects, we know of nothing more perfect than the constitution of the Church of Scotland. There is, to each of its members, an independent voice from within; and from without there is no force or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical. They who feel dislike to an establishment, do so in general because of their recoil from all contract and communication with the state. We have no other communication with the state than that of being maintained by it—after which we are left to regulate the proceedings of our great home mission, with all the purity and the piety and the independence of any missionary board. We are exposed to nothing from without, which can violate the sanctity of the apostolical character, if ourselves do not violate it.

And neither are we exposed to aught, which can trench on the authority of the apostolical office, if ourselves we make no surrender of it. In things ecclesiastical we decide all. Some of these things may be done wrong; but still they are our majorities which do it. They are not, they cannot, be forced upon us from without. We own no head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever is done ecclesiastically is done by our ministers, acting in His name, and in protest submission to His authority. Implicated as the church and the state are imagined to be, they are not so implicated, as that, without the concurrence of the ecclesiastical courts, a full and final effect can be given to any proceeding, by which the good of Christianity and the religion of our people may be affected. There is not a clerical appointment, which can take place in any of our parishes, till we have sustained it. Even the law of patronage, right or wrong, is in force not by the power of the state, but by the permission of the church; and, with all its fancied omnipotence, has no other basis than that of our majorities to rest upon. It should never be forgotten, that, in things ecclesiastical, the highest power of our church is amenable to no higher power on earth for its decisions. It can exclude, it can deprive, it can depose at pleasure. External force might make an obnoxious individual the holder of a benefice; but there is no external force in these realms, that could make him a minister of the Church of Scotland. There is not one thing which the state can do to our independent and indestructible church, but strip her of its temporalities. "*Nec tamen consumebatur,*" she would remain a church notwithstanding—stronger than ever, in the props of her own moral and inherent greatness; and, at least strong as ever, in the reverence of her country's population—she was as much a church in her days of suffering, as in her days of outward security and triumph—when a wandering outcast, with nought but the mountain breezes to play around her, and nought but the caves of the earth to shelter her, as now when admitted to the bowers of an establishment. The magistrate might withdraw his protection; and she cease to be an establishment any longer—but in all the high matters of sa-

cred and spiritual jurisdiction, she would be the same as before. With or without an establishment, she, in these, is the unfettered mistress of her doings. The King by himself, or by his representative, might be a looker-on; but more, the King cannot, the King dare not.

But we gladly bring our argument to a close. It has been well remarked, that, in the abstract discussion of rights between which there may be collision, it is difficult to avoid a certain tone of harshness—a spirit the most unlike possible to that which should be, and indeed to that which actually is, in real and living exemplification. The vindication of our establishment, as far as we have proceeded in it, necessarily involves the vindication of our order from the charge—that, because supported by the state, we are therefore as if by necessary consequence, a mean and mercenary priesthood. In repelling this, we cannot but assert the real independence which belong to us; but let not the assertion of our independence be interpreted into an assertion of disrespect or defiance. What we say and say truly in the abstract, may in the concrete be never realized; and for this best and most desirable of all reasons, that the one party might never be put on the hardy and resolute defence of its prerogative, just because the other party may never have the wish or the thought to invade it. There is many an ancient and venerable possession in our land, whose rights are never called forth from their depository, or produced in court—just because they are never trampled on. And so of the rights of our church—there might be no call for the parade or for the production of them, just because there might be no contest; and we are left to the undisturbed exercise of every power which legitimately belongs to us. It is thus that for centuries, nay for a whole millennium, we can imagine a prosperous and a pacific union, between the church on the one hand and the state upon the other—a union most fruitful in blessings to both—the church rendering to the state that most precious of all services, the rearing of a virtuous and orderly and loyal population; and the state giving tenfold extent and efficacy to the labours of the church, by multiplying and upholding its stations all over the lands,

and providing it in fact with approaches to the door of every family. There is here no compromise of sound principle on the part of the church—for it is not in drivelling submission to the authority of man, it is in devout submission to the high authority of Heaven, that we tell our people to honour the king, to obey magistrates, to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, and meddle not with them who are given to change. Neither is there any compromise of sound policy on the part of

the state—for the Christian education of the people, is the high road to all the best objects of patriotism. In such an intercourse of benefits as this, there needs not, we repeat it, be so much as a taint of worldliness. We may retain entire our apostolic fervour and our apostolic simplicity notwithstanding—pure as in the season of our most dark and trying ordeals—equally pure in the sunshine of blandness and cordiality, between a Christian church and an enlightened Government.

SERMON XXXVIII.

On the Honour due to all Men.

“Honour all men.—Honour the king.”—1 PETER. ii. 17.

To honour all men is alike the lesson of Philosophy and Religion. He who studies Humanity, not according to its accidental distinctions in society, but in its great and general characteristics—he who looks to its moral nature as a piece of curious and interesting mechanism, all whose processes are as accurately exemplified in the mind of the poorest individual, as the laws or the constructions of anatomy are in his body—he whose office it is to contemplate the fabric of its principles and powers, and who can recognise even in humble life the goodliest specimens of both—with him the distinctions of rank are apt to be lost and forgotten, in the homage which he renders to man, simply as the possessor of a constitution that has so often exercised and regaled his faculties as an object of liberal curiosity. The homeliest peasant bears within the confines of his inner man, that very tablet on the lines and characters of which the highest philosopher may for years perhaps have been most intensely gazing. All the secrets of our wondrous economy are deposited there; and, in the heart even of the most unlettered man, the memory, and the understanding, and the imagination, and the conscience, and every other function and property of the yet inaccessible soul are all in busy operation. To the owner of such an unex-

plored microcosm, we attach somewhat of the same reverence which we entertain for some profound and hidden mystery—and he who has laboured most anxiously to seize upon the mysteries of our nature, and therefore feels most profoundly how deep and how inscrutable they are, he perhaps is the most predisposed by his pursuits and his habits to “honour all men.”

Somewhat of the same sentiment is impressed upon us in the midst of a crowd—or as we pass along that street which is alive from morning to night with its endless flow of passengers. We are aware of no contemplation, that is more fitted to annihilate in one’s own mind the importance of self; or rather to multiply this feeling, and make it be transferred by us to each individual of that restless and eager population by whom we are surrounded. To think of each having within the precincts of his own bosom, a chamber of thoughts and purposes, and fond imaginations as warm and teeming as our own, and of the busy history that is going on there; that every one of the immense multitude is the centre of his own distinct amphitheatre, which, however unknown to us, is the universe to him; that each meditative countenance of the vast and interminable number bespeaks a play of hopes, and wishes, and

interests within, in every way as active, and felt to be of as great magnitude and urgency, as we experience in ourselves—further to think that should my own heart cease its palpitations, and were the light of my own wakeful spirit to be extinguished for ever, that still there would be a world as full of life and intelligence as before; to think of myself as an unmissed or unnoticed thing among the myriads who are around me, or rather to think that with each of these myriads there are desires as vivid, and sensibilities as deep, and cares as engrossing, and social or family affections as tender, as those which I carry about with me in that little world to which no one eye hath access but the eye of my own consciousness—there is a humility that ought to be impressed by such a contemplation; or, if it do not utterly abase the reckoning that we have of ourselves, it ought at least to exalt our reckoning of all other men, and teach us to hold in honour those, who in the workings of the same nature and fellowship of the very same interests so thoroughly partake with us.

It is true, that, in what may be called the outward magnitude of these interests, there is a wide distance between a sovereign and his subject—between the cares of an empire, and the cares of a small household economy. That is, the empire externally speaking is greater than the household—while inwardly the cares, the cogitations, the sensibilities of the heart, whether oppressive or joyful, may be altogether the same. They be a different set of objects, wherewith the monarch is conversant, and that keep in play the system of his thoughts and emotions, just as it is upon a different sort of food that his blood circulates or that his physical system is upholden. But as the peasant is like to him in respect of anatomy, so, with all the diversity of circumstances, he is substantially like to him, in the frame and mechanism of his spirit. The outward causes by which each is excited are vastly different; but the inward excitement of both is the same—and, could we explore the little world that is in each of the two bosoms, we should recognise in each the same busy rotation of hopes and fears, and wishes and anxieties. If it be indeed a just calculation, that there is a superiority, a sur-

passing worth in the moral which far outweighs the material, then, let the cottage be as widely dissimilar from the palace as it may, there is a similarity between their inhabitants, not in that which is minute, but in that which is momentous—and our weightiest arguments for honouring the king bear with efficacy upon the lesson, to honour all men.

And moreover, let us but rate the importance of one thinking and living spirit, when compared with all the mute and unconscious materialism which is in our universe. Without such a spirit, the whole of visible existence were but an idle waste—a nothingness—for what is beauty were there no eye to look upon it, and what is music were there no ear to listen, and what is matter in all its rich and wondrous varieties without a spectator mind to be regaled by the contemplation of them? One might conceive the very panorama that now surrounds us—the same earth and sea and skies that we now look upon—the same graces on the face of terrestrial nature, the same rolling wonders in the firmament—yet without one spark of thought or animation throughout the unpeopled amplitude. This in effect were nonentity. To put out all the consciousness that is in nature were tantamount to the annihilation of nature; and the lighting up again of but one mind in the midst of this desolation, would of itself restore significancy to the scene, and be more than equivalent to the first creation of it. In other words, one living mind is of more worth than a dead universe—or there is that in every single peasant to which I owe sublimer homage, than, if untenanted of mind, I should yield to all the wealth of this lower world, to all those worlds that roll in spaciousness and in splendour through the vastnesses of astronomy.

Our Saviour Himself hath instituted the comparison between a world and a soul—and, whether both were alike perishable or alike enduring, His estimate of the soul's superiority would hold. He founds his computation on our brief tenure of all that is earthly, and on the magnitude of those abiding interests which wait the immortal spirit in other scenes of existence. All men are immortal. There is a grandeur of destination here, that far outweighs all the pride and pre-

tension of this world's grandeur. Those lordly honours which some men fetch from the antiquity of their race are but poor indeed, when compared with that more signal honour which all men have in the eternity of their duration. In respect of immortality, the great and the small ones of the earth stand on an equal eminence—and in respect of the death which comes before it, both have to sink to the same humiliating level. The prince shares with the peasant in the horror and loathsomeness of death—the peasant shares with the prince in the high distinction of immortality. It is because in the poorest man's bosom, there resides an undying principle—it is because of that endless futurity which is before him, and in the progress of which all the splendours and obscurations of our present state will be speedily forgotten—it is because, though of yesterday, the bliss and the brightness of coming centuries may be upon his path; and, whatever the complexion of his future history shall be, yet the sublime character of eternity shall rest upon it—it is because of these that humanity, however it be clothed and conditioned in this evanescent world, should be the object of an awful reverence; and if, by reason of those perishable glories which sit on a monarch's brow for but one generation, it be imperative to honour the king—then, by reason of those glories which the meanest may attain to, and which are to last for ever, it is still more imperative to honour all men.

It is in virtue of the natural equality between man and man, of the like noble prospects and the like high capacities among all the members of the species—that we have never hesitated on the question of popular or plebeian education; and when it is asked, how far should the illumination of the lower orders in society be permitted to go?—we do not scruple to reply, that it should be to the very uttermost of what their taste and their time and their convenience will permit. There have been a dread and a jealousy upon this topic wherewith we cannot at all sympathize—somewhat of the same alarm for the progress of scholarship among the working classes, that is felt for the progress of sedition—just as if the admission of light amongst them were to throw the

whole mass into a state of busy and mischievous fermentation—and some great coming disorder were surely to result from the growing intelligence of those who form the vast majority of our commonwealth. And, in addition to what injury it is apprehended the social edifice at large might sustain from the elevation of the popular mind, it is further thought that individually it is fraught with uttermost discomfort to the people themselves; that it will induce a restlessness, a discontent, a wayward ambition, wholly unsuited to their state as labourers; that henceforward they will spurn at the ignoble drudgeries of their lot; and that the fruit of making them scholars will be wholly to unhinge and unsettle them as workmen. And when once this impatience becomes general, a certain fierce and feverish aspiring, it is feared, will run throughout that class in society who even now by the superiority of their muscular force are enough formidable—and of whom the terror is, that when once a mental force is superadded to the muscular, they will overleap all the barriers of public safety, and be the fell instruments of a wild and wasteful anarchy over the face of the land.

This is not altogether the place for exposing what we deem to be the utter groundlessness of such imaginations; and therefore, without touching at all on the political apprehension lest Education should lodge a power that is dangerous in the hands of the labouring classes,—we shall just say of the personal, or of that which relates to the habits and character of the individual labourer, that we believe it to be scarcely ever if at any time realized. We positively find them to be among the best symptoms of a trusty and well-conditioned mechanic, if, upon entering his house, we find the humble library upon his shelves—or if in taking account of his hours, we find the time which many give to evening dissipation given by him to the attendance or the preparations of a mechanic school. There is no such discrepancy between the powers and the principles of our complex nature, no such awkward sorting or balancing of parts in the human constitution, as that there must be a stifling of some in order to make room for the right and prosperous operation of the others—as, for example, that

all liberal curiosity, all appetite for the informations of science should be kept in check, lest industry be relaxed, or the cares of a family provision be altogether forgotten. The ingredients of our compound being are really in far better adjustment than that all should be so very apt to go into disorder, upon any one of them being fostered into activity by the excitement of its own peculiar gratification—and it will be found that a taste for literature, and patient assiduity in labour, and a reflective prudence in every matter of family economics, and a habit of sound and good workmanship on the one hand, with a well exercised intellect even in the subjects of general speculation upon the other—that all these may be at work, and in fullest harmony together with one and the same individual. Instead of spoiling him as an artisan, they would only transform him into an artisan of a higher caste—and as there is a general movement all over the land for a higher education to our people, let us do nothing to curb the energies of their aspiring intellect—but rather rejoice in the bright anticipation that must at length be realized, of a well-taught and a highly lettered peasantry. On a progress like this we would lay no limitation. Let it go freely and indefinitely onwards—nor be afraid, as many are, lest there should be too much of schooling or even too much of science for the common people. That were a noble achievement in political economy, did it point out the way by which, through better wages and less work, the children of handicraft and of hard labour might be somewhat lightened of their toils. And that were a still nobler achievement in philanthropy, could their then wider and more frequent intervals of repose be reclaimed from loose and loathsome dissipation—could even an infant but growing taste for philosophy be made to supplant all the coarser depravities of human vice—and they, admitted to more of companionship than they now have with men of a higher walk in society, give frequent demonstration, that, even amid the drudgery of their humble condition, there was among them much of the unquenched fire of genius, and a still vigorous play of those perceptions and those powers by which our common nature is ennobled.

Having said thus much for that education which gives the knowledge of science to the common people—we feel ourselves placed on still higher vantage ground, when we plead for that education to them which gives the knowledge of religion. If we hold the one to be desirable, we hold the other to be indispensable. In our estimation there is a certain narrowness of soul, among those who are jealous even of their most daring ascents into the region of a higher scholarship; but to lay an interdict upon all scholarship, is in truth nothing better than the midnight darkness of Popery. And yet, in certain quarters of our land, there still lurks, in deep and settled inveteracy, that intolerance which would withhold the very alphabet from our population; and though in one respect, it is the key to the revealed mysteries of heaven, the instrument for unlocking that gospel which was designed so specially for the ignorant and the poor—yet still there be some who, aloft from all sympathy with the lower orders, can admit of no higher demand from them than the mere wants of their animal existence. The eternity of the poor does not enter into their care or computation at all. They are viewed in scarcely any other light than as the instruments of labour, as so many pieces of living mechanism that have their useful application along with those other springs and principles of action which keep the busy apparatus of our great manufactories in play—their limbs as the levers of a certain kind of machinery, and the spirit that is within them but as that moving force by which the human engine is set agoing. The immortality of this spirit is as little regarded, as if it were indeed but a vapour that passeth away. It is valued only because of the materialism which it animates, or of the motion which by means of a curious and complicated framework, it can impress on any tangible thing that is transformed thereby into some article of merchandise. It is thus that Humanity is apt to be addressed or treated with, singly for the physical strength which it might be made to yield in the service of busy artisanship—and, without one ungenerous reflection on the great capitalists of our land, it is thus that sometimes at least there is a certain grossness of mercantile

spirit, in virtue of which, our nature, in despite of all its noble capacities, and the exceeding grandeur of its ultimate destination is very apt to be grossly brutalized.

It is therefore the more refreshing, when, in some densely peopled territory that is all in a fervour with the smoke and the din and the unremitting turmoil of its many fabrications, there is seen an interest to arise in the religion of the assembled host, and on the side of their immortal well-being—when, for so wide and plenteous a harvest there at length appears a band of resolute and devoted labourers—when, in the midst of a field so rich in the materials for a great spiritual manufacture that hath its gains and its proceeds in eternity, men are to be found of compass enough and Christianity enough for this highest enterprise of charity—when a company is formed with a design and on a speculation so magnificent, as far to surpass the sublimest adventures of commerce—and, instead of that transformation on the rude produce of our country, which is effected by the labour of human hands, it is proposed to go forth on the people of the country as the subjects of a noble transformation; and to impress upon human souls, now in the darkness and earthliness of nature, a glory that is unperishable.

It is a reproach to the spirit of merchandise,—when in its exclusive demand for the physical strength and service of human beings, it gives but little regard to their eternity—yet among the sons of merchandise, we do meet with many of those zealous and enlightened philanthropists, who, by their efforts in the cause both of common and of Christian scholarship, have done much to redeem the imputation. There is indeed the grossest injustice in every imputation that leads to the fastening of an odium or an obloquy, upon a whole order—and we might here take the opportunity of saying in reference to another order, and when we hear so much of an alleged conspiracy on the part of monarchs against the illumination of our species, it is far indeed from holding universally. There is a growing liberality upon the subject among all the classes of society—and as surely as workmasters are now learning that education furnishes them with their best and most

valuable servants—so surely will Kings also learn, that the firmest basis upon which their authority can be upheld, is a virtuous and a well schooled peasantry.

The ancient prejudice upon this question is now on all hands rapidly subsiding. The cause of popular ignorance is no longer incorporated, as it wont to be, with the cause of loyalty and established order. Even they who sit in the highest places, and were at all times the most sensitively fearful of any new element, that, when brought into play, might derange and unsettle the existing framework of society—even they can now look without alarm on that heaving of the popular mind towards a higher scholarship, which is now fermenting and spreading over the whole face of the British commonwealth. We are aware of nothing more truly important to the cause of education, than some recent practical testimonies of our landed aristocracy to the worth of Scotland's parochial teachers, and their offer of a helping hand to secure and to speed the ascent of our common people, though already perhaps the most lettered in Europe or in the world, even above the level of their present acquirements. There could not more authentic demonstration have been given, and from a quarter more thoroughly unsuspecting, to the safety of a learning for the vulgar—and there is nought more delightful than thus to behold the upper classes of society, giving welcome and encouragement to the lower for a nearer assimilation with themselves in that knowledge which is more honourable than wealth, in those mental accomplishments which shed its truest grace and dignity upon our nature.

There are two opposite directions in which we have to witness what may be called an ultra or extreme politics. One of those extremes is now getting fast obsolete, at least in Scotland—for in our sister country there is still an inveteracy about it, which may not give way for perhaps one or two generations. To picture it forth most effectually, we might seize in imagination upon some one individual by whom it is realized—who, frank and generous, and kind-hearted in all the relations of private society, yet on every question of public or parliamentary war-

fare shows all the fiercest antipathies of high and antiquated cavaliership—who, merciful and munificent in all his leadings with his own people, yet eyes a boding mischief in every new and advancing movement by the people of the land—who deems it perhaps one of the glories of Old England to have a jovial and well-fed peasantry, yet would feel the education of them to be a raising of them out of their places, and so a disturbance on the sober and settled orthodoxy of other days—who fears a lurking sectarianism in this active and widely diffused scholarship—that might afterwards break forth into outrage on England's venerated throne, and her noble hierarchy; and therefore would vastly rather than this age of philanthropic restlessness, have the age brought back again, when pastime and holiday, and withal a veneration for Church, had full ascendant over the hearts and habits of a then unlettered population. Still in many of England's princely halls, in many a baronial residence, there exists a feeling that her golden time has passed away—and that this new device of a popular education is among the deadliest of the destroyers. High in loyalty, and devoted by all the influences of sentiment, and ancestry, and sworn partisanship to the prerogatives of monarchy; they honour the king—but, overlooking the intellect, and the capacity, and the immortal nature that reside even in the meanest of his subjects, and so regardless as they are of the still higher prerogatives of mind; they do not and they know not how to honour all men.

But in counterpart to this, there is another extreme that to our taste is greatly more offensive than the former—when the cause of education is vilified by mixing up with it in the meantime, that accursed thing which education at length will utterly exterminate—when a mechanic school is made the vehicle of an outrageous disaffection to all authority, and a mechanic publication breathes the fierceness of radicalism throughout all its pages—when one cannot in any way devise either for the religion or the science of our lower orders, but this unclean spirit must insinuate and turn it all to loathsomeness; and every honest effort to obtain a more enlightened peasantry is

either paralyzed or poisoned, by the obtruded alliance of men, who bear no other regard to the people than as the instruments of some great public or political overthrow. Still it vouches nobly for the good of a people's scholarship, that this abuse is chiefly exemplified in that land where they are just emerging from ignorance, and that in our own more lettered country it is comparatively unknown—that it is there and not here where this cause has been seized upon by demagogues, who, while they would flatter the multitude into the belief that they honour all men, give full manifestation by all their writings and their ways, that they do not honour the king.

It is in such conflicts of human passion and human party, that Christianity comes forth in the meekness of wisdom, and points out to us the more excellent way. It unites loyalty to the King with love, nay reverence, for the very humblest of his subject population—and can both do homage to the dignity of office that sits upon the one, and to those exalted capacities, both of worth and intellect, which lie in wide and wealthy diffusion through the other. There is nought of the pusillanimous in its devotion to the Crown, and nought of the factious and the turbulent in the descents which it makes among the common people. We have felt that glow which the presence of a monarch can awaken, when, instead of the crouching servility of bondsmen, we are conscious of nothing but the generous and high-minded enthusiasm of gallant chivalry. And equal to this is the pure and philanthropic triumph which the spectacle of a beggar's school is fit to awaken, when instead of a fiery sedition lighted up in the heart, and rankling its mischievous fermentations there, the mind indulges in the soothing perspective of that brighter day, when the whole community of our empire shall be moulded into a harmonious and well ordered family. To call forth the energies of the popular mind by the power of a high education being made to bear upon it, will most surely add to the stability of the throne, while it must serve to lift and to embellish the whole platform of society. It will speed the progress of the species, but not along a track of revolutionary violence. The moral perfectibility of the

infidel may call for the demolition both of altars and of thrones—but the operations of the Christian philanthropist leave the fabric of our civil polity untouched; and, in that Millennium, after which he aspires, he sees Kings to be the nursing fathers, and Queens the nursing mothers, of our Zion. He has no fellowship either with those who would revile the

monarch, or who would refuse to enlighten the people—and, though fired with the hopes of some great and coming enlargement, he finds them on the prophecies of a Book, whose precepts within the utterance of one breath, and placed together in the same text, are to honour the King and to honour all men.

SERMON XXXIX.

On the Moral Influence of Fidelity.

“Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”—TITUS ii. 10.

It is the duty of the Christian minister to bring forward not one part of the divine will, but all the parts of it—and whatever he sees urged and insisted upon in the Bible, he lies under the solemn obligation of urging and insisting upon it also. Now it is remarkable, that, when urging some of the commandments, he is looked upon as more religiously employed, than when urging some other of the commandments. There are certain subjects which do not carry to the eye of many, the same aspect of godliness with others. A sermon on sabbath breaking, for example, would be regarded as a more characteristic exercise, and as more allied with the solemn and appropriate functions of the pulpit, than a sermon upon theft; and, generally speaking, while the duties of the first table are listened to by the more serious professors of Christianity with a pious and respectful feeling of their high importance—it may be observed that the duties of the second table, when urged in all their minuteness, and brought forward in all their varieties, and illustrated by references to the homely and familiar experience of human life, are looked upon as having a certain degree of earthliness about them—to be as much inferior in point of religiousness to the duties of the first table, as the employments of a common week-day are inferior to the employments of the sabbath—in a word, while the one bears to many the aspect of sacredness, the other bears the aspect of se-

cularity—and when a minister gives his strength and his earnestness for a whole sermon to the latter, there is a feeling among his hearers that he has descended from that high ground on which a godly or an orthodox minister loves to expatiate.

We forbear at present to enter into the explanation of this very notable peculiarity, though it does admit we think of a most interesting explanation. The thing complained of, forms a serious obstacle in the way of our attempts to enforce the whole will of God, and to explain the whole of his counsel. If there be any part of that will of which the exposition is resisted as a very odd and uncommon and perhaps ridiculous subject from the pulpit, how shall we be able to command a reverential hearing for it? In what way shall we establish the authority of God over all the concerns of a man's history? Should not the solemnity of religious obligation be made to overspread the whole field and compass of human affairs?—and if it be not so is not this disposing God from the supremacy which belongs to Him? Is it not just saying that there are places and occasions in which we will not have Him to reign over us? Is it not disowning His right of having all things done to His glory? And those hearers who love to be told of what they owe to God on the sabbath and in the holy days of sacrament and prayer—but who love not to be told

of what they owe Him in their shops and in their market places and in their everyday employments—they are just narrowing the limits of His jurisdiction, and with all their seeming reverence for godliness as the only high and appropriate theme for the pulpit, they are in fact wresting from God his sovereignty over the great bulk of human existence. With the quitting of a few occasional acknowledgements, they are for securing the mighty remainder of time to themselves—and are for putting off with fragments that Being who demands of all His creatures, the homage of an entire service—the incense of a perpetual offering.

We should like all hearers to feel the religiousness of that topic which this text leads us to insist upon. We should like them to annex as serious a feeling of solemnity and obligation to the eighth of God's commandments, as to the fourth of His commandments. Both were announced in thunder from mount Sinai. Both were heard to issue in the same voice of authority from the throne of the lawgiver. The violations of both are written in the book of God's remembrance; and they are ranked among the bad deeds done in the body, which will bring down from the judgment-seat the same awful doom upon the children of iniquity. The place which the commandment possesses in the catalogue is surely of no great consequence in the matter. Enough that it be a commandment. Enough for one and for all of us that thus saith the Lord. He orders one thing, and He orders another. If the one thing must be observed with reverence, because He orders it—there is precisely the same reason for the other thing being also observed with reverence. And if "sanctify the sabbath-day and keep it holy" be a godly and religious subject, then do we contend that, "Thou shalt not steal" is a godly and a religious subject also.

In this case the minister has no choice. If the consciences of any of his hearers be blind upon this subject, that is the very reason why he should labour to open and to enlighten them. He stands charged with the office of expounding and urging and solemnly insisting upon all the requisitions of the Bible. If he do not warn the sinner from his way, the sinner will die in his iniquity, but his

blood will be required of him. This is perfectly decisive as to his conduct. It is with him a matter of self-interest, as well as of duty, to warn his hearers against all sin—and, knowing as he does that there is an awful day of reckoning before them, that he must appear in the midst of them at the bar of God, that he will be called upon to give an account of them and be examined upon this, whether he has watched over the souls of his people, and faithfully attempted to guard them against all error, and to warn them against all unrighteousness—woe be to him if he is deterred by any senseless or ignorant levity whatever, from coming forward with a faithful and a firm exposition of the truth, or from sounding in their ears this awful testimony of God's abhorrence of the sin of stealing, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall first endeavour to explain what the precise sin is which the text warns us against. We shall secondly insist on its exceeding sinfulness, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it. And thirdly we shall press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The sin of the text receives a particular name, and it must therefore receive a particular explanation. It is not called stealing, though it be certainly a species of it. Stealing is neither more nor less than taking to oneself what belongs to another, and what he does not give. We should apply this term to the act of a man who entered into another house than that in which he tarried, and bore away of the moveables he found in it—or to the act of a man who came to another farm than that on which he laboured, and carried off such produce as he could lift away with him—or to the act of a man who made out his access into a shop or a workhouse belonging to another master, and abstracted such money or such goods as he could lay his hand upon. There are so many acts of theft—and to give a clear idea of what that is which turns an act of theft into an act of purloining, we have only to conceive that, instead of another entering the house, a

servant within it were to help himself to such things as he had access to, without any understood allowance from the master or the mistress who employed him—or that, instead of another coming to a farm, a labourer belonging to it were to make a daily and a weekly habit of secreting a part of its produce, for the purpose of feeding his own little stock, or helping out the maintenance of his young family—or that, instead of another finding his way into your shop or your workhouse, the man you employed to keep the one or to work in the other, were to pocket for his own use what he thinks he might bear away without too great a hazard of detection. All these are so many undoubted examples of theft—but such a theft as would more readily be characterised by the term purloining. To steal is to take that which is not our own. To purloin is to take that which is not our own—but then the thing so taken must be that which we have in trust, or that to which our situation as an agent or a servant or an overseer gives us free and frequent access. When purloining is done upon a large scale it sometimes changes its name, though not its nature. It is then called an embezzlement. To embezzle is quite equivalent to purloin in the nature of the act, though greater in the extent of it. Thus we have heard of the embezzlement of public stores, of the embezzlement of the royal treasury. It is an act of theft performed by a confidential agent of the crown—and we have succeeded in the object of all these explanations, if we have led our hearers to perceive the reason why Paul addresses the advice of the text to people in a particular situation. They are in the situation of servants—and, taking in the 9th verse, the whole advice runs thus, “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

We now proceed in the second place to insist on the exceeding sinfulness of this sin, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it.

The first palliation is a kind of tacit one, by which the understanding is im-

posed upon, and the conscience quieted, merely through the change of name which this crime has undergone. Because it is not commonly called stealing, it is not conceived to have the disgrace or the odiousness of stealing. There is a wonderful power of imposition in words—and how many a purloiner may quiet all that is troublesome within him by the reflection that what he does is not stealing; it is only taking. Thus may he try to escape the imputation of stealing, by merely giving a different name to his iniquity—but, if the thing thus taken be not his to take, it is to all intents and purposes, stealing—he merits the full disgrace of being called a thief—and, what is still more awful than all the disgrace with which this world can cover him, he is guilty of a sin, which, if persisted in, will most infallibly exclude him from the inheritance of the kingdom of God. To undeceive him, he should be made distinctly to know that there is no difference whatever in the sins; that an angry and offended God looks with equal displeasure upon both, and will assign to each the same awful punishment in the great day of reckoning. This low work of purloining is just stealing under another name. It is taking what belongs to another, and what that other has not given. Every understanding will acknowledge, that, however it may be glossed over by another and a milder designation, it is an act of theft; and what every understanding will acknowledge, we want every conscience to feel. But we go further. We take up a principle contained in our Shorter Catechism, where it is said, in answer to the question, “Are all sins equally heinous in the sight of God?” That “some sins, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.” Now purloining contains in it an aggravation which does not belong to a bare and simple example of stealing. The stranger who does not know me, and whom I never trusted, may come to my premises and steal of my property. But the servant who purloins does know me, lives under my roof, is maintained by my wages, and, above all, has had a confidence placed in him which he has chosen to abuse and to violate. I left a door open, or I made over a charge,

or I invested him with a particular commission, and why? because I had faith in his integrity and discretion. The stranger thief is guilty of one vice—an act of dishonesty. The household thief is dishonest too; but he is more than this. He has betrayed the trust I put in him. He has repaid my good opinion of him, by an act of ingratitude and an act of unfaithfulness. I was led away by his fair appearances; and he has turned out a hypocrite. He has added to the guilt of stealing, the guilt of cunning and falsehood and habitual concealment. These are aggravations which make the purloining of the servant far more provoking to him who suffers by it, than the depredations of the nightly vagabond. But they are not only more provoking to man—they are more provoking to a just and a holy God. The aggravations which we have just now spoken of will tell on the awful sentence of the great day. The discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart sees and judges of every one of them; and when the time cometh that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, the low pilferments of the farm, of the family, and of the workshop, will appear to the shame and condemnation of the guilty.

But there is another plea on which the purloiner tries to find himself something like an acquittal, from the shame and the remorse of his secret iniquities. However great at the end of months or of years his depredations may be in the amount, yet, to escape detection, he is forced to make them small in the detail. The distinct and single theft of every one day is but a petty affair—and his conscience easily falls into the snare, that, as what he does take at any one time is so very little it is not worth the thinking of. But what right has he, we would ask, to make any addition to the eighth commandment? God says, "Thou shalt not steal," and then he brings the commandment to a close. He does not say thou shalt not steal much, leaving us at freedom to steal a little, and to judge how little we may steal with innocence and safety. He says, thou shalt not steal, and then he leaves off. If we steal the value of a farthing, it is a stolen farthing. It is evidence enough to convict of a breach of the eighth commandment, by

which we are enjoined not to steal at all. Little as we may think of it, it is enough to convict us of disobedience to the entire and absolute commandment of God—and it will turn out the accursed thing, which, if not repented of and not turned from, will be the death and the condemnation of our souls. He that is unjust in the least, says our Saviour, is unjust also in much. It may be so little as to be the very least—but if stolen, it is an act of injustice—and He who knew what was in man says, that he who can do the very least act of injustice can do a great one. O how many go to Hell with what they account small sins. Small sin! is sin a small matter? If we have stolen to the value of a single grain, we have broken the law of God; and do we call that an affair of small consequence? The moment we stretch forth our hand to what is another's be it ever so little, we have broken the line which lies betwixt duty and rebellion. We have got over the wall which separates lawful from forbidden ground, and however little way we have got on the forbidden ground, still we are on it—and, if apprehended there and brought to the bar of judgment, we shall be treated as criminals. Go not, ye purloiners and household thieves, to delude your consciences any more on this subject. Go not to make any distinction which the law of God does not make. Think not that you will escape condemnation; because the thing stolen is so very little. Think not that this plea will serve you with God, whose law must be fulfilled to the very last jot and tittle of it—and we tell you that if you ever pray and lift up your hands unto God—then though you have stolen only to the amount of a morsel or a fragment which does not belong to you, God will look upon your hands and see them to be unclean. The defilement of the thing stolen sticks to them; and He beholding it will turn in indignation from your prayers and your offering.

The next plea we propose to your attention is, that the master out of whose stock we have purloined is rich—he will not miss it, and it can do him no harm. Still making additions of their own you will observe to the law of God. Still doing as the Pharisees did before them—making the commandment of God of

none effect by their traditions, and teaching for doctrines the commandments and inventions of men. God says thou shalt not steal. He does not say thou shalt not steal from the poor, leaving us at liberty to steal from the rich whenever we have opportunity. The distinction betwixt rich and poor in this matter is a distinction of their own. By making this plea they not only disobey God; but they insult Him by offering to mend His law, and bringing forward what they think a better one of their own. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. And that word is—let him that stole steal no more. There is no allusion to rich or poor in this injunction. Nay, in the text it is stealing from the rich that is expressly forbidden. The poor, generally speaking, are the servants; and the rich, generally speaking, are the masters—and servants are ordered not to purloin from their masters, but to show all good fidelity. No, there is nothing for it, but an entire separation from this unclean and accursed practice. It is an express violation of God's law; and admits of no plea, no palliation. It is a dangerous experiment to trifle with sin, and to venture upon what we are pleased to think the lesser shades and degrees of it. The moment that sin is committed, even in the very least degrees of it, the fence which separates obedience from rebellion is broken down. After we have got over that fence, there is no saying how far we may go. After a garden wall is once leaped, it is not doing much more to enter its most precious depositories, and spoil it of its fairest and richest productions. And here we may repeat, by the way, that the first sin ever committed by man forms a striking refutation of the two pleas which we are now attempting to expose. The thing stolen was a fruit. The master he stole it from was the Lord of Heaven and of Earth—to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills, and who sits surrounded with the wealth of innumerable worlds. What becomes of the smallness of the sin now? It was just this sin which banished Adam from paradise, which broke up the communion between earth and heaven—which entailed ruin on a whole species of moral and intelligent creatures. The infidel laughs

at the story, and with all the parade of an enlightened wisdom he counts it ridiculous—he thinks how paltry the offence—and how big the mischief and the ruin which are stated to have sprung from it. But he only betrays the grossness of a mind, which cannot rise above the estimates and the calculations of an ordinary man—which looks no further than to the visible performance, and is blind to the only principle which gives to the performance its moral character. It is not in the magnitude of the thing done, that the chief magnitude of the offence lies. It is the state of mind implied by the doing of it. Had Adam rooted out every tree of paradise, and dismantled the garden of all its beauties—we might have thought that his offence lay in the material extent of the injury that was done by him. But Adam did no more than steal a forbidden fruit; and, for any evil performed by his hand, Eden might have remained in all its bloom and in all its loveliness. But in proportion as the material hurt was small, is the grandeur and the entireness of the moral lesson conveyed by it. It leads our single eye to the foulness of that turpitude which lies in disobedience to God. The thing done was small in itself—but it carried rebellion in its principle. Thus saith the Lord, was the sanction which lay upon it—and that sanction was trampled upon. When God said Let there be light, and there was light—we look upon this as a sublime and wonderful evidence of His power. When God said, In the day he eateth he shall die, and he did eat, and from that moment a cloud of malignant darkness gathered upon the head of the offender, and hangs to this hour over his distant posterity—we look upon this as an evidence no less sublime of His truth and of His righteousness. The simplicity of the visible act enables us to see the spiritual character of this great transaction in all its majesty—nor can the senseless levities we have heard on the subject of Adam's fall, keep us from viewing it as one in dignity with the other events of that wonderful period, when the Almighty had spread a new creation around him, and displayed the attributes of His high and unchangeable nature among the beings whom He had formed. Take this lesson to yourselves, ye pur-

loiners, who are going on deceiving your consciences, and heaping ruin and condemnation upon your deluded souls. You think the thing purloined is so very small, and the master you stole it from is so very rich. But what right have you to set your thinkings and your excusings against the awful authority of "Thus saith the Lord?" It is no matter how small the theft. It is no matter how rich the man who suffers by it. God's authority is trampled upon by the act. His Holy Bible is despised. His judgment is bid defiance to—and the saying of the Apostle Paul is as much slighted and undervalued as if no Apostle had ever said it, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God. O, if any of you have been hitherto deceived upon this subject, suffer now the word of exhortation. Go not to trifle any longer with the precious interest of your souls. Resist not what we say, because it touches painfully upon your practices or your consciences. We mean no offence. We want to stir up no anger among you. We bring forward no railing accusation. It is the general and unceasing importance of the subject which has led us to fix upon it; for we give you our solemn assurance, that we know of no act of purloining committed by any one of you—nor do we have in our eye a single guilty individual. For any thing we know, there is not one of you who is not nobly superior to the slightest taint and degree of this iniquity—and, in this case, the sole use of this sermon may be that you shall be kept clean through the word now spoken to you. But lest there should be a purloiner in this congregation, we think it our high and awfully incumbent duty, to stretch forth our hand that we may arrest and reclaim him from that road of perdition on which he is hastening—and surely you will grant us your indulgence when we say, that in doing what we have done, we have only lifted our testimony against what we honestly believe would land him in everlasting burnings if it be persisted in.

But let us now endeavour, in the third place, to press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity—by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Let us observe, however, that the servants whom Titus was to exhort, were among the people of his own congregation. They formed a Christian community; and, whatever kind of people this designation may be applied to now-a-days, it was applied in those days to men, who, in embracing the profession of the faith, formally renounced the errors or the idolatries of their former years—to men, who, in making this profession, must generally speaking have been moved to it by a real belief in the great and prominent truths of that new religion which was proposed to them: Or, in other words, the exhortation of the text is recommended by Paul to be addressed to men, who, not only embraced the profession of the faith, but had embraced the faith—to men who felt the influence of the great doctrines of Christianity—to men who had God revealed to them in their Saviour, and knew of the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and were under that process of teaching which the grace of God is employed in carrying on, and the object of which is that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. We know well the use that has been made of these considerations. Bring, it is said, these dissuasives against their evil practices to bear upon Christian servants. Exhort those who are already in the faith; and, as to those who are not in the faith, including, for any thing we know, the great mass of servants who are now before us, suspend all our attacks upon their sins, till we have brought them to the Saviour—furnish them with a Christian motive, before we press them to a Christian reformation—make them the subjects of grace, by giving them that faith which has the promise of the Spirit, ere we attempt that teaching which can only be done effectually by the grace that bringeth salvation. Now, it is all very true that no obedience is pure in its principle, but that to which we are constrained by the love of God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus—no obedience is successful in its accomplishment, but that which is wrought through the strength of Him who confers power to become the children of God only on those who believe—no obedience is acceptable to the Father,

but such as is offered up in the name of the Son. All this is most true—and it must be our incessant object to grow in such obedience, by growing in the only principle which can actuate and uphold it. But recollect that there are expedients set agoing by the wisdom of God for bringing men to Christ—and there are considerations addressed to sinners for the purpose of convincing them of danger, and forcing them to flee for refuge unto Christ—and there are certain performances, which, in the very act of coming unto Christ, they are called upon to do—and, therefore it is, that, though at this moment you may be out of Christ and away from Him, we count it a reasonable topic for each and all of you, when we tell you of the exceeding sinfulness of every one sin with which you are chargeable. It is right that every kind of unrighteousness should be made manifest to your consciences—for the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. It is right that every purloiner should be made to know what thousands and thousands more of purloiners are not aware of, that the heavy judgment of God lies upon them for that offence which they are apt to look on as so light and so common, and so natural and so excusable. It is right they should be made to understand how great the danger is, and what the place of security to flee to—and surely, the more they are burdened with a sense of the wrath of God, the more will they feel the weight and importance of the saying, that unless they believe in Christ this wrath abideth on them. And surely if Christ said at the very outset, repent and believe the Gospel—if He said, he that followeth after me must forsake all—if the grace of God, at the first moment of its appearance, taught men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts—we are not out of place when we tell the most ignorant and graceless purloiner among you, to turn him to Christ, that he may obtain the forgiveness of all his misdoings; and when we tell him within the compass of the same breathing to turn him from his iniquities—that the man who keeps by his sins is in fact keeping away from the Saviour—that he is loving darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil—that he is not coming to the Saviour, for he is not

doing what all who come, must and will do—he is not stirring himself up in the business of forsaking all. The evil and inveterate habits of an unfaithful servant he will not forsake. He clings to them as so many idols that he cannot bring himself to part with. Christ, who claims the authority of his alone master, does not prevail upon him to give up the service of those sins which lord it over him. And it is, therefore, that he should know, how every day that he persists in this forbidden practice, he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and putting the grace of an offered salvation and the voice of a beseeching God away from him.

Let us therefore urge it most earnestly upon you that you consider your doings. Christ is willing to receive you; and, if you are willing to come to Him, to you belongs the whole extent of his purchased salvation. But you are not willing to come to Him, if you are more willing to retain your iniquities; and in these iniquities you will die. Sell your goods to feed the poor, says our Saviour to the young man in the Gospel, and then come and follow me; but he would not come to Him upon these terms, and his devotedness to his wealth was the bar that stood in his way to the kingdom of God. In like manner we call upon you purloiners to cleanse your hands and come to the Saviour. If you will not come upon these terms, the rich man had his bar in the way of salvation, and you have yours. He would not give up his property, and you will not give up the produce of your petty pilferments. You are not willing to come to Christ that you may have life—for, sweet as is the life which is at his giving, it is not so sweet to your taste, as is the sweetness of those stolen waters which have hitherto been your secret and your habitual enjoyment. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he is therefore called the profane Esau. How much more profane are you, who are putting the offer of a birthright in heaven away from you—and for what?—for the crumbs and fragments of your paltry depredations. From this moment we charge you to touch them no more. Bid your hand cease from its pilferments; and compel it to your bidding. If what we have said

tell upon your conscience, this very night will it tell upon your conduct. To-morrow comes, and it will find you a reforming man—earnest how to find your salvation, and busy to frame your doings that you may turn unto the Lord. You will get up from the bed of reflection, with the purpose of keeping yourself clear and aloof from your wonted dishonesties; and with a prayer that you may be strengthened in the execution of this purpose. Till we see something of this kind, we see no evidence of your yet having taken a single step to the Saviour. Keep by the purloinings against which we have been charging you; and you are not so much as moving towards Christ, nor will you ever reach Him. Cease then from them at this moment—do this in the very act of going to the Saviour and seeking after him; and who knows but this first and foremost of your visible reformations, humble as it is when compared with the accomplishments of him who stands perfect and complete in the whole will of God, who knows but it may betoken the commencement of a good work in your soul?—that awakening of the sinner's eye on which Christ has promised that he shall give light—the outset of that path which conducts from one degree of grace unto another, till you reach the stature of the full grown Christian—an earlier stage of the journey which conducts him who cometh unto Christ to all His promised manifestations, that, made to shine upon your head will make you rejoice more and more in the perfections of His righteousness, in the fulness of His grace and the freeness of His kind invitations, in the sureness of those never-failing supplies out of which you are strengthened with all might in the inner man, and enabled to do all things through the spirit which is given unto you.

We now proceed to the motive which Paul urged upon the servants he was addressing—that they might adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. We think that two very distinct, and, at the same time very affecting and important lessons, may be drawn from this single clause of the verse now before us. The first is that a man's Christianity might be made to show itself throughout the whole business of his vocation, what-

ever it may be—that it may be made to give a pervading expression to his whole history—that it might accompany and be at work with him throughout every doing and every exercise he can put his hand to—that, in a word, the influence of its spirit is a perennial influence, ever present in the heart, and ever sending forth a powerful and a perpetual control over the conduct. It is not merely in one thing, or in another thing, that the doctrine of Christ is capable of being adorned. It admits of being adorned in all things. Doctrine sometimes signifies the thing taught; and it sometimes signifies the process of teaching. We understand it more in the latter sense on the present occasion. Show how excellent, and how purifying, and how universal, in point of salutary influence, this teaching is. Show how completely it goes over the whole round of human performances. Show with what a comprehensive eye, it surveys the map of human life, and stamps its own colour and gives its own outline to its most remote and subordinate provinces. Let the world see, that wherever a man of Christian doctrine is present, and whatever the employment be that he is engaged with, there at all times goes along with him a living exhibition of the power and the efficacy of Christian doctrine; that he represents by every one action the character of the gospel which he professes; that the stamp of its morality may be recognised on his every distinct and separate performance; and that others may say of each and of all his doings, that this is done in the style and manner of a Christian.

When a man becomes Christian, what we would ask is the most visible expression of the change which has taken effect upon him? We are not speaking of the change in its essential character, which is neither more nor less than a thorough and aspiring devotedness to the will of that God whom he now sees by the eye of faith to be reconciled to him through the blood of an everlasting covenant. The question we are putting relates to the seen effect of this principle upon the man's outward habits and performances; and we ask which is the most notable and conspicuous effect, and such as will most readily arrest the eye and the observation

of acquaintances?—We know well what the general impression of the world is upon this subject. They think when a man undergoes that mysterious and unaccountable thing which is called conversion; the most palpable transformation it makes upon him is to turn him into a psalm-singing, a church-going, an ordinance-keeping, and a prayer-making Christian. They positively do not look for such a change on the common and week-day history of this said convert, as they do on the style and character of his sabbath observations. But yet there is something that they will look for on week days too. They will look for a more decided aspect of sobriety. They will look for a more demure and melancholy seclusion from his old acquaintances. They will look for a clear and total renunciation of all that is intemperate, and of all that is licentious. They will look for a final adieu from those habits of intoxication, of those habits of profligacy, or those habits of companionable indulgence, to which the young of every great city are introduced with a facility and a readiness so alarming to the heart of every Christian parent; and in the prosecution of which they widen by every day of thoughtlessness their departure from God; and accumulate upon them the burden of his righteous indignation; and lull their consciences into such a slumber, as to thousands and thousands more will at length sink and deepen into the sleep of death; and bring the whole power of their example to bear upon the simple and the uninitiated. And thus does the tide of corruption maintain its unabated force and fulness from one period to another; and is strengthened by yearly contributions out of the wreck of youthful integrity; and, did not the cheering light of prophecy assure us that through the omnipotence of a pure gospel better days of reformation and of virtue were to come, one would almost sit down in despair of ever making head against such a torrent of combination and of example on the side of profligacy. Nor is this despair much alleviated, though some solitary case of repentance out of a hundred should now and then be offering itself to our contemplations; and conscience should again lift its commanding voice within him, and be reinstated in that authority

which she had lost; and he, breaking off his sins by righteousness, should by an act of simple and determined abandonment brave the mockery of all his associates, and betake himself to the paths of peace and of prayer and of piety.

Now, all the things of our text should lead an enlightened disciple to look for more evidence than this; and should lead a decided convert to exhibit more evidence than this. The man who adorns the gospel in all things, will most certainly be and do all that we have heretofore insisted on. But we regret that it should be so much the impression of the world, and so much the impression even of our plausible and well-looking professors, that these form outward marks of such prominence as to throw all other outward marks into the shade; and to draw an almost exclusive regard towards sobriety of manners, and sobriety of external observation, as forming the great and leading evidences of a now acquired Christianity. Now think, what prodigious effect it would give to the gospel, what an impressive testimony to its worth and excellence it would spread around the walk of every professor of it—did all that was undeviating in truth, all that was generous in friendship, all that was manly in principle, all that was untainted in honour, all that was winning in gentleness, all that was endearing in the graces and virtues of domestic society, all that was beneficent in public life, and all that was amiable in the unnoticed recesses of private history—did all these form into one beautiful corona of virtues and accomplishments, which might shed the lustre of Christianity over every field that is traversed by a professor of Christianity. The name of a convert is at all times most readily associated with sobriety and sabbath-keeping. We should like that the conduct of the professors were such as to establish a still wider association. And if it is not, it is because professors have so woefully neglected the principle of our text. It is because they have made their Christianity one thing, and their civil business another. It is because they have separated religion from humanity, and missed a truth of most obvious and most commanding evidence—that there is not so much as a single half hour in the whole current of

man's history, which the gospel might not cheer by its comforts, or guide by its rules, or enlighten by its informations and its principles. Had every professing convert proceeded upon this, the association would have gone much farther than it has actually done. It would have thrown a kind of universal emblazonment over the very name of Christianity. A man under the teaching of Jesus Christ could not be spoken of, without lighting up in the heart every feeling of confidence and affection and esteem. And only conceive how it would go to augment the power of this living and efficient testimony—did every man who plies his attendance upon church, and runs after sacraments, and whose element is to be hearing and talking of sermons, and the whole style of whose family regulation wears a complexion of sacredness—how it would tell with all the omnipotence of a charm upon the world, could we only have it to say of every such man—that the soul of honour and integrity animated all his doings—that his every word and his every bargain were immutable—that not so much as a flaw or the semblance of an impeachment ever rested on any of his transactions—that if in business, you might repose upon him—that if in company, you had nothing to fear from his pride, or his severity, or his selfishness—that if in the relations of neighbourhood, you might look for nothing from his hands but kindness and civility—that if in the officialities of public employment, you might see all the faithfulness of a man who felt the weight of duty and responsibility that were attached to it—that if the head of a family, you might behold the happiest attemperament of wisdom and of gentleness—and finally, that if in service, you might commit to him the keepership of your all; you might give your suspicions and your jealousies to the wind; and, trusting to a fidelity which no opportunity can tempt, and no power of concealment can make to swerve from the line of honesty, you might review the whole subject of his guardianship, and find how to its minutest particle that all was untouched and all was unviolated.

This conducts us to the second lesson, which we proposed to draw from the

clause of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And that is that it is in the power of men and women, in the most obscure and unnoticed ranks of society, to do a thing of far greater magnificence and glory, than can be done by all the resources of a monarch, by all the commanding influence of wealth, by all the talents and the faculties of genius, by all the magic of utterance pouring forth its streams of eloquent and persuasive reasoning, by all grandeur, and all nobility, and all official consequence, when disjoined from Christian principle. Humble as ye are ye servants, there is a something ye can do which has all the greatness and all the effect of eternity stamped upon it. There is a something ye can do which the King of Glory may put down as done unto Him, and by which ye can both magnify the name and carry forward the interests of the Sun of Righteousness. There is a something ye can do by which you may be admitted into the high honour of being fellow workers with God—by which He to whom all power is committed both in heaven and earth, will own you as the auxiliaries of His cause—by which ye may become the instruments of adding to the triumphs of the great Redeemer, and holding up His name to the world with the splendour of an augmented reputation. O think what a distinction the once crucified but now exalted Saviour has conferred upon you. He has laid the burden of His honour and of His cause upon your shoulders. He has committed to you the task of adorning His doctrine. He has ennobled your every employment, by telling you that out of them all there may arise the moral lustre of such a principle and such a quality, as will reflect a credit upon Himself. And He who has done so much to exalt the station of a servant by taking the form of one on His own person, and by rendering under it such a service to Him who sitteth on the throne, as to have purchased for a sinful world all the securities and all the hopes and all the triumphs of their redemption, comes back upon you servants, now that he is exalted to the right hand of the most High, and tells you how much he looks to you for the glories of His

interest and of His name—how much He rests upon you for the illustration and the honour of His doctrine in the world. And as it was the work of the Son of God, when veiled in the humiliation of a servant, which set on foot the great plan of the world's restoration—so is it still to the work of servants, to you my humbler brethren, the glories of whose immortal nature lie buried only for a few little years under the meanness and the drudgeries of your daily employment—it is to you that He confides the helping forward of this mighty achievement, and the maintaining of its influence and of its glory from generation to generation.

It is in His name that we address you. We tell you, ye men-servants and ye maid-servants, from the sincerity of a heart that is most thoroughly penetrated with the truth and the importance of what we are now uttering, that you can do more for Christ in your respective families than we can possibly accomplish. We know not who your masters and mistresses are. But we know that there may be masters who scowl disdainfully on the business of the priesthood. We know that with the insolence of wealth, there may be some who despise the preaching of the cross, and make holiday of our sabbaths and our sacraments. We know that there may be some who come not here to have the doctrine of God our Saviour preached to them; and therefore it is that we want you to do this business for us. You may do it in effect without the utterance of a single word on the subject of Christianity. You may do it by the living power of your example. You may do it by the impressive exhibition of a fidelity which no temptation can seduce, and no lure of gain can cause to swerve from the line of a strict and undeviating integrity. You may do it by a lesson of greater energy than all that human argument can press, or the magic of human eloquence can insinuate. You may let them see in the whole of your history, that the man among all their dependents who is most devoted to the service of the sanctuary, is also the most devoted to the service of his employer; and the most tender of all his interests; and the most observant of all his will. You may preach them a daily

sermon by the daily exhibition of your faithfulness, and your attachment, and that deep and duteous spirit of loyalty, which, with all the firm footing of a religious principle in your heart, leads you to be careful of all the trust he has committed to you, and mindful of all his orders, and ever ready to meet his every wish and his every lawful imposition by the alacrity of your most assiduous and devoted ministrations. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. And even though your master should listen to the every demonstration which issues from the pulpit, he may retire day after day with a charmed ear, and an unawakened conscience, and the whole of the preacher's eloquence may die away from his memory like the sound of a pleasant song. But you keep by him through the week, and a grateful sense of your value is ever forcing itself upon his convictions. And the inference that Christianity has a something of reality in its nature, may at times intrude itself among the multitude of his other thoughts and his other avocations. And his conscience may be arrested by the interesting visitation of such an idea. And that Spirit whom we call you to pray for on his behalf, may reward your example and your supplications, by pressing the idea home, and pursuing him with its resistless influence, and opening through its power such an avenue to his heart, as may at length carry before it the whole of his desires and of his purposes. And in like manner as Christianity found its way into the household of Cæsar—so may you, my humbler brethren, find out a way for it into the houses of the wealthiest of our citizens; and be the instruments of spreading it around among all those villas of magnificence, which skirt and which adorn the city of our habitation; and to you, clothed as ye are in the habiliments of servitude, and weighed down from morning to night by its drudgeries, and veiled as the greatness of your immortal aspirations is from the eye of the world—even upon you may this blessing in all its richness be realized, that as ye have turned men unto righteousness so shall ye shine as the stars for ever and ever.

When we think of the lower orders of society, we cannot but think along with it, how high and how noble is the

Gospel estimate of that importance which belongs to them. Each of them carries in his bosom a principle of deathless energy, never to be extinguished. Each of them has a career of ambition opened up, lofty as heaven, and splendid as a crown of immortality. Each of them has an open way to Him who sitteth on the throne, through the mediation of Him who sitteth on the right hand of it. To them belongs the memorable distinction conferred by this utterance of the Eternal Son—that unto the poor the Gospel is preached. Each of them possesses a heart that may be regenerated by the influences of the Spirit; and may be filled with all that is pure and all that is elevated in piety; and may be turned into a residence for the finest and the loftiest emotions; and that, under the power of an evangelical culture, may be made to exemplify all that is respectable in worth, and all that is endearing in the nobler graces of Christianity. When worth and greatness meet in one imposing combination, there is a something in a spectacle so rare which draws the general eye of admiration along with it. But to the moral taste of some, and we profess ourselves to be of that number—there is a something still more touching, still more attractive, still more fitted to draw the eye of philanthropy, and to fill it with the images of beauty and peacefulness, in what we should call the virtues and the respectabilities of humble life—as a pious father, in the midst of a revering family—or the duteous offspring who rise around him, and are taught by his example to keep the Sabbaths of the Lord, and to love His ordinances—or the well-ordered household, the members of which are trained to all the decencies of Christian conduct—or the frail and lowly tenement, where the voice of psalms is heard with the return of every evening, and the morning of the hallowed day collects all its inmates around the altar of domestic prayer. When such pictures as these occur in humble life, and sure we are that humble life is capable of affording them, who could think of withholding from them his testimony of readiest admiration? The man who, without any superiority of wealth whatever, has, by the pure force of character, gained a moral ascendancy over the population of

his obscure neighbourhood, causes all earthly distinctions to vanish into insignificance before him. Now we affirm that in the very poorest and most unnoticed walks of society, such men are to be found; that by the powerful application of Christian motives such men may be multiplied; that there exist throughout the wide mass of society all the imaginable capabilities of worth and excellence, and principle and piety; that on the spacious field of a mighty harvest, which is on every side of us, there may be raised a whole multitude of converts, in whose hearts the principle of the Gospel shall have taken up its firm possession, and over the visible path of whose history the power of the Gospel may shed the lustre of some of the best and finest accomplishments by which our nature can be adorned.

We must not however pursue this speculation any farther. It is in the power of the servants, who now hear us, to turn it into a reality. We look to them for the vindication of all we have uttered; and sure we are, that a faithful and an attached servant; one who would maintain unseduced integrity, in the midst of manifold temptations; on whom the struggling force of principle would achieve a victory over the lure of every opportunity, and the certainty of every concealment; who, nobly superior to all that is sordid, and sneaking, and artful, would protect his master's interest as his own, and disdain to touch a single farthing of what was committed to him—why, we should never think of the rank of such a man—we should call him the champion of his order, and feel how honourably he had represented his own class of society—how he had asserted all their honours, and shown how elevation of soul and of sentiment belonged as essentially to them as to the wealthiest and most distinguished of the land—how he had evinced the wondrous capabilities of principle and of improvement which had existed over the wide mass of the population. And, taking him as a specimen, that the whole face of the community might be turned into a moral garden; and that, in point of moral and spiritual importance, the poor, the despised, the unnoticed, the neglected poor, are to the full equal with all that was most lofty in

the rank, and all that was most splendid in the literature of society.

We dismiss you, my friends, with the remark—that this is no speculation of ours. It is the call of the Saviour who died for you. It is He who, now that he has achieved your redemption, condescends to ask a favour of you. He commits to you the adornment of his doctrine in the eyes of the world. And remember that when you leave this church, and betake yourselves to the familiarities of your daily employment, though our eye cannot follow you, the eye of your Master in heaven is never away from you. He takes an interest in all your doings. He registers the every hour and performance of your history. If you suffer not this reflection to tell upon your conduct

from this moment, you are throwing the gauntlet of defiance to a beseeching and a commanding Saviour. But if otherwise, He will not despise the humble offering of your obedience. He will put it down as done unto Him. He will recognise you as fellow-helpers to his cause and to his interest in the world. He will accept of your prayers, because they are the prayers of them whose hands are clean and whose hearts are purged from their regard to all iniquity. You will grow in friendly and familiar intercourse with the great Mediator; and He will put down the very smallest items of your obedience as fruits of the love that you bear Him, and of the faith which worketh by love and which keepeth the commandments.

SERMON XL.

The Importance of Civil Government to Society.

“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”—ROMANS iii. 9—19.

THERE are certain of these charges which can be brought more simply and speedily home in the way of conviction than certain others of them. Those which bring man more directly before the tribunal of God, can be made out more easily than those which bring him before the tribunal of his fellows. It were difficult to prove, that, in reference to man, there are not some of the species who have not something to glory of; but it should not be so difficult to prove, that we have nothing to glory of before God. Now, the conclusion of the Apostle's argument in this passage is, that it is before God that all the world is guilty; and if we, in the first instance, single out those verses which place man before us in his simple relationship to the God who formed him, we ought not to find it a hard

matter to carry the acquiescence of our hearers in the sentence which is here pronounced upon our guilty species.

One of those verses is, that “there is none righteous, no, not one.” To be held as having righteously kept the law of our country, we must keep the whole of it. It is not necessary that we accumulate upon our persons the guilt of treason, and forgery, and murder, and violent depredation, ere we forfeit our lives to an outraged government. By one of these acts we incur just as dreadful and as entire a forfeiture as though guilty of them all. The hundred deeds of obedience will not efface or expiate the one of disobedience; and we have only to plead for the same justice to a divine that we render to a human administration, in order to convince every individual who now

hears us, conscious, as he must be, of one, and several, and many acts of transgression against the law of God, that there is not one of them who is righteous before him.

“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,” is another of these verses. We will venture to say of every man, without exception, who has not submitted himself to the great doctrine of this epistle, which is justification by faith, that there is not one principle clearly intelligible even to his own mind, on which he rests his acceptance with the God whom he has offended. He may have some obscure conception of His mercy, but he has never struck the compromise between His mercy and His justice. He has never braved the inquiry, how is it possible that a sinner can be pardoned without a dissolution of God’s moral government? If he has ever taken up the question, “What shall I do to be saved?” he has never, in the prosecution of it, looked steadily in the face at the Truth and Holiness of the Godhead. He has never extricated his condition as a sinner, from the dilemma of God’s conflicting attributes; or apprehended, to his own satisfaction, how it is that the dignity of Heaven’s throne can be upheld, amid the approaches of the polluted, who dare the inspection of eternal purity, and offer to come nigh, on the single presumption of God’s connivance at sin,—and a connivance founded too on the vague impression of God’s simple, and easy, and unresisting tenderness. What becomes of all that which stamps authority upon a law, and props the majesty of a Lawgiver, is a question that they have not resolved; and that just because it is a question which they do not entertain. They are not seeking to resolve it. That matter which appertains to the very essence of a sinner’s salvation, is a matter of which they have no understanding; and they do not care to understand it. They are otherwise taken up, and giving themselves no uneasiness upon the subject. They, all their lives long, are blinking, and evading the questions which lie at the very turning point of that transition by which a sinner passes from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance. They hold the whole of this matter in abeyance and the things of the

world engross, and interest, and occupy, their whole hearts, to the utter exclusion of Him who made the world. They are seeking after many things, but they are not seeking after God.—If you think that this is bearing too hard upon you, tell us what have been the times, and what the occasions, on which you have ever made the finding of God the distinct and the business object of your endeavours? When did you ever seek Him truly? When did your efforts in this way ever go beyond the spirit and the character of an empty round of observations? What are the strenuous attempts you ever made to push the barrier which intercepts the guilty from the God whom they have rebelled against? If you are really and heartily seeking, you will find; but, without the fear of refutation, do we affirm of all here present who have not reached the Saviour, and are not in their way to Him, that none of you understandeth, and none of you seeketh after God.

“They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good; no, not one,”—is another of these verses. We do not say of the people whom we are now addressing, that they have gone out of the way of honour, or out of the way of equity, or out of the way of fair, and pleasant, and companionable neighbourhood. But they, one and all of them, are out of the way of godliness. When the Prophet complains of our species, he does not affirm of them that they had turned every one to a way either of injustice or cruelty; but he counts it condemnation enough, that they had turned every one to *his own way*. It is iniquity enough in his eyes that the way in which we walk is our own way, and not God’s; that in the prosecution of it we are simply pleasing ourselves, and not asking or caring whether it be a way that is pleasing to Him; that the impelling principle of what we do is our own will, and not His authority; that the way in which we walk is a way of independence upon God, if not of iniquity against our fellows in society; that it is the way of one who walks in the sight of his own eyes, and not of one who walks under the sight and in the service of another; that God, in fact, is as good as cast off from us;

and we say what is tantamount to this, that we will not have Him to reign over us. This is the universal habit of Nature; and if so, Nature is out of the way, and the world at large offers a monstrous exception to the habit of the sinless and un-fallen, where all from the highest to the lowest, walk in that rightful subordination which the thing that is formed should ever have towards Him who formed it. It is this which renders all the works of mere natural men so unprofitable, that is, of no value in the high count and reckoning of eternity. They want the great moral infusion which makes them valuable. There is nothing of God in them; having neither His will for their principle, nor the advancement of any one cause which His heart is set upon for their object. They may serve a temporary purpose. They may shed a blessing over the scenery of our mortal existence. They may minister to the good, and the peace, and the protection of society. They may add to the sunshine or the serenity of our little day upon earth; and yet be unprofitable, because they yield no fruit unto immortality. Destitute as they all are of godliness, they are destitute of goodness. They have not the essential spirit of this attribute pervading them. And though many there are to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and who have reached a lofty estimation in the walks of integrity and honour, and even of philanthropy and patriotism, yet, with the taint of earthliness which vitiates all they do, in the estimation of Heaven's Sanctuary there is none of them that doeth good; no, not one.

We now pass onward to another set of charges, which it may be not so easy to substantiate on the ground of actual observation. They consist of highly atrocious offences against the peace and the dearest interests of society. It is true, that the apostle here drops the style of universality which he so firmly sustains in the foregoing part of his arraignment, when he speaks of all being out of the way; and of none, no, not one, being to be found on the path of godliness. And it is further true, that, in the subsequent prosecution of his charges, he quotes several expressions which David made use of, not against the whole species, but

against his own enemies. But yet it will be found, that though the picture of atrocity here drawn may not in our day be so broadly exhibited as in the ruder and more barbarous periods of this world's history, yet, that the principles of it are still busily at work; and though humanity be altered a little in its guise, it is not, apart from the gospel, at all altered in its substance; that though softened down into a somewhat milder complexion, its fiercer elements are not therefore extinguished, but only lie for a time in a sort of slumbering concealment; that though law and civilization, and a more enlightened sense of interest, may have stopped the mouth of many a desolating volcano, which would else have marred and wasted the face of society, yet do the fiery materials still exist in the bosom of society. It is religion alone which will kill the elementary principles of human wickedness, and every expedient short of religion will do no more than restrain the ebullition of them. So that, dark as the scriptural representation of our nature is; and though here personified by the Apostle into a monster, whose delight is in the most foul and revolting abominations; with a throat like an open sepulchre, emitting contempt, and hatred, and envy, and every thing offensive; and a tongue practised in the arts of deceitfulness; and lips from which the gall of malignity ever drops in unceasing distillation; and a mouth full of venomous asperity; and feet that run to assassination as a game; and with the pathway on which she runs marked by the ruin and distress that attend upon her progress; and with a disdainful aversion in her heart to the safety and ingloriousness of peace; and, finally, with an aspect of defiance to the God that called her into being, and gave all her parts and all her energies—though this sketch of our nature was originally taken by the Psalmist from the prowling banditti that hovered on the confines of Judea, yet has the Apostle, by admitting it into his argument, stamped a perpetuity upon it, and made it universal,—giving us to understand, that if such was the character of man, as it stood nakedly out among the rude and resentful hostilities of a barbarous people, such also is the real character of man among the glosses, and the regularities, and

the monotonous decencies of modern society.

There is one short illustration which may help you to comprehend this. You know that oaths were more frequent at one time than they are now in the conversation of the higher classes, and that at present it is altogether a point of politeness to abstain from the utterance of them. It is a point of politeness, we fear, more than a point of piety. There may be less of profaneness in their mouths, while there may be as much as ever in their hearts; and when the question is between God and man, and with a view to rate the godliness of the latter, do you think that this is at all alleviated by a mere revolution of taste about the proprieties of fashionable intercourse? There may be as little of religion in the discontinuance of swearing, when that is brought about by a mere fluctuation in the mode or *bon ton* of society, as there is of religion in the adoption of a new dress, or a new style of entertainment. And, in like manner, murder in the act may be less frequent now, while, if he who hateth his brother be a murderer, it may be fully as foul and frequent in the principle; and theft, in the shape of violent and open depredation, be no longer practised by him who gives vent to an equal degree of dishonesty through the chicaneries of merchandize; and that malice which wont in other times to pour itself forth in resentful outcry, or vulgar execration, may now find its sweet and secret gratification in the conquests of a refined policy; and thus may there lurk under the soft and placid disguises of well-bred citizenship, just as much of unfeeling deceit, and unfeeling cruelty, as were ever realized in the fiercer contests of savage warfare, so as to verify the estimate of our apostle, even when applied to the character of society in modern days, and to make it as evident with the duties of the second table as it is with the first, that in every thing man has wandered far from the path of rectitude, and in every thing has fallen short of the glory of God.

The truth is, there is much in the whole guise of modern society that is fitted to hide from human eyes the real deformity of the human character. We think that, apart from Christianity, the

falsehood and ferocity of our species are essentially the same with what they were in the most unsettled periods of its history—that, however moulded into a different form, they retain all the strength and substance that they ever had—and that, if certain restraints were lifted away, certain regulations which have their hold not upon the principle, but upon the selfishness of our nature: then would the latent propensities of man again break forth into open exhibition, and betray him to be the same guileful, and rapacious, and vindictive creature he has ever shown himself to be, in those places of the earth where government had not yet introduced its restraints, and civilization had not yet introduced its disguises.

And even when society has sat down into the form of a peaceful and well-ordered commonwealth, will it be seen that the evil of the human heart, though it come not forth so broadly and so outrageously as before, is just as active in its workings, and just as unsubdued in its principle as ever. We apprehend that man to be mainly ignorant of life, and to be unpractised or untaught among the collisions of human intercourse, who is not aware that even among our politest circles, smoothed as they may be into perfect decorum, and graced by the smile of soft and sentimental courtesy, there may lurk all the asperities and heart-burnings so honestly set forth by our Apostle; and that even there the artful malignity of human passion finds, in slanderous insinuations, and the devices of a keen and dexterous rivalry, its effectual vent for them. And little has he experienced of the trick and treachery of business, who thinks that, in the scramble of its eager competitions, less deceit is now used with the tongue, than in the days when the Psalmist was compassed round with the snares of his adversaries. And slightly has he reflected on the true character, that often beams out from beneath the specious fallacy which lies over it, who does not perceive that there may, even with law, be as determined a spirit of injustice, among the frauds and the forms of bankruptcy, as that which in the olden time, and without law, carried violence and rapine into a neighbour's habitation. And there is a lack of insight with him who thinks, that in civilized war, with all

its gallant courtesies, and all its manifestos of humane and righteous protestation, there may not be the same kindling for the fray, and the same appetite for blood, that gives its fell and revengeful sweep to the tomahawk of Indians. There is another dress and another exterior upon society than before; but be assured, that in so far as it respects the essentials of human character, the representation of the Apostle is still the true one. Whatever were the deceitful, or whatever were the murderous propensities of man, three thousand years ago, they have descended to our present generation; and we are not sure but that, through the regular vents of war, and of bankruptcy, there is as full scope for their indulgence as ever. There may be a change in the mode of these iniquities, without any change at all in the matter of them; and after all that police, and refinement, and the kindly operation of long pacific intercourse, have done to humanize the aspect of these latter days, we are far from sure whether upon the displacement of certain guards and barriers of security, the slumbering ferocities of man might not again announce their existence, and break out, as before, into open and declared violence.

All this, while it gives a most humiliating estimate of our species, should serve to enhance to our minds the blessings of regular Government. And it were curious to question the agents of police upon this subject, the men who are stationed at the place of combat and of guardianship, with those who have cast off the fear of God, and cast off also the fear of man to such a degree, as to be ever venturing across the margin of human legality. Let the most observant of all these public functionaries simply depon to the effect it would have, even upon our mild and modern society, were this guardianship dissolved. Would it not be evident to him, and is it not equally evident to you all, that the artificial gloss which now overspreads the face of it would speedily be dissipated; and that, underneath, would the character of man be sure to stand out in far nearer resemblance to that sketch, however repulsive, which the inspired writer has here offered of our species? Were anarchy the order of our day, and the lawless propensities of man permitted to stalk abroad in this

the season of their wild emancipation; were all the restraints of order driven in, and human strength and human fierceness were to ride in triumph over the prostrate authorities of the land; were the reigning will of our country, at this moment, the will of a spontaneous multitude, doing every man of them, in rude and random ebullitions, what was right in his own eyes; with just such a fear of our heavenly superior as now exists in the world, but with all fear and reverence for earthly superiors taken away from it; let us just ask you to conceive the effect of such a state of things, and then to compute how little there is of moral, and how much there is of mere animal restraint in the apparent virtues of human society. There is a twofold benefit in such a contemplation. It will enhance to every Christian mind the cause of loyalty, and lead him to regard the power that is, as the minister of God to him for good. And it will also guide him through many delusions to appreciate justly the character of man; to distinguish aright between the semblance of principle and its reality; and to gather, from the surveys of experience, a fresh evidence for the truth of those Scriptures, which speak so truly of human sinfulness, and point out so clearly the way of human salvation.

But it is not necessary, for the purpose of identifying the character of man, as it now is, with what the character of man was, in its worst features, in the days of the Royal Psalmist, to make out by evidence a positive thirst after blood on the part of any existing class in society. We are not sure that it was any native or abstract delight in cruelty which prompted the marauders of other days to deeds of violence. Place a man in circumstances of ease and of self-complacency, and he will revolt from the infliction of unnecessary pain, just as the gorged and satiated animal of prey will suffer the traveller to pass without molestation. It forms no part of our indictment against the species, that his appetite for blood urges him onwards to barbarity, but that his appetite for other things will urge him on to it; and that if, while he had these things, he would rather abstain from the death of his fellow-men, yet, rather than want these things, he would inflict it. It is not that his love of cruelty is the originating

appetite which carries him forward to deeds of cruelty, but that his abhorrence of cruelty is not enough to arrest the force of other appetites, when they find that human life lies in the way of their gratification. The feet of the borderers of Judea made haste to shed blood; but, just because, like the borderers of our own land, their love of booty could only be indulged with human resistance among human habitations. And were these days of public licentiousness again to return—were the functions of government suspended, and the only guarantee of peace and of property were the native rectitude of the species—did the power of anarchy achieve its own darling object of a jubilee all over the country for human wilfulness; and in this way were, not the past inclinations revived, but just the present inclinations of man let loose upon society—a single month would not elapse, ere scenes of as dread atrocity were witnessed, as those which the Psalmist has recorded, and those which the Apostle has transmitted, as the exemplars, not of practical, but of general humanity. The latent iniquities of the human heart would reappear just as soon as the compression of human authority was lifted away from them; and these streets be made to flow with the blood of the most distinguished of our citizens; and the violence at first directed against the summit of society, would speedily cause the whole frame of it to totter into dissolution; and in this our moral and enlightened day it would be found, that there was enough of crime in the country to spread terror over all its provinces, and to hold its prostrate families in bondage; and with such a dreary interregnum of tumult, and uproar, and vagrancy, as this, would there be a page of British history as deeply crimsoned over, as are the darkest annals of the barbarity of our species—all proving, how indispensable the ordinance of human government is to the well-being of society; but also proving, that if it be the will, and the inward tendency, and the unfettered principle, which constitute the real elements of the character of man, this character has only been coloured into another hue, without being transformed into another essence, by an ordinance which can only keep its elements in check, but never can extinguish them.

And on applying the spiritual touchstone of the gospel, may we perhaps fasten a similar charge on many in society, who never suspected it possible that they had any part in the Apostle's dark representation of our foul and fallen nature. Even in the wildest scenes of anarchy, it may not be the love of cruelty, but the love of power or of plunder, which leads men to the most revolting abominations of cruelty. It is not so much a ravenous desire after human blood, as a regardlessness about it, which stamps a savage barbarity on the characters of men. It is their regard for the objects of avarice and ambition, coupled with their regardlessness about the quantity of human life, that lies in the way of them; which is enough to account for deeds of atrocity as monstrous as ever were committed, either by bloody tyrants, or ferocious multitudes. Now, may not this regard on the one hand, and this regardlessness on the other, be fully exemplified by him who looks with delight on the splendid reversion that awaits him, and cares not how soon the death of his aged relative may bring it to his door? And may it not be exemplified by him who, all in a tumult with military glee, and the visions of military glory, longs for some arena crowded with the fellows of his own sentient nature, on which he might bring the fell implements of destruction to bear, and so signalize himself in the proud lists of chivalry or patriotism? And most striking of all perhaps, may it not be exemplified, by the most gentle and pacific of our citizens, who, engrossed with the single appetite of fear, and under the movements of no other regard than a regard to his own security, might listen with secret satisfaction to the tale of the many hundreds of the rebellious who had fallen—and how the sweep of fatal artillery, or the charge of victorious squadrons, told with deadly execution on the flying multitude? We are not comparing the merits of the cause of order, which are all triumphant with those of anarchy; the inscribed ensigns of which are as hateful to every Christian eye, as ever to the Jews of old was the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. We are merely expounding the generalities of a nature, trenced upon every side of it in

deceitfulness; and where, under the gloss of many plausibilities, there lurk, unsuspected, and unknown, all the rudiments of depravity: and through the intricacies of which, he who saw with the eye of inspiration could detect a permanent and universal taint, both of selfishness and of practical atheism. The picture that he has drawn will bear to be confronted with the humanity of modern as well as of ancient days; and, though taken off at first from the ruder specimens of our kind, yet, on a narrow inspection, will it be found to be substantiated among the delicate phases of our more elegant and artificial society; so as that every mouth should be stopped, and the whole world be brought in guilty before God.

In looking to the present aspect of society, it is not easy so to manage our argument as to reach conviction among all, that all are guilty before God; and that, unknowing of it themselves, there may be the lurking principles of what is dire in human atrocity, even under the blandest exhibitions of our familiar and every-day acquaintanceship. But, as there are degrees of guilt, and as these are more or less evident to human eyes, it would, perhaps, decide the identity of our present generation, with those of a rude and savage antiquity, could we run along the scale of actual wickedness that is before us, and fasten upon an exemplification of it so plainly and obviously detestable as to vie with all that is recorded of the villany of our species in former ages of the world. And such a one has occurred so recently, that there is not one here present who, upon the slightest allusion, will not instantly recognise it. We speak not of those who have openly spoken, and that beyond the margin of legality, against the government of our land. We speak not of those who have clamoured so loudly, and lifted so open a front of hostility to the laws, as to have brought down upon them the hand of public vengeance. We speak not even of those who, steeled to the purposes of blood went forth to kill and to destroy, and, found with the implements of violence in their hands, are now awaiting the sentence of an earthly tribunal on the enormity into which they have fallen. But we speak to our men of deeper con-

trivance; to those wary and unseen counsellors who have so coolly conducted others to the brunt of a full exposure, and then retired so cautiously within the shelter of their own cowardice; those men of print and of plot, and of privacy, in whose hands the other agents of rebellion were nothing better than slaves and simpletons; those men of skill enough for themselves, to go thus far, and no farther, and of cruelty enough for others, as to care not how many they impelled across the verge of desperation; those men who have made their own harvest of the passions of the multitude, and now skulk in their hiding places, till the storm of vengeance that is to sweep the victims of their treachery from the land of the living shall have finally blown away; those men who spoke a patriotism which they never felt, and shed their serpent tears over sufferings which never drew from their bosoms one sigh of honest tenderness. Tell us, if out of the men who thus have trafficked in delusion, and, in pursuance of their unfeeling experiment, have entailed want and widowhood upon families, there may not as dark a picture of humanity be drawn as the Psalmist drew out of the rude materials that were around him: And, after all that civilization has done for our species, and all that smoothness of external aspect into which government has moulded the form of society; is it not evident, that upon the slightest relaxation of its authority, and the faintest prospect of its dissolution and overthrow, there is lying in reserve as much of untamed and ruthless ferocity in our land, as, if permitted to come forth, would lift an arm of bloody violence, and scatter all the cruelties of the reign of terror among its habitations?*

These are rather lengthened illustrations in which we have indulged; but who can resist the temptation that offers itself, when an opening is given for exhibiting the accordancy that obtains between the truth of observation, and the averments of scripture; when facts are before us, and such a use of them can be made, as that of turning them into ma-

* This Sermon was preached in 1820, after the suppression of a rebellious movement in Scotland.

terials by which to strengthen the foundations of orthodoxy ; and when, out of scenes which rise with all the freshness of recency before us, it can be shown how the sturdy apostolic doctrine will bear to be confronted with every new display, and every new development of human experience? And, ere we have done, we should like to urge three lessons upon you, from all that has been said ; the first with a view to set your theology upon its right basis ; and the second with a view to set your loyalty upon its right basis ; and the third with a view to impress a right practical movement on those who hold a natural or political ascendancy in our land.

I. First, then, as to the theology of this question. We trust you perceive how much it is, and how little it is, that can be gathered from the comparative peace and gentleness of modern society ; how much the protection of families is due to the physical restraints that are laid on by this world's government, and how little is due to the moral restraints that are laid on by the unseen government of Heaven ; how little the existing safety of our commonwealth, both from crime and turbulence, is owing to the force of any considerations which are addressed to the principle of man, and how much of it is owing to the force of such considerations as are addressed to man's fears and man's selfishness ;—all proving, that if human nature, in this our age, do not break forth so frequently and so outrageously into violence as in other ages that have gone by, it is only because it is shackled, and not because it is tamed. It is more like the tractableness of an animal led about by a chain than of an animal inwardly softened into a docility and a mildness which did not formerly belong to it. It is due, without doubt, to the influence of a very strong and very salutary counteraction ; but it is a counteraction that has been formed out of the interest of man, and not out of the fear of God. It is due, not to the working of that celestial machinery which beats on the spiritual part of our constitution, but to the working of another machinery most useful for the temporary purpose which it serves, yet only bearing on the material and worldly part of our constitution. On this point, observation and or-

thodoxy are at one ; and one of the most convincing illustrations which the Apostle can derive to his own doctrine, may be taken from the testimony of those who, in the shape of legal functionaries, are ranged along that line of defence, over which humanity, with its numerous out-breakings of fraud, and rapacity, and violence, is ever passing. Let them simply aver, on their own experimental feeling, what the result would be, if all the earthly safeguards of law and of government were driven away from the rampart at which they are stationed ; and they are just preaching orthodoxy to our ears, and lending us their authority to one of its articles, when they tell us, that upon such an event the whole system of social life would go into unhingement, and that, in the wild uproar of human passions which would follow, kindness, and confidence, and equity, would take their rapid flight from human habitations.

II. But, secondly, the very same train of argument which goes to enlighten the theology of this subject, serves also to deepen and to establish within us all the principles of a most devoted loyalty. That view of the human character, upon which it is contended, by the divine, that unless it is regenerated there can be no meetness for heaven, is the very same with that view of the human character upon which it is contended, by the politician, that unless it is restrained there will be no safety from crime and violence along the course of the pilgrimage which leads to it. An enlightened pilgrim recognises the hand of God in all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the natural elements ; and he equally recognises in it all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the moral elements by which he is surrounded. Had he a more favourable view of our nature, he might not look on government as so indispensable ; but, with the view that he actually has, he cannot miss the conclusion of its being the ordinance of Heaven for the church's good upon earth ; and that thus a canopy of defence is drawn over the heads of Zion's travellers ; and they rejoice in the authority of human laws as an instrument in the hand of God for the peace of their Sabbaths, and the peace of their sacraments ; and they deprecate the anarchy that would

ensue from the suspension of them, with as much honest principle, as they would deprecate the earthquake that might engulf, or the hurricane that might sweep away their habitations; and, aware of what humanity is, when left to itself, they accept, as a boon from heaven, the mechanism which checks the effervescence of all those fires that would else go forth to burn up and to destroy.

This, at all times the feeling of every enlightened Christian, must have been eminently and peculiarly so at that time when our recent alarms were at the greatest height. It was the time of our sacrament; and, to all who love its services, must it have been matter of grateful rejoicing, that, by the favour of Him who sways the elements of Nature, and the as uncontrollable elements of human society, we were permitted to finish these services in peace; that, in that feast of love and good-will, we were not rudely assailed by the din of warlike preparation; that, ere sabbath came, the tempest alarm, which had sounded so fearfully along the streets of our city, was hushed into the quietness of sabbath; so that, like as if in the midst of sweetest landscape, and amongst a congregation gathered out of still and solitary hamlets, and with nothing to break in upon the deep repose and tranquillity of the scene, save the voice of united praise from an assembly of devout and revering worshippers, were we, under the protection of an arm stronger than any arm of flesh, and at the bidding of a voice more powerful than that of mighty conquerors suffered to enjoy the pure and peaceful ordinances of our faith, with all the threats and all the outcries of human violence kept far away from us.

It was the apprehension of many, that it might have been otherwise. And, what ought to be their enduring gratitude, when, instead of the wrath of man let loose upon our families; and a devoted city given up to the frenzy and the fierceness of a misguided population; and the maddening outcry of combatants plying against each other their instruments of destruction; and the speed of flying multitudes, when the noise of the footmen and the noise of the horsemen gave dreadful intimation of the coming slaughter; and the bursting conflagration, in various

quarters, marking out where the fell emissaries of ruin were at work; and the shock, and the volley, and the agonies of dying men, telling the trembling inmates of every household, that the work of desperation had now begun upon the streets, and might speedily force its way into all the dwelling-places:—this is what that God, who has the elements of the moral world at command, might have visited on a town which has witnessed so many a guilty sabbath, and harbours within its limits the ungodliness of so many profane and alienated families.—In what preciousness, then, ought that sabbath to be held; and what a boon from the kindness of long-suffering Heaven should we regard its quietness; when, instead of such deeds of vengeance between townsmen and their fellows, they walked together in peaceful society to the house of prayer, and sat in peacefulness together at its best loved ordinance.

The men who prize the value of this protection the most, are the men who feel most the need of human government, and who most revere it as an ordinance of God. Such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless it be renewed by divine grace, there can be no translation into a blessed eternity; and such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless its native inclinations be repressed by human government, there can be no calm or protected passage along the track of conveyance in this world. Their loyalty emerges from their orthodoxy. With them it has all the tenacity of principle; and is far too deeply seated to be laid prostrate among the fierce and guilty agitations of the tumultuous. They have no part in the rancour of the disaffected; and they have no part in the ambitiousness of the dark and daring revolutionist; and seeking, as they do, to lead a quiet and a peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, a season of turbulence is to them a season of trial, and would be a season of difficulty, had they not the politics of the Bible to guide their way among the threats and the terrors of surrounding desperadoes. "Honour the king, and meddle not with those who are given to change," are the indelible duties of a record that is indelible; and they stamp a sacredness upon Christian loyalty. They are not at liberty to cancel what God has

enacted, and to expunge what God has written. They are loyal because they are religious; to suffer in such a cause is persecution, to die in it is martyrdom.

There is a mischievous delusion on this subject. In the minds of many, and these too men of the first influence and station in the country, there is a haunting association which still continues to mislead them, even in the face of all evidence, and of all honest and credible protestation; and in virtue of which they, to this very hour, conceive that such a religion as they call methodism, is the invariable companion of a plotting, artful, and restless democracy. This is truly unfortunate; for the thing called methodism is neither more nor less than Christianity in earnest; and yet they who so call it, have it most honestly at heart to promote the great object of a peaceful, and virtuous, and well-conditioned society; and not therefore their disposition, which is right, but their apprehension upon this topic, which is egregiously wrong, has just had the effect of bending the whole line of their patronage and policy the wrong way. And thus are they unceasingly employed in attempting to kill, as a noxious plant, the only element which can make head against the tide of irreligion and blasphemy in our land; conceiving, but most woefully wide of the truth in so conceiving, that there is a certain approving sympathy between the sanctity of the evangelical system, and the sedition that so lately has derided and profaned it. The doctrinal Christianity of this very epistle would be called methodistical by those to whom we are now alluding; but sure we are, that the disciple who goes along with Paul, while he travels in argument through the deeper mysteries of faith, will not abandon him when, in the latter chapters of his work, he breaks forth into that efflorescence of beautiful and perfect morality with which he winds up the whole of his wondrous demonstration; but will observe the bidden conduct as a genuine emanation of the expounded creed—when told, that every soul should be subject unto the higher powers, and that there is no power but of God, and that the powers which be are ordained of God. And whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that re-

sist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

III. We venture to affirm, that it is just the want of this Christianity in earnest which has brought our nation to the brink of an emergency so fearful as that upon which we are standing. When Solomon says, that it is righteousness which exalteth a nation, he means something of a deeper and more sacred character than the mere righteousness of society. This last may be learned in the school of classical or of civil virtue; and an argument may be gathered in its behalf even from the views of an enlightened selfishness; and, all lovely as it is in exhibition, may it draw from the tasteful admirers of what is fine in character even something more than a mere nominal acknowledgment. It may carry a certain extent of practical conformity over the real and living habits of those who, faultless in honour, and uprightness, and loyalty, are nevertheless devoid of the religious principle altogether; and who, so far from being tainted with methodism, in the sense of that definition which we have already given of it, would both repudiate its advances upon their own family, and regret any visible inroads it might make on our general population.

That Solomon does mean something more than the virtues to which we are now alluding, is evident we think from this circumstance. The term righteousness, admits of a social and relative application, and in this application, may introduce a conception into the mind that is exclusive of God. But the same cannot be said of the term sin. This generally suggests the idea of God as the Being sinned against. The one term does not so essentially express the idea of conformity to the divine law, as the other term expresses the idea of transgression against it. It does not carry up the mind so immediately to God; because, with the utter absence of Him from our thoughts, may it still retain a substance and a significancy, as expressive of what is held to be right in a community of human beings. It is well, then, that the clause, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," is followed up by the clause, "But sin is a reproach to any people;" and

that thus the latter term, which is equivalent to ungodliness by the contrast in which it stands with the former term, leads us to the true import of the first of these two clauses, and gives us to understand Solomon as saying, that it is godliness that exalteth a nation.

Cut away the substratum of godliness, and how, we ask, will the secondary and the earth-born righteousness be found to thrive on the remaining soil which nature supplies for rearing it? It is an error to think that it will make a total withdrawalment of itself from the world. It will still be found, in straggling specimens, among some sheltered and congenial spots even of this world's territory—at times among the haunts of lettered enthusiasm; and at times on the elevated stage of rank which stands forth to public notice, or of an opulence which is raised above the attacks of care and of temptation; and, at times, on the rarely-occurring mould of a native equity, when, in middle and comfortable life, the rude urgencies of want and of vulgar ambition do not overbear it. Even there it will grow but sparingly, without the influences of the gospel; as it did in those ages, and as it still does in those countries where the gospel is unknown. But, if you step down from those moral eminences, or if you come out from those few sweet and kindred retirements, where the moral verdure has stood, unblighted, even in the absence of Christianity, and thence go forth among the ample spaces, and the wide, and open, and general exposures of society; if, on the arena of common life, you enter the teeming families of the poor, and hold converse with the mighty host who scarcely know an interval between waking hours of drudgery and hours of sleeping unconsciousness; if, passing away from the abodes of refinement, you mingle with the many whose feelings and whose faculties are alike buffeted in the din and the dizzying of incessant labour—we mean to affix no stigma on the humbler brethren of our nature; but we may at least be suffered to say, that among the richest of fortune and accomplishment in our land, we know not the individual whose virtues, if transplanted into the unkindlier region of poverty, would have withstood the operation of all the adverse elements to

which it is exposed,—unless upheld by that very godliness which he perhaps disowns, that very methodism on which perhaps he pours the cruelty of his derision.

And here it may be remarked, how much the taste of many among the higher orders of society, is at war with the best security that can be devised for the peace and well-being of society. There are many among them who admire the blossoms of virtue, while they dislike that only culture which can spread this lovely efflorescence over the whole field of humanity. They advert not to this—that the virtue which is cradled in the lap of abundance, and is blown into luxuriance among the complacencies of a heart at ease, would soon evince its frailty were it carried out among the exposures of an every-day world; that there it would droop and perish under the uncongenial influences which, apart from religion, would positively wither up all the honesties and delicacies of humble life; and therefore, that if they nauseate that gospel, which ever meets with its best acceptance, and works its most congenial effects upon the poor, they abandon the poor to that very depravity into which they themselves, had they been placed among the same temptations and besetting urgencies, would assuredly have fallen. The force of native integrity may do still what it did in the days of Pagan antiquity, when it reared its occasional specimens of worth and patriotism; but it is the power of godliness, and that alone, which will reclaim our population in the length and breadth of it, and shed a moral bloom, and a moral fragrance, over the wide expanse of society. But with many, and these too the holders of a great and ascendant influence in our land, godliness is puritanism, and orthodoxy is repulsive moroseness, and the pure doctrine of the Apostles is fanatical and disgusting vulgarity; and thus is it a possible thing, that in their hands the alone aliment of public virtue may be withheld, or turned into poison. Little are they aware of the fearful reaction which may await their natural enmity to the truth as it is in Jesus; and grievously have they been misled from the sound path, even of political wisdom, in the suspicion and intolerance wherewith they have regarded the dispensers of the word of life among the

multitude. The patent way to disarm Nature of her ferocities, is to Christianize her; and we should look on all our alarms with thankfulness, as so many salutary indications, did they lead either to multiply the religious edifices, or to guide the religious patronage of our land.

But, again, it is not merely the taste of the higher orders which may be at war with the best interests of our country. It is also their example; not their example of dishonesty, not their example of disloyalty, not their example of fierce and tumultuous violence, but an example of that which, however unaccompanied with any one of these crimes in their own person, multiplies them all upon the person of the imitators—we mean the example of their irreligion. A bare example of integrity on the part of a rich man, who is freed from all temptations to the opposite, is not an effective example with a poor man, who is urgently beset at all hands with these temptations. It is thus that the most pure and honourable example which can shine upon the poor from the upper walks of society, of what we have called the secondary and the earth-born righteousness, will never counterwork the mischief which emanates from the example that is there held forth of ungodliness.

It is the poor man's sabbath which is the source of his week-day virtues. The rich may have other sources; but take away the sabbath from the poor, and you inflict a general desecration of character upon them. Taste, and Honour, and a native love of Truth, may be sufficient guarantees to the performance of duties to the breaking of which there is no temptation. But they are not enough for the wear and exposure of ordinary life. They make a feeble defence against such temptations as assail and agitate the men who, on the rack of their energies are struggling for subsistence. With them the relative obligations hold more singly upon the religious; and if the tie of religion, therefore, be cut asunder, the whole of their morality will forthwith go into unbingement. Whatever virtue there is on the humbler levels of society, it holds direct of the sabbath and of the sanctuary; and when these cease to be venerable, the poor cease to be virtuous. You take away all their worth, when you take

away the fear of God from before their eyes; and why then should we wonder at the result of a very general depravation among them, if before their eyes there should be held forth, on the part of their earthly superiors, an utter fearlessness of God? The humbler, it ought not to be expected, will follow the higher classes on the ground of social virtue; for they have other and severer difficulties to combat, and other temptations, over which the victory would be greatly more arduous. But the humbler will follow the higher on the ground of irreligion. Only they will do it in their own style, and, perhaps, with the more daring and lawless spirit of those who riot in the excesses of a newly felt liberty. Should the merchant, to lighten the pressure of work in his counting-house, make over the arrears of his week-day correspondence to the snug and secret opportunity of the coming sabbath;—the hard wrought labourer just follows up this example in his own way, when, not to lighten, but to solace the fatigue of the six days that are past, he spends the seventh in some haunt of low dissipation. Should the man of capital, make his regular escape from the dull Sunday, and the still duller sermon, by a rural excursion, with his party of choice spirits, to the villa of weekly retreat, which by his wealth he has purchased and adorned—let it not be wondered at, that the man of drudgery is so often seen, with his band of associates, among the suburb fields and pathways of our city; or that the day which God hath commanded to be set apart for himself, should be set apart by so vast a multitude, who pour forth upon our outskirts, to the riot and extravagance of holiday. Should it be held indispensable for the accommodation of our higher citizens, that the great central lounge of politics, and periodicals, and news, be opened on sabbath to receive them; then, though the door of public entry is closed, and with the help of screens, and hangings, and partial shutters, something like an homage is rendered to public decency, and the private approach is cunningly provided, and all the symptoms of sneaking and conscious impropriety are spread over the face of this guilty indulgence—let us not wonder, though the strength of example has forced its way through the

impotency of all these wretched barriers, and that the reading-rooms of sedition and infidelity are now open every sabbath, for the behoof of our general population. Should the high-bred city gentleman hold it foul scorn to have the raillery of the pulpit thus let loose upon his habits, or that any person who fills it should so presume to tread upon his privileges—let us no longer wonder, if this very language, and uttered, too, in this very spirit, be re-echoed by the sour and sturdy Radical, who, equal to his superior in the principle of ungodliness, only outpeers him in his expressions of contempt for the priesthood, and of impetuous defiance to all that wears the stamp of authority in the land. It is thus that the impiety of our upper classes now glares upon us from the people, with a still darker reflection of impiety back again; and that, in the general mind of our country, there is a suppressed but brooding storm, the first elements of which were injected by the men who now tremble the most under the dread of its coming violence.

It is the decay of vital godliness amongst us, that has brought on this great moral distemper. It is irreligion which palpably lies at the bottom of it. Could it only have confined its influences among the sons of wealth or of lettered infidelity, society might have been safe. But this was impossible; and now that it has broke forth on the wide and populous domain of humanity, it is seen that, while a slender and sentimental righteousness might have sufficed, at least, for this present world, and among those whom fortune has shielded from its adversities, it is only by that righteousness which is propped on the basis of piety, that the great mass of a nation's virtue can be upholden.

There is something in the histories of these London executions that is truly dismal.* It is like getting a glimpse into Pandæmonium; nor do we believe that, in the annals of human depravity, did ever stout hearted sinners betray more fierce and unfeeling hardihood. It is not that part of the exhibition which is merely revolting to sensitive nature that we are

now alluding to. It is not the struggle, and the death, and the shrouded operator, and the bloody heads that were carried around the scaffold, and the headless bodies of men who but one hour before, lifted their proud defiance to the God in whose presence the whole decision of their spirits must by this time have melted away. It is the moral part of the exhibition that is so appalling. It is the firm desperado step with which they ascended to the place of execution. It is the undaunted scowl which they cast on the dread apparatus before them. It is the frenzied and bacchanalian levity with which they bore up their courage to the last, and earned, in return, the applause of thousands as fierce and as frenzied as themselves. It is the unquelled daring of the man who laughed, and who sung, and who cheered the multitude, ere he took his leap into eternity, and was cheered by the multitude, rending the air with approbation back again. These are the doings of infidelity. These are the genuine exhibitions of the popular mind, after that Religion has abandoned it. It is neither a system of unchristian morals, nor the meagre Christianity of those who deride, as methodistical, all the peculiarities of our Faith, that will recall our neglected population. There is not one other expedient by which you will recover the olden character of England, but by going forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ among its people. Nothing will subdue them but that regenerating power which goes along with the faith of the New Testament. And nothing will charm away the alienation of their spirits, but their belief in the overtures of redeeming mercy.

But we may expatiate too long; and let us therefore hasten to a close, with a few brief and categorical announcements, which we shall simply leave with you as materials for your own consideration.

First, though social virtue, and loyalty, which is one of its essential ingredients, may exist in the upper walks of life apart from godliness—yet godliness, in the hearts of those who have the brunt of all the common and popular temptations to stand against, is the main and effective hold that we have upon them for securing the righteousness of their lives.

* Executions of men who had conspired for the murder of the Ministers of State.

Secondly, the despisers of godliness are the enemies of the true interest of our nation; and it is possible that, under the name of Methodism, that very instrument may be put away which can alone recall the departing virtues of our land.

Thirdly, where godliness exists, loyalty exists; and no plausible delusion—no fire of their own kindling, lighted at the torch of false or spurious patriotism, will ever eclipse the light of this plain authoritative scripture—"Honor the King, and meddle not with those who are given to change."

But, again, such is the power of Christianity, that, even though partially introduced in the whole extent of its saving and converting influences, it may work a general effect on the civil and secular virtues of a given neighbourhood. It is thus that Christianity may only work the salvation of a few, while it raises the standard of morality among many. The reflex influence of one sacred character upon the vicinity of his residence may soften, and purify, and overawe many others, even where it does not spiritualize them. This is encouragement to begin with. It lets us perceive that, even before a great spiritual achievement has been finished, a kind of derived and moral influence may have widely and visibly spread among the population. It is thus that Christians are the salt of the earth; and we know not how few they are that may preserve society at large from falling into dissolution. It is because there are so very few among us, that our nation stands on the brink of so fearful an emergency. Were there fewer, our circumstances would be still more fearful; and if, instead of this, there were a few more, the national virtue may re-attain all the lustre it ever had, even while a small fraction of our people are spiritual men. It is in this way, that we would defend those who so sanguinely count on the power of Christianity, from the imputation of being at all romantic in their hopes or undertakings. It may take ages ere their ultimate object, which is to generalize the spirit and character of the millennium in our world, be accomplished. But if there were just a tendency to go forth among our people on the errand of Christianizing them, and that tendency were not thwarted by the

enmity and intolerance of those who revile, and discourage, and set at nought all the activities of religious zeal, we should not be surprised though, in a few years, a resurrection were witnessed amongst us of all the virtues that establish and that exalt a nation.

But, lastly, alarming as the aspect of the times is, and deeply tainted and imbedded as the minds of many are with infidelity; and widely spread as the habit has become of alienation from all the ordinances of religion; and sullen as the contempt may be, wherewith the hardy blasphemer of Christianity would hearken to its lessons, and eye its ministers, yet even he could not so withstand the honest and persevering good-will of one on whom there stood, visibly announced, the single-hearted benevolence of the gospel, as either to refuse him a tribute of kindness, when he met him on the street, or as to reject, with incivility and disdain, the advances he made upon his own family. Even though he should sternly refuse to lend himself to any of the processes of a moral and spiritual operator, yet it is a fact experimentally known, that he will not refuse to lend his children. The very man who, unpitying of himself, danced and sung on the borders of that abyss which was to engulf him in a lake of vengeance for ever, even he had about him a part of surviving tenderness, and he could positively weep when he thought of his family. He who, had he met a minister of state would have murdered him, had he met the sabbath-school teacher who ventured across his threshold, and simply requested the attendance of his children, might have tried to bear a harsh and repulsive front against him, but would have found it to be impossible. Here is a feeling which even the irreligion of the times has not obliterated, and it has left, as it were, an open door of access, through which we might at length find our way to the landing-place of a purer and better generation. We hear much of the olden time, when each parent presided over the religion of his own family, and acted, every sabbath evening, the patriarch of Christian wisdom among the inmates of his own dwelling-place. How is it that this beautiful picture is again to be realized? Is it by persuasives, however forcible, addressed

to those who never listen to them? Is it by the well-told regrets of a mere indolent sentimentalism? Is it by lifting up a voice, that will die in distance away, long ere it reach that mighty population who lie so remote from all our churches, and from all our ordinances? Are we to be interdicted from bending the twig with a strength which we do have, because others require of us to bend the impracticable tree, with a strength which we do not have? The question is a practical one, and should be met experimentally;—how is the olden time to be brought back again? Is it by merely looking back upon it with an eye of tasteful contemplation; or, is it by letting matters alone; or, is it by breathing indignation and despite against all the efforts of religious philanthropy; or, is it by disdainful obloquy against those who do something, on the part of those that do nothing? Who, in a future generation, will be the likeliest parents for setting up the old system? the children who now run neglected through the streets, or those who, snatched from sabbath profanation, receive a weekly training among the decencies and the docilities of a religious school? It is not the experimental truth upon this question, that the amount of family religion is lessened, under such an arrangement, in those houses where it had a previous existence; but that, instead of this, it is often established in houses where it was before unknown. It is true, that unless a sabbath-school apparatus be animated by the Spirit of God, it will not bear with effect on the morals of the rising generation; but still it is by the frame-work of some apparatus or other that the Spirit works: and we deem that the likeliest and the best devised for the present circumstances of our country, which can secure, and that immediately, the most abundant strength of application on tender and susceptible childhood.*

* Had not the Sermon been extended to so great a length, its Author might have entered a little more into detail on the operation and advantage of the sabbath-school system; an omission, however, which he less regrets, as, in the work of supplying it, he would have done little more than repeated what he has published on the subject, in a more express form.

In conclusion, we may advert to a certain class of society, now happily on the decline, who are fearful of enlightening the poor; and would rather that every thing was suffered to remain in the quiescence of its present condition; and though the Bible may be called the key to the kingdom of Heaven, yet, associating, as they do, the turbulence of the people with the supposed ascent that they have made in the scale of information, would not care so to depress them beneath the level of their present scanty literature, as virtually to deny them the use and the possession of the Oracles of God. Such is the unfeeling policy of those who would thus smother all the capabilities of humble life, and lay an interdict on the cultivation of human souls, and barter away the eternity of the lower orders, for the temporal safety and protection of the higher, and, in the false imagination, that to sow knowledge is to sow sedition in the land, look suspiciously and hardly on any attempt thus to educate the inferior classes of society. It is well that these bugbears are rapidly losing their influ-

The same remark applies to the cursory allusion that he has made on that melancholy topic, the lack of city churches, and the unwieldy extent of city parishes; he having, elsewhere, both delivered the arithmetical statements upon this topic, and also ventured to suggest the gradual remedy that might be provided for the restoration of church-going habits among the people of our great towns.

He takes the opportunity which this Note affords him, of referring the attention of his readers to a truly Christian charge, drawn up by the Methodist body in November 1819, on the subject of the political discontents which then agitated the country. It was circulated, he understands, among the members and ministers of that connexion, and ought for ever to dissolve the imagination of any alliance between the spirit of methodism, and the spirit of a factious or disaffected turbulence.

He would further observe, that the mighty influence of a sabbath on the general moral and religious character of the people, may serve to vindicate the zeal of a former generation about this one observance; a zeal which is regarded by many as altogether misplaced and puritanical. Without entering into the question, whether the Law of the Country should interfere to shield this day from outward and visible profanation, it may at least be affirmed, that the opinion of those who rate the alternations of Christianity in a land, by the fluctuating regards which, from one age to another, are rendered to the Christian Sabbath, is deeply founded on the true philosophy of our nature.

ence—and we know not how far this is due to our late venerable monarch, who, acting like a father for the good of his people, certainly did much to rebuke this cruel and unfeeling policy away from his empire. His saying, that he hoped to see the time, when there should not be a poor child in his dominions who was not taught to read the Bible, deserves to be enshrined among the best and the wisest of all the memorabilia of other days. It needs only the Saxon antiquity of Alfred, to give it a higher place than is given to all that is recorded even of his wisdom. We trust that it will be embodied in the remembrance of our nation, and be handed down as a most precious English tradition, for guiding the practice of English families; and that, viewed as the memorial of a Patriot King, it will supplant the old association that obtained between knowledge and rebellion, and raise a new association in its place, between the cause of education and the cause of loyalty. Be assured, that it is not because the people know too much, that they ever become the willing subjects of any factious or unprincipled demagogue—it is just because they know too little. It is just because ignorance is the field on which the quackery of a political impostor ever reaps its most abundant harvest. It is this which arms him with all his superiority; and the way eventually to protect society from the fermentation of such agitators, is to scatter throughout the mass as much knowledge and information as will equalize the people to the men who bear them no other regard, than as the instruments of uproar and overthrow. No coercion can so keep down the cause of scholarship, as that there shall not be a sufficient number, both of educated and unprincipled men, to plot the disturbance and overthrow of all the order that exists in society. You cannot depress these to the level of popular ignorance, in a country where schools have not been universally instituted. You cannot unscholar demagogues down to the level of an untaught multitude; and the only remaining alternative is, to scholar the multitude up to

the level of demagogues. Let Scotland,* even in spite of the exhibition that she has recently made, be compared with the other two great portions of our British territory, and it will be seen, historically, as well as argumentatively, that the way to tranquillize a people is not to enthrall but to enlighten them. It is, in short, with general knowledge as it is with the knowledge of Christianity. There are incidental evils attendant on the progress of both; but a most glorious consummation will be the result of the perfecting of both. Let us go forth, without restraint, on the work of evangelizing the world, and the world, under such a process, will become the blissful abode of Christian and well-ordered families. And let us go forth, with equal alacrity, to the work of spreading education among our own people; and, instead of bringing on an anticipated chaos, will it serve to grace and to strengthen all the bulwarks of security in the midst of us. The growth of intelligence and of moral worth among the people, will at length stamp upon them all that majesty of which they will ever be ambitious; and, instead of a precarious tranquillity, resting upon the basis of an ignorance ever open to the influences of delusion, will the elements of peace, and truth, and righteousness, be seen to multiply along with the progress of learning in our land.

* What we regret most in our late disturbances, is, that it may serve to foment the prejudice which still exists against the cause of popular education. It is worthy of remark, that, of late years, both in Glasgow and Paisley, this cause has been most lamentably on the decline; inasmuch that we will venture to say, there is no town population in Scotland which has become so closely assimilated, in this respect, to the manufacturing population of our sister country. Any danger which may be conceived to arise from education, proceeds not from the extent of it in any one class of society, but from the inequality of it between people either of the same, or of different classes; thus rendering one part of the population more manageably subservient to any designing villany or artifice that may exist in another part. The clear and direct way of restoring this inequality, is, not to darken and de-grade all, which is impracticable, but, as much as possible, to enlighten all.

SERMON XLII.

On the Consistency between the Efficacy of Prayer, and the Uniformity of Nature.

¹ Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,—and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”—2 PETER iii. 3, 4.

THE infidelity spoken of in our text, had for its basis the stability of nature, or rested on the imagination that her economy was perpetual and everlasting—and every day of nature's continuance added to the strength and inveteracy of this delusion. In proportion to the length of her past endurance, was there a firm confidence felt in her future perpetuity. The longer that nature lasted, or the older she grew, her final dissolution was held to be all the more improbable—till nothing seemed so unlikely to the atheistical men of that period, as the intervention of a God with a system of visible things, which looked so unchanging and so indestructible. It was like the contest of experience and faith, in which the former grew every day stronger and stronger, and the latter weaker and weaker, till at length it was wholly extinguished; and men in the spirit of defiance or ridicule, braved the announcement of a Judge who should appear at the end of the world, and mocked at the promise of His coming.

But there is another direction which infidelity often takes, beside the one specified in our text. It not only perverts to its own argument, what experience tells of the stability of nature; and so concludes that we have nothing to fear from the mandate of a God, laying sudden arrest and termination on its processes. It also perverts what experience tells of the uniformity of nature; and so concludes that we have nothing either to hope or to fear, from the intervention of a God during the continuance or the currency of these processes. Beside making nature independent of God for its duration, which they hold to be everlasting; they would also make nature to be independent of God for its course, which they hold to be unalterable. They tell us of the rigid and

undeviating constancy from which nature is never known to fluctuate; and that in her immutable laws, in the march and regularity of her orderly progressions, they can discover no trace whatever of any interposition by the finger of a Deity. It is not only that things continue to be as they were from the beginning of creation; but that all things continue to act, as they did from the beginning of the creation—causes and effects following each other in wonted and unvariable succession, and the same circumstances ever issuing in the same consequents as before. With such a system of things, there is no room in their creed or in their imagination, for the actings of a God. To their eye, nature proceeds by the sure footsteps of a mute and unconscious materialism; nor can they recognise in its evolutions those characters of the spontaneous or the wilful, which bespeak a living God to have had any concern with it. He may have formed the mundane system at the first: he may have devised for matter its properties and its laws: but these properties, they tell us, never change; these laws never are relaxed or receded from. And so we may as well bid the storm itself cease from its violence, as supplicate the unseen Being whom we fancy to be sitting aloft and to direct the storm. This they hold to be a superstitious imagination, which all their experience of nature and of nature's immutability forbids them to entertain. By the one infidelity, they have banished a God from the throne of judgment. By the other infidelity, they have banished a God from the throne of providence. By the first they tell us, that a God has nought to do with the consummation of nature; or, rather, that nature has no consummation. By the second, they tell us that a God has nought to do with the history of nature. The

first infidelity would expunge from our creed the doctrine of a coming judgment. The second would expunge from it the doctrine of a present and a special providence, and the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer.

Now this last, though not just the infidelity of the text—yet being very much the same with it in principle—we hold it sufficiently textual, though we make it, and not the other, the subject of our present argument. We admit the uniformity of visible nature—a lesson forced upon us by all experience. We admit that as far as our observation extends, nature has always proceeded in one invariable order—inasmuch that the same antecedents have, without exception, been ever followed up by the same consequents; and that, saving the well accredited miracles of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, all things have so continued since the beginning of the creation.

We admit that, never in our whole lives, have we witnessed as the effect of man's prayer, any infringement made on the known laws of the universe; or that nature by receding from her constancy, to the extent that we have discovered it, has ever in one instance yielded to his supplicating cry. We admit that by no importunity from the voice of faith, or from any number and combination of voices, have we seen an arrest or a shift laid on the ascertained courses, whether of the material or the mental economy; or a single fulfilment of any sort, brought about in contravention, either to the known properties of any substances, or to the known principles of any established succession in the history of nature. These are our experiences; and we are aware the very experiences which ministered to the infidelity of our text, and do minister to the practical infidelity of thousands in the present day—yet in opposition to, or rather notwithstanding these experiences, universal and unexcepted though they be, do we affirm the doctrine of a superintending providence, as various and as special, as our necessities—the doctrine of a perpetual interposition from above, as manifoldly and minutely special, as are the believing requests which ascend from us to Heaven's throne.

We feel the importance of the subject, both in its application to the judgment

that now hangs over us,* and to the infidelity of the present times. But we cannot hope to be fully understood, without your most strenuous and sustained attention—an attention, however, which we request may be kept up to the end, even though certain parts in the train of observation may not have been followed by you. What some may lose in those passages, where the subject is presented in the form of a general argument, may again be recovered, when we attempt to establish our doctrine by scripture, or to illustrate it by instances taken from the history of human affairs. In one way or other, you may seize on the reigning principle of that explanation, by which we endeavour to reconcile the efficacy of prayer with the uniformity of experience. And our purpose shall have been obtained, if we can at all help you to a greater confidence in the reality of a superintending providence, to a greater comfort and confidence in the act of making your requests known unto God.

Let us first give our view in all its generality, in the hope that any obscurity which may rest upon it in this form, will be dissipated or cleared up, in the subsequent appeals that we shall make, both to the lessons of the Bible, and to the lessons of human experience.

We grant then, we unreservedly grant, the uniformity of visible nature; and now let us compute how much, or how little, it amounts to. Grant of all our progressions, that, as far as our eye can carry us, they are invariable; and then let us only reflect how short a way we can trace any of them upwards. In speculating on the origin of an event, we may be able to assign the one which immediately preceded, and term it the proximate cause; or even ascend by two or three footsteps, till we have discovered some anterior event which we term the remote cause. But how soon do we arrive at the limit of possible investigation, beyond which if we attempt to go, we lose ourselves among the depths and the obscurities of a region that is unknown? Observation may conduct us a certain length backwards in the train of causes and effects; but, after having done its uttermost, we

* This sermon was preached during the prevalence of cholera.

feel, that, above and beyond its loftiest place of ascent, there are still higher steps in the train which we vainly try to reach, and find them inaccessible.

It is even so throughout all philosophy. After having arrived at the remotest cause which man can reach his way to, we shall ever find there are higher and remoter causes still, which distance all his powers of research, and so will ever remain in deepest concealment from his view. Of this higher part of the train he has no observation. Of these remoter causes, and their mode of succession, he can positively say nothing. For aught he knows, they may be under the immediate control of higher beings in the universe; or, like the upper part of a chain, a few of whose closing links are all that is visible to us, they may be directly appended to the throne, and at all times subject to the instant pleasure of a prayer-hearing God. And it may be by a responsive touch at the higher, and not the lower part of the progression, that He answers our prayers. It may be not by an act of intervention among those near and visible causes, where intervention would be a miracle; it may be by an unseen, but not less effectual act of intervention, among the remote and therefore the occult causes, that He adapts Himself to the various wants and meets the various petitions of His children. If it be in the latter way that He conducts the affairs of His daily government—then may He rule by a providence as special, as are the needs and the occasions of His family; and, with an ear open to every cry, might He provide for all and administer to all, without one infringement on the uniformity of visible nature. If the responsive touch be given at the lower part of the chain, then the answer to prayer is by miracle, or by a contravention to some of the known sequences of nature. But if the responsive touch be given at a sufficiently higher part of the chain, then the answer is as effectually made, but not by miracle, and without violence to any one succession of history or nature which philosophy has ascertained—because the reaction to the prayer strikes at a place that is higher than the highest investigations of philosophy. It is not by a visible movement within the region of human observation, but by an invisible

movement in the transcendental region above it, that the prayer is met and responded to. The Supernal Power of the Universe, the mighty and unseen Being who sits aloft, and has been significantly styled the Cause of causes—He, in immediate contact with the upper extremities of every progression, there puts forth an overruling influence which tells and propagates downwards to the lower extremities; and so, by an agency placed too remote either for the eye of sense or for all the instruments of science to discover, may God, in answer if He choose to prayer, fix and determine every series of events—of which nevertheless all that man can see is but the uniformity of the closing footsteps—a few of the last causes and effects following each other in their wonted order. It is thus that we reconcile all the experience which man has of nature's uniformity, with the effect and significancy of his prayers to the God of nature. It is thus that at one and the same time, do we live under the care of a presiding God, and among the regularities of a harmonious universe.

These views are in beautiful accordance with the simple and sublime theology unfolded to us in the book of Job—where, whether in the movements of the animated kingdom below, or the great evolutions that take place in the upper regions of the atmosphere, the phenomena and the processes of visible nature are sketched with a masterly hand. It is in the midst of these scenes and impressive descriptions, that we are told—"lo these are parts of his ways." The translation does not say what parts; but the original does. They are but the lower parts—the endings as it were of the different processes—the last and lowest footsteps, which are all that science can investigate; and of which, throughout the whole of her limited ascent, she has traced the uniformity. But she has traced it a very short way: or, in the language of the patriarch, who estimates aright the achievements of philosophy—how little a portion is heard of Him—how few the known footsteps which are beneath the veil to the unknown steps and workings which are above it; and so, the thunder, or rather the inward and secret movements of His power, who can understand?

“He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds: and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?” Job xxvi. 8—14.

The last sentence of this magnificent passage were better translated thus—These are the parts, or the lower endings of his ways;—but the secret working of his power, who can understand?

That part of the economy of the divine administration, in virtue of which God works, not without but by secondary causes, is frequently intimated in the book of Psalms.

“Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire.” Ps. civ. 4.

Or, as it might have been translated—“Who maketh the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his servant.”

But without the aid of any emendations in our version, this subserviency of visible nature to the invisible God, is distinctly laid before us in the following passages.

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

He raises the tempest, not without the wind, but by the wind. In the one way, it would have been a miracle; in the other way it is alike effectual, but without any change in the properties or laws of visible nature—without what we commonly understand by a miracle. He does not bring the vessel against the wind to its desired haven; but he makes the storm a calm, and so the waves thereof are still. Our Saviour also bade the winds into peace; and the miracle there lay in the effect following on the heard utterance of His voice. A voice no less effectual though unheard by us, overrules at all times the working of nature’s elements; and brings the ordinary processes, as well as the marked and miraculous exception to them, under the control of a divine agency.

“Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of the treasuries.” Psalm cxxxv. 6, 7.

Here, without any change of translation, we are told of the subserviency of the visible instruments, to the invisible but real agency of Him who wields them at His pleasure. In this passage, the winds are plainly represented to us as the messengers of God, and the flaming fire as his servant. He changes no properties, and no visible processes—working, not without the wind, but by it—not without the electric matter, but by it—not without the rain, but by it—not without the vapour, but by it. Let the philosopher tell how far back he can go, in exploring the method and order of these respective agencies. Then we have only to point further back and ask—on what evidence he can tell, that the fiat and the finger of a God are not there. We grant the observed order to be invariable, save when God chooses to interpose by miracle. But whether he does or not—from that chamber of his hidden operations, which philosophy has not found its way to, can he so direct all, so subordinate all, that whatever the Lord pleases, that does he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

“Praise the Lord from the earth, ye

dragons, and all deeps; Fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word." Psalm cxlviii. 7, 8.

The stormy wind fulfilleth his word.

Our last example shall be from the New Testament. "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 17.

This last example will prepare you to go along with one of the particular instances we are just to bring forward, of a special prayer met by a special fulfilment.

We are thus enabled to perceive what the respective provinces are of philosophy and faith. Every event in nature or history, has a cause in some prior event that went before it, and that again in another, and that again in another still higher than itself in this scale of precedency; and so might we climb our ascending way from cause to cause, from consequent to antecedent—till the investigation has been carried upwards, from the farthest possible verge of human discovery. There it is that the domain of observation or of philosophy terminates; but we mistake, if we think that there the progression, whose terms or whose footsteps we have traced thus far, also terminates. Beyond this limit we cannot track the pathway of causation—not because the pathway ceases, but because we have lost sight of it—having now retired from view among the depths and mysteries of an unknown region, which we, with our bounded faculties, cannot enter. This may be termed the region of faith—placed as it were above the region of experience. The things which are done in the higher, have an overruling influence, by lines of transmission, on all that happens in the lower—yet without one breach or interruption to the uniformity of visible nature. Whatever is done in the transcendental region—be it by the influence of prayer; by the immediate finger of God; by the ministry of angels; by the spontaneous movements, whether of displeasure or of mercy above, responding to the sins or to the supplicating cries that ascend from earth's inhabitants below—that will pass by a descending influence into the palpable regions of sense and observation—yet, from the moment it comes within its limits, will it proceed without the sem-

blance of a miracle, but by the march and the movement of nature's regularity, to its final consummation. God hath in wisdom ordained a regimen of general laws; and, that man might gather from the memory of the past, those lessons of observation which serve for the guidance of the future, He hath enacted that all those successions shall be invariable, which have their place and their fulfilment within the world of sensible experience. Yet God has not, on that account, made the world independent of Himself. He keeps a perpetual hold on all its events and processes notwithstanding. He does not dissever Himself, for a single instant, from the government and the guardianship of His own universe; and can still, notwithstanding all we see of nature's rigid uniformity, adapt the forthgoings of His power to all the wants and all the prayers of His dependent family. For this purpose, He does not need to stretch forth His hand on the inferior and the visible links of any progression, so as to shift the known successions of experience; or at all to intermeddle with the lessons and the laws of this great schoolmaster. He may work in secret, and yet perform all His pleasure—not by the achievement of a miracle on nature's open platform; but by the touch of one or other of those master springs, which lie within the recesses of her inner laboratory. There, and at His place of supernatural command by the fountain heads of influence, He can turn whithersoever He will the machinery of our world, and without the possibility of human eye of detecting the least infringement on any of its processes—at once upholding the regularity of visible nature, and the supremacy of nature's invisible God.

But we are glad to make our escape, and now to make it conclusively, from the obscurer part of our reasoning on this subject—although, most assuredly, these are not the times for passing it wholly by; or for withholding aught which can make in favour of the much derided cause of humble and earnest piety. But, instead of propounding our doctrine in the terms of a general argument, let us try the effect of a few special instances—by which, perhaps, we might more readily gain the consent of your understanding to our views.

When the sigh of the midnight storm sends fearful agitation into a mother's heart, as she thinks of her sailor boy, now exposed to its fury, on the waters of a distant ocean—these stern disciples of a hard and stern infidelity would, on this notion of a rigid and impracticable constancy in nature, forbid her prayers—holding them to be as in potent and vain, though addressed to the God who has all the elements in his hand, as if lifted up with senseless importunity to the raving elements themselves. Yet nature would strongly prompt the aspiration; and, if there be truth in our argument, there is nothing in the constitution of the universe to forbid its accomplishment. God might answer the prayer, not by unsettling the order of secondary causes—not by reversing any of the wonted successions that are known to take place in the ever-restless ever-heaving atmosphere—not by sensible miracle among those nearer footsteps which the philosopher has traced; but by the touch of an immediate hand among the deep recesses of materialism, which are beyond the ken of all its instruments. It is thence that the Sovereign of nature might bid the wild uproar of the elements into silence. It is there that the virtue comes out of Him, which passes like a winged messenger from the invisible to the visible; and at the threshold of separation between these two regions, impresses the direction of the Almighty's will on the remotest cause which science can mount her way to. From this point in the series, the path of descent along the line of nearer and proximate causes may be rigidly invariable; and in respect of the order, the precise undeviating order, wherewith they follow each other, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The heat, and the vapour, and the atmospherical precipitates, and the consequent moving forces by which either to raise a new tempest or to lay an old one—all these may proceed, and without one hair-breadth of deviation, according to the successions of our established philosophy—yet each be but the obedient messenger of that voice, which gave forth its command at the fountain-head of the whole operation; which commissioned the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, and made lightnings for the

rain, and brought the wind out of his treasuries. These are the palpable steps of the process; but an unseen influence, behind the farthest limit of man's boasted discoveries, may have set them agoing. And that influence may have been accorded to prayer—the power that moves Him, who movesthe universe; and who, without violence to the known regularities of nature, can either send forth the hurricane over the face of the deep or recall it at His pleasure. Such is the joyful persuasion of faith, and proud philosophy cannot disprove it. A woman's feeble cry may have overruled the elemental war; and hushed into silence this wild frenzy of the winds and the waves; and evoked the gentler breezes from the cave of their slumbers; and wafted the vessel of her dearest hopes, and which held the first and and fondest of her earthly treasures, to its desired haven.

And so of other prayers. It is not without instrumentality, but by means of it, that they are answered. The fulfilment is preceded by the accustomed series of cause and effects; and preceded as far upward, as the eye of man can trace the pedigree of sensible causation. Were it by a break anywhere in the traceable part of this series that the prayer was answered, then its fulfilment would be miraculous. But without a miracle the prayer is answered as effectually. Thus, for example, is met the cry of a people under famine, for a speedy and plenteous harvest—not by the instant appearance of the ripened grain, at the bidding of a voice from heaven—not preternaturally cherished into maturity, in the midst of storms; but ushered onwards, by a grateful succession of shower and sunshine, to a prosperous consummation. An abundant harvest is granted to prayer—yet without violence, either to the laws of the vegetable physiology, or to any of the known laws by which the alterations of the weather are determined. It must be acknowledged by every philosopher, how soon it is that we arrive in both departments on the confines of deepest mystery; and, let the constancy of patent and palpable nature be as unaltered and unalterable as it may, God reserves to Himself the place of mastery and command, whether among the arcana of vegetation or the depths of meteorology. He

may at once permit a most rigid uniformity to the visible workings of nature's mechanism—while among its invisible, which are also its antecedent workings, He retains that station of preeminence and power, whence He brings all things to pass according to His pleasure. It is not by sending bread from the upper store-houses of the firmament, that He answers this prayer. It is by sending rain and fruitful seasons. The intermediate machinery of nature is not cast aside, but pressed into the service; and the prayer is answered by a secret touch from the finger of the Almighty, which sets all its parts and all its processes agoing. With the eye of sense, man sees nothing but nature revolving in her wonted cycles, and the months following each other in bright and beautiful succession. In the eye of faith, ay and of sound philosophy, every year of smiling plenty upon earth is a year crowned with the goodness of heaven.

But to touch on that which more immediately concerns us, let us now instance prayer for health. We ask, if here philosophy has taken possession of the whole domain, and left no room for the prerogatives and the exercise of faith—no hope for prayer? Has the whole intermediate space between the first cause and the ultimate phenomena, been so thoroughly explored; and the rigid uniformity of every footstep in the series been so fixed and ascertained by observation, as to preclude the rationality of prayer, and leave it without a meaning, because without the possibility of a fulfilment? Where is the physician or the physiologist who can tell, that he has made the ascent from one prognostic or one predisposition to another—till he reached even to the primary fountain-head of that influence, which either medicates or distempers the human frame; and found throughout an adamantine chain of necessity, not to be broken by the sufferer's imploring cry? We ask the guardians of our health, how far upon the pathway of causation, the discoveries of medical science have carried them; and whether, above and beyond their farthest look into the mysteries of our framework, there are not higher mysteries; where a God may work in secret and the hand of the Omnipotent be stretched forth

to heal or destroy? It is thence, He may answer prayer. It is from this summit of ascendancy, that He may direct all the processes of the human constitution—yet without violating in any instance, the uniformity of the few last and visible footsteps. Because science has traced, and so far determined this uniformity, she has not therefore exiled God from His own universe: She has not forced the Deity to quit His hold of its machinery, or to forego by one iota the most perfect command of all its evolutions. His superintendence is as close and continuous and special, as if all things were done by the visible intervention of his hand. Without superstition, with the fullest recognition of science in all its prerogatives and all its glories—might we feel our immediate dependence on God; and, even in this our philosophic day, and notwithstanding all that philosophy has made known to us, might we still assert and vindicate the higher philosophy of prayer—asking of God, as patriarchs and holy men of old did before us, for safety and sustenance and health and all things.

And if ever in the dealings of God with the people of the earth, if ever science had less of the territory and faith had more of it, it is in that undisclosed mystery which still hangs over us; which now for many months has shed baleful influences on your crowded city; and where of no man can tell whether in another day or another hour, it might not descend with fell sloop into the midst of his own family—entering there with rude unceremonious footstep, and hurrying to one of its rapid and inglorious funerals the dearest of its inmates. Never on any other theme did philosophy make more entire demonstration of her own helplessness; and perhaps at the very first footsteps of the investigation, or on the question of the proximate cause, the controversy is loudest of all. But however justly of the proximate cause discovery may be made, or however reinotely among the anterior causes the investigation might be carried, never will proud philosophy be able to annul the intervention of a God, or purchase to herself the privilege of mocking at the poor man's prayer. Indeed, amid the exuberance and variety of speculation on this unsettled and unknown subject, there was one remote cause assigned for

this pestilent visitation, which, so far from shutting out, rather suggests and that most forcibly the intervention of a God immediately before it. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria: and they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes."* We hope to have made it plain to you, let this or any other cause be found the true one, that, however high the path of discovery may have been traced, yet higher still there is place for the finger of a God above to regulate all the designs of a special providence, and to move in conformity with all the accepted prayers of His family below. But among the scoffers of our latter day, even in the absence or the want of all discovery, the finger of a God is disowned; and it seems to mark how resolute and at the same time how hopeless is the infidelity of modern times, that, just in proportion to our ignorance of all the secondary or the sensible causes, is our haughty refusal of any homage to the first cause. It is passing strange of this disease, that, after having baffled every attempt to find out its dependence on ought that is on earth, the idea of its dependence on the will of Heaven should of all others have been laughed most impiously to scorn. The voice of derision and defiance was first heard in our high places; and thence it passed, as if by infection, into general society. And so, many have disowned the power and the will of the Deity in this visitation. They most unphilosophically, we think, as well as impiously have spurned at prayer.

But we cannot pass away from this part of our subject, without adverting to a recent event, the thought of which is at present irresistibly obtruded on us, and by which this parish and congregation but a few weeks ago have been deprived of one of the most conspicuous of our office-bearers—one who constitutionally the kindest and most indulgent of men, was the most alive of all I ever knew to the wants and the miseries of our common nature; and who finely alive to all

the impulses and soft touches of humanity, laboured night and day in the vocation of doing good continually. But, instead of saying that he laboured, I should say that he luxuriated in well doing; for never was a heart more attuned to ready and responsive agreement with the calls of benevolence than his, and sooner would I believe of nature that she had receded from her constancy, than of him that e'er

"He looked unmoved on misery's languid eye,
Or heard her sinking voice without a sigh."

Of all the recollections which the friends either of my youth or of my manhood have left behind them in this land of dying men, there is none more beautifully irradiated—whether I look back on the mildness of his christian worth, or on those sensibilities of an open and generous and finely attuned spirit, which gives such a charm to human companionship. And as the second great law is like unto the first; so that love of his which went forth so diffusively amongst his fellows upon earth, we humbly hope, was at once the indication and the consequent of a love that ascended with high and habitual aspiration to God in heaven. It was through a brief and tremendous agony that he was carried from the world of sense to the world of spirits; and yet it is a happiness to be told that the faith and hope of the gospel lighted up a halo over his expiring moments, and that, ere death had closed his eyes, he through nearly an hour of audible prayer gave his last testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.*

But to recall ourselves from this theme of sadness, we trust you will now understand of every event in nature or history, that each in the order of causation is preceded by a train which went before it, and that man's observations can extend more or less a certain way along this train, till they are lost in the undiscovered and at length undiscoverable recesses which are placed beyond the cognizance of the human faculties. Now it is because of the higher and unknown part which belongs to every such series

* This note refers to John Wilson, Esq. Silk merchant Glasgow, who was Kirk Treasurer of St. John's, and to the deep regret of all who knew him, was carried off by cholera in the neighbourhood of Glasgow.

* Isaiah vii. 18, 19.

that we bid you respect the lessons of piety, for God hath not so constructed the universe as to remove it from the hold of His own special management and superintendence; and therefore, not in one thing the Bible tells us, but in every thing we should make our requests known unto God. But again, it is because of the lower and the known or ascertained and strictly uniform part which belongs to every series, that we bid you respect the lessons of experience; for God did not so conduct the affairs of His universe, as to thrust forth His invisible hand among its visible successions; but while He keeps a perpetual and ascendant hold among the springs of that machinery which is behind the curtain, He leaves untouched all those wonted regularities, which, on the stage of observation, are patent to human eyes. Now these are the respective domains of philosophy and faith, and this is the use to be made of them. Looking to the one, we learn the subordination of all nature. Looking to the other, we learn the constancy of visible nature. These great truths harmonize; and between the lessons which they give there is the fullest harmony. He who is enlightened and acts upon both is at one and the same time a man of prudence and a man of prayer; who never loses his confidence in God, yet, as awake to the manifestations of experience as if they were the manifestations of the divine will, never counts upon a miracle. He holds perpetual converse with heaven; yet shapes his earthly conduct by his earthly circumstances. In his habits of diligence he proceeds on the uniformity of visible nature, and he does accordingly. In his habits of devotion he knows that there is a visible power above which subordinates all nature, and he prays accordingly. He is neither the mystic who will not act, nor is he the infidel who will not pray. He knows how to combine both, or how to combine wisdom with piety—that rare and beautiful combination unknown to the world at large, yet realized by many a cottage patriarch, who, without attempting, without being capable in fact of any profound or philosophical adjustment between them, but on his simple understanding alone of Scripture lessons and Scripture examples, unites

the most strenuous diligence in the use of means, with the strictest dependence upon God. Without the combination of these two, there has been nothing great, nothing effective in the history of the church; and, on the other hand, we find that all the most illustrious, whether in philanthropy or in christian patriotism, from the apostle Paul to the highest names in the descending history of the world, as Augustine and Luther and Knox and Howard, that, superadding the wisdom of experience to a sense of deepest piety, they were at once men of performance and men of prayer.

But let us look for a moment to the highest example of all, even that of our Saviour when on earth; for in the history of His temptation, will the eye of the diligent observer recognize an application and a moral, which serve, we think very finely, to illustrate our whole argument.

The first proposal of the adversary was, that, because an hungered by the abstinence of forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, he should turn stones into bread; and the reply of our Saviour that “man liveth not by bread alone but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God” bespoke His confidence in that Supreme Power which overrules all nature. Now observe how this is followed up by the tempter—since such His confidence I may prevail upon Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, employing the very argument He just has used, even the overruling power of that God who can bear Him up by the intervention of angels lest he dash his foot against a stone. The reply “thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” tells us, that the same Being who overrules all nature, never interferes, but for some worthy and great purpose to thwart the established successions of visible nature; and that it is wrong, it is wanton, in any of his creatures so to act, as if he counted upon such an interference. It is a noble lesson for us never to traverse or neglect the means which experience hath told us are effectual for good; and never to brave, but at the call of imperious duty, the exposures which the same experience has told us, on our knowledge or recollection of Nature’s established processes, are followed up by evil. Our Saviour

would not, in defiance to the law of gravitation, cast himself off from that place of security which upheld Him against its power. And neither should we ever, though in defiance but to the probable law of contagion, or by what (to borrow a usual phrase) might well be termed a tempting of Providence, refuse those places or cast away those measures of security, that are found to protect us against the virulence of this destroyer. In a word, between the wisdom of piety and the wisdom of experience there is most profound harmony—unknown to the infidel, and so he hath cast off prayer; unknown to the fanatic, and so he hath cast prudence away from him.

And we appeal to you, my brethren, if there be not much in the state and recent history of our nation to confirm these views. We rejoiced in the appointment several months ago of a national fast, and that notwithstanding the contempt and annoyance of the many infidel manifestations to which the appointment had been exposed—hoping, as we then did, that it would meet with a dutiful and a general response from the people of the land; and perceiving afterwards, in our limited sphere, the obvious solemnity, and we trust in a goodly number of instances, the deep and heart-felt sacredness of its observation among our families. It is well that there should be a public and a prayerful recognition of God in the midst of us; and we have failed in our argument, we have failed, whether from the obscurity of its illustrations or the obscurity of its terms, in obtaining for it the sympathy of your understandings—if you perceive not, that, in the distinct relation of cause and effect, there is a real substantive connection between the supplications which ascend for health and safety from the midst of a land, and the actual warding off of disease and death from its habitations. But in fullest harmony with this it is also well, I would go farther and say there is no infringement upon deepest piety in pronouncing it indispensable—that while we invoke the Heavenly Agent who sitteth above for every effectual blessing, all the earthly means and earthly instruments should be in complete and orderly preparation. We are aware that in many places and on many occasions these have

been rebelled against.* And it but enhances the lesson, beside carrying a most impressive rebuke, both to the fanaticism of an ill-understood Christianity; and to the ignorant frenzy of an ill-educated and, in respect to the woeful deficiency both of churches and schools, we would say a neglected population—that just in those places where the offered help of the physician was most strenuously and most ungratefully resisted, and at times indeed by violence overborne, that there it was where the disease reasserted its power, and as if with the hand of an avenger shook menace and terror among the families. As if the same God who bids us in His word make request unto Him in all things, would furthermore tell us by His Providence, that, in no one thing will He permit a heedless invasion on the regularities of that course which He Himself has established; that with His own hand He ordained the footsteps of Nature, and He will chastise the presumption of those who shall think to contravene the ordinance; that experience is the school-master authorized by Him for the government and guidance of His family on earth, and that He will resent the outrage done to her authority whenever her lessons or her laws are wantonly violated.

In conclusion let us observe, that, on the one hand, we shall be glad if aught that has been said will help to conciliate our mere religionists to the lessons of experience and of sound philosophy; and, in opposition to those senseless prejudices, by which they have often brought the most unmerited derision and discredit on their own cause, we would remind them that it is not all philosophy which Scripture denounces, but only vain philosophy—it is not all science which it deprecates, but only the science falsely so called.

* In Edinburgh the metropolis of medical science, a vigorous system of expedients was instituted; and nothing could exceed the promptitude and the watchfulness and the activity, at a moment's call, wherewith the disease was met and repressed at every point of its outbreakings. And we cannot imagine a more striking demonstration for the importance of human agency, diligently operating on all the resources which Nature and experience have placed within our reach, than is furnished by a comparison between the perfection of our city arrangements, and the fewness of our city deaths.

On the other hand we should rejoice in witnessing the mere philosopher, or man of secular and experimental wisdom, more conciliated than he is to the lessons of Religion, and to that humble faith which is the great and actuating spirit of its observations and its pieties and its prayers. We have heard that the study of Natural Science disposes to Infidelity. But we feel persuaded that this is a danger only associated with a slight and partial, never with a deep and adequate and comprehensive view of its principles. It is very possible that the conjunction between science and scepticism may at present be

more frequently realised than in former days; but this is only because, in spite of all that is alleged about this our more enlightened day and more enlightened public, our science is neither so deeply founded nor of such firm and thorough staple as it wont to be. We have lost in depth what we have gained in diffusion—having neither the massive erudition, nor the gigantic scholarship, nor the profound and well-laid philosophy of a period that has now gone by; and it is to this that infidelity stands indebted for her triumphs among the scoffers and the superficialists of a half-learned generation.

SERMON XLII.

Heaven a Character and not a Locality.

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”—REV. xxii. 11.

Our first remark on this passage of Scripture, is, how very palpably and nearly it connects time with eternity. The character wherewith we sink into the grave at death, is the very character wherewith we shall re-appear on the day of resurrection. The character which habit has fixed and strengthened through life, adheres, it would seem, to the disembodied spirit, through the mysterious interval which separates the day of our dissolution from the day of our account—when it will again stand forth, the very image and substance of what it was, to the inspection of the Judge and the awards of the judgment-seat. The moral lineaments which be graven on the tablet of the inner man, and which every day of an unconverted life makes deeper and more indelible than before, will retain the very impress they have gotten—unaltered and uneffaced, by the transition from our present to our future state of existence. There will be a dissolution, and then a reconstruction of the body, from the sepulchral dust into which it had mouldered. But there will be neither a dissolution nor a renovation of the spirit, which, indestructible both in character and essence, will weather and

retain its identity, on the mid-way passage between this world and the next—so that at the time of quitting its earthly tenement we may say, that, if unjust now it will be unjust still, if filthy now it will be filthy still, if righteous now it will be righteous still, and if holy now it will be holy still.

Our second remark, suggested by the scripture now under consideration, is that there be many analogies of nature and experience, which even death itself does not interrupt. There is nought more familiar to our daily observation than the power and inveteracy of habit—inasmuch that any vicious propensity is strengthened by every new act of indulgence; any virtuous principle is more firmly established than before, by every new act of resolute obedience to its dictates. The law which connects the actings of boyhood, or of youth, with the character of manhood, is the identical, the unrevoked law which connects our actings in time with our character through eternity. The way in which the moral discipline of youth prepares for the honours and the enjoyments of a virtuous manhood, is the very way in which the moral and spiritual discipline of a whole life pre-

pires for a virtuous and happy immortality. And, on the other hand, the succession, as of cause and effect, from a profligate or a dishonest manhood, to a disgraced and worthless old age—is just the succession, also of cause and effect, between the misdeeds and the depravities of our history on earth, and an inheritance of worthlessness and wretchedness for ever. The law of moral continuity between the different stages of human life, is also the law of continuity between the two worlds—which even the death that intervenes does not violate. Be he a saint or a sinner, each shall be filled with the fruit of his own ways—so that when translated into their respective places of fixed and everlasting destination, the one shall rejoice through eternity in that pure element of goodness, which here he loved and aspired after; the other, a helpless, a degraded victim of those passions which lorded over him through life, shall be irrevocably doomed to that worst of torments and that worst of tyranny—the torment of his own accursed nature, the inexorable tyranny of evil.

Our third remark suggested by this scripture is, that it affords no very dubious perspective of the future heaven and the future hell of the New Testament. We are aware of the material images employed in scripture, and by which it bodies forth its representation of both—of the fire, and the brimstone, and the lake of living agony, and the gnashing of teeth, and the wailings, the ceaseless wailings of distress and despair unutterable, by which the one is set before us in characters of terror and most revolting hideousness—of the splendour, the spaciousness, the music, the floods of melody and sights of surpassing loveliness, by which the other is set before us in characters of bliss and brightness unperishable; with all that can regale the glorified senses of creatures, rejoicing for ever in the presence and before the throne of God. We stop not to inquire, and far less to dispute, whether these descriptions, in the plain meaning and very letter of them, are to be realized. But we hold that it would purge theology from many of its errors, and that it would guide and enlighten the practical Christianity of many honest inquirers—if the moral

character both of heaven and hell were more distinctly recognized, and held a more prominent place in the regards and contemplations of men. If it indeed be true that the moral, rather than the material, is the main ingredient, whether of the coming torment or the coming ecstasy—then the hell of the wicked may be said to have already begun, and the heaven of the virtuous may be said to have already begun. The one, in the bitterness of an unbinged and dissatisfied spirit, has a foretaste of the wretchedness before him; the other, in the peace and triumphant complacency of an approving conscience, has a foretaste of the happiness before him. Each is ripening for his own everlasting destiny; and whether in the depravities that deepen and accumulate on the character of the one, or in the graces that brighten and multiply upon the other—we see materials enough, either for the worm that dieth not, or for the pleasures that are for evermore.

But again, it may be asked, will spiritual elements alone suffice to make up, either the intense and intolerable wretchedness of a hell, or the intense beatitude of a heaven? For an answer to this question, let us first turn your attention to the former of these receptacles. And we ask you to think of the state of that heart in respect to sensation, which is the seat of a concentrated and all-absorbing selfishness, which feels for no other interest than its own, and holds no fellowship of truth or honesty, or confidence with the fellow-beings around it. The owner of such a heart may live in society; but, cut off as he is by his own sordid nature from the reciprocities of honourable feeling and good faith, he may be said to live an exile in the midst of it. He is a stranger to the day-light of the moral world; and, instead of walking abroad on an open platform of free and fearless communion with his fellows, he spends a cold and heartless existence in the hiding-place of his own thoughts. You mistake it, if you think of this creeping and ignoble creature, that he knows aught of the real truth or substance of enjoyment; or however successful he may have been in the wiles of his paltry selfishness, that a sincere or a solid satisfaction has been the result of it. On the contrary, if you enter his heart, you will there find a dis-

taste and disquietude in the lurking sense of its own worthlessness; and that discovered from the respect of society without, it finds no refuge within, where he is abandoned by the respect of his own conscience. It does not consist with moral nature, that there should be internal happiness or internal harmony, when the moral sense is made to suffer perpetual violence. A man of cunning and concealment, however dexterous, however triumphant in his worthless policy, is not at ease. The stoop, the downcast regards, the dark and sinister expression, of him who cannot lift up his head among his fellow men, or look his companions in the face, are the sensible proofs, that he who knows himself to be dishonest feels himself to be degraded; and the inward sense of dishonour which haunts and humbles him here, is but the commencement of that shame and everlasting contempt to which he shall awaken hereafter.

This, you will observe, is a purely moral chastisement; and, apart altogether from the infliction of violence or pain on the sentient economy, is enough to overwhelm the spirit that is exercised thereby. Let him then that is unjust now be unjust still; and, in stepping from time to eternity, he bears, in his own distempered bosom, the materials of his coming vengeance along with him. The character itself will be the executioner of its own condemnation; and when, instead of each suffering apart, the unrighteous are congregated together—as in the parable of the tares, where, instead of each plant being severally destroyed, the order is given to bind them up in bundles and burn them—we may be well assured, that, where the turbulence and disorder of an unrighteous society are superadded to those sufferings which prey in secrecy and solitude within the heart of each individual member, a ten-fold fiercer and more intolerable agony will ensue from it. The anarchy of a state, when the authority of its government is for a time suspended, forms but a feeble representation of that everlasting anarchy, when the unrighteous of all ages are let loose to act and react with unmitigated violence on each other. In this conflict of assembled myriads; this fierce and fell collision between the outrages of injustice

on the one side, and the outcries of resentment on the other; and, though no pain were inflicted, in this war of passions and of purposes, the passion and purpose of violence in one quarter calling forth the passion and the purpose of keenest vengeance back again—though no material or sentient agony were felt—though a war of disembodied spirits—yet in the wild tempest of emotions alone—the hatred, the fury, the burning recollection of injured rights, and the brooding thoughts of yet unfulfilled retaliation—in these, and these alone, do we behold the materials enough of a dire and dreadful pandemonium; and, apart from corporeal suffering altogether, may we behold, in the full and final developments of character alone, enough for imparting all its corrosion to the worm that dieth not, enough for sustaining in all its fierceness the fire that is not quenched.

But there is another moral ingredient in the future sufferings of the wicked, beside the one of which we have now spoken—suggested to us by the second clause of our text; and from which we learn that, not only will the unjust man carry his falsehoods and his frauds along with him to the place of condemnation, but that also the voluptuary will carry his unsanctified habits and unhallowed passions thitherward. “Let him that is filthy be filthy still.” We would here take the opportunity of exposing, what we fear is a frequent delusion in society—who give their respect to the man of honour and integrity—and he does not forfeit that respect, though known at the same time to be a man of dissipation. Not that *we* think any one of the virtues, which enter into the composition of a perfect character, can suffer, without all the other virtues suffering along with it. We believe that a conjunction, between a habit of unlawful pleasure and the maintenance of a strict resolute exalted equity and truth, is very seldom, we could almost say, is never realised. The man of forbidden indulgence, in the prosecution of his objects, has a thousand degrading fears to encounter; and many concealments to practise; perhaps low and unworthy artifices to which he must descend; and how can either his honour or his humanity be said to survive, if at length, in his heedless and impetuous

career, he shall trample on the dearest rights and the most sacred interests of families? With us it has all the authority of a moral aphorism, that the sobrieties of human virtue can never be invaded, without the equities of human virtue also being invaded. The moralities of human life are too closely linked and interwoven with each other, as that though one should be detached, the others might be left uninjured and entire; and so no one can cast his purity away from him, without a violence being done to the general moral structure and consistency of his whole character. But, be this as it may; we have the authority of the text and the oft reiterated affirmations of the New Testament, for saying of the voluptuary, that, if the countenance of the world be not withdrawn from him, the gate of heaven is at least shut against him; that nothing unclean or unholy can enter there; and that, carrying his uncrucified affections into the place of condemnation, he will find them too to be the ministers of wrath, the executioners of a still sorer vengeance. The loathing, the remorse, the felt and conscious degradation, the dreariness of heart that follow in the train of guilty indulgence here—these form but the beginning of his sorrows; and are but the presages and the precursors of that deeper wretchedness, which, by the unrepealed laws of moral nature, the same character will entail on its possessors in another state of existence. They are but the penalties of vice in embryo, and they may give at least the conception of what are these penalties in full. It will add—it will add inconceivably, to the darkness and disorder of that moral chaos, in which the impenitent shall spend their eternity—when the uproar of the bacchanalian and the licentious emotions is thus super-added, to the selfish and malignant passions of our nature; and when the frenzy of unsated desire, followed up by the languor and the compunction of its worthless indulgence, shall make up the sad history of many an unhappy spirit. We need not to dwell on the picture, though it brings out into bolder relief the all-important truth, that there is an inherent bitterness in sin; that, by the very constitution of our nature, moral evil is its own curse and its own worse punishment; that the wicked on

the other side of death, but reap what they sow on this side of it; and that, whether we look to the tortures of a distempered spirit or to the countless ills of a distempered society, we may be very sure that to the character of its inmates—a character which they have fostered upon earth, and which now remains fixed on them through eternity—the main wretchedness of hell is owing.

Before quitting this part of the subject, we have but one remark more to offer. It may be felt as if we had overstated the power of mere character to beget a wretchedness at all approaching to the wretchedness of hell—seeing that the character is often realised in this world, without bringing along with it a distress or a discomfort which is at all intolerable. Neither the unjust man of our text, nor the licentious man of our text, is seen to be so unhappy here, in virtue of the moral characteristics which respectively belong to them, as to justify the imagination, that there, these characteristics will be of power, to effectuate such anguish and disorder of spirit as we have now been representing. But it is forgotten, first, that the world presents in its business, its amusements, and its various gratifications, a refuge from the mental agonies of reflection and remorse—and, secondly, that the governments of the world offer a restraint against the outbreaks of violence, which would keep up a perpetual anarchy in the species. Let us simply conceive of these two securities against our having even now a hell upon earth, that they are both taken down; that there is no longer such a world as ours, affording to each individual spirit innumerable diversions from the burden of its own thoughts; and no longer such a human government as ours, affording to general society a powerful defence against the countless variety of ills, that would otherwise rage and tumultuate within its borders—then, as sure as that a solitary prison is felt by every criminal to be the most dreadful of all punishments; and as sure as that, on the authority of law being suspended, the reign of terror would commence, and the unchained passions of humanity would go forth over the face of the land to raven and to destroy—so surely, out of moral elements and influences alone, might an eternity of utter

wretchedness and despair be entailed on the rebellious: And, only let all the unjust and all the licentious of our text be formed into a community by themselves, and the Christianity which now acts as a purifying and preserving salt upon the earth be wholly removed from them; and then it will be seen that the picture has not been overcharged; but that the wretchedness is intense and universal, just because the wickedness reigns uncontrolled, without mixture and without mitigation.

But we now exchange this appalling for a delightful contemplation. The next clause of our text suggests to us the moral character of heaven. We learn from it that, on the universal principle "as a tree falleth so it lies," the righteous now will be righteous still. We no more dispute the material accompaniments of heaven, than we dispute the material accompaniments in the place of condemnation. But still we must affirm of the happiness that reigns, and holds unceasing jubilee there—that, mainly and pre-eminently, it is the happiness of virtue; that the joy of the eternal state is not so much a sensible or a tasteful or even an intellectual as it is a moral and spiritual joy; that it is a thing of mental, infinitely more than it is a thing of corporeal gratification; and, to convince us how much the former has the power and predominance over the latter, we bid you reflect, that, even in this world, with all the defect and disorder of its materialism, the curse upon its ground inflicting the necessity of sore labour, and the angry tempest from its sky after destroying or sweeping off the fruits of it, the infirmity of their feeble and dis-tempered frames, after the pining sickness and at times the sore agony—yet, in spite of these, we ask whether it would not hold nearly if not universally true, that if all men were righteous then all men would be happy. Just imagine for a moment, that honour and integrity and benevolence were perfect and universal in the world; that each held the property and right and reputation of his neighbour to be dear to him as his own; that the suspicions and the jealousies and the heart-burnings, whether of hostile violence or envious competition, were altogether banished from human society; that the emotions, at all times delightful,

of good-will on the one side, were ever and anon calling the emotions no less delightful of gratitude back again; that truth and tenderness hold their secure abode in every family; and, on stepping forth among the wider companionships of life, that each could confidently rejoice in every one he met with as a brother and a friend—we ask if on this simple change, a change you will observe in the *morale* of humanity, though winter should repeat its storms as heretofore, and every element of nature were to abide unaltered—yet, in virtue of a process and a revolution altogether mental, would not our millennium have begun, and a heaven on earth be realized? Now let this contemplation be borne aloft, as it were, to the upper sanctuary, where we are told there are the spirits of just men made perfect, or where those who were once the righteous on earth are righteous still. Let it be remembered, that nothing is admitted there, which worketh wickedness or maketh a lie; and that therefore, with every feculence of evil detached and severed from the mass, there is nought in heaven but the pure the transparent element of goodness—its unbounded love. its tried and unalterable faithfulness, its confiding sincerity. Think of the expressive designation given to it in the Bible, the land of uprightness. Above all think, that, revealed in visible glory, the righteous God, who loveth righteousness, there sitteth upon His throne, in the midst of a rejoicing family—Himself rejoicing over them, because, formed in His own likeness, they love what He loves, they rejoice in what He rejoices. There may be palms of triumph; there may be crowns of unfading lustre; there may be pavements of emerald, and rivers of pleasure, and groves of surpassing loveliness, and palaces of delight, and high arches in heaven which ring with sweetest melody—but, mainly and essentially, it is a moral glory which is lighted up there; it is virtue which blooms and is immortal there; it is the goodness by which the spirits of the holy are regulated here, it is this which forms the beatitude of eternity. The righteous now, who, when they die and rise again, shall be righteous still, have heaven already in their bosoms; and when they enter within its portals, they carry the very being and substance

of its blessedness along with them—the character which, is itself the whole of heaven's worth, the character which is the very essence of heaven's enjoyments.

“Let him that is holy, be holy still.” The two clauses descriptive of the character in the place of celestial blessedness, are counterparts to the clauses descriptive of the character in the place of infernal woe. He that is righteous in the one stands contrasted with him that is unjust in the other. He that is holy in the one stands contrasted with him that is licentious in the other. But we would have you attend to the full extent and significance of the term “holy.” It is not abstinence from the outward deeds of profligacy alone. It is not a mere recoil from impurity in action. It is a recoil from impurity in thought. It is that quick and sensitive delicacy to which even the very conception of evil is offensive—a virtue which has its residence within; which takes guardianship of the heart, as of a citadel or unviolated sanctuary in which no wrong or worthless imagination is permitted to dwell. It is not purity of action that is all which we contend for. It is exalted purity of sentiment—the ethereal purity of the third heavens, which, if once settled in the heart, brings the peace and the triumph and the unutterable serenity of heaven along with it. In the maintenance of this, there is a curious elevation; there is the complacency, we had almost said the pride, of a great moral victory over the infirmities of an earthly and accursed nature; there is a health and harmony to the soul; a beauty of holiness, which, though it effloresces on the countenance and the manner and the outward path, is itself so thoroughly internal, as to make purity of heart the most distinctive evidence of a work of grace in time, the most distinct and decisive evidence of a character that is ripening and expanding for the glories of eternity. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “Without holiness no man shall see God.” “Into the holy city nothing which defileth or worketh an abomination shall enter.” These are distinct and decisive passages, and point to that consecrated way, through which alone, the gate of heaven is opened to us. On this subject, there is a remarkable harmony, between the didactic sayings of vari-

ous books in the New Testament, and the descriptive scenes which are laid before us in the book of Revelations. However partial and imperfect the glimpses there afforded of heaven may be, one thing is palpable as day, that holiness is its very atmosphere. It is the only element which its inmates breathe, and which it is their supreme and ineffable delight to breathe in. They luxuriate therein, as in their best-loved and most congenial element. Holiness is their oil of gladness—the elixir, if we may use the expression, the moral elixir of glorified spirits. And in their joyful hosannas, whether of “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” or of “Just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints,” we may read, that, as virtue in the Godhead is the theme of their adoration, so virtue in themselves is the very treasure they have laid up in heaven—the wealth, as well as the ornament, of their now celestial natures.

We would once more advert to a prevalent delusion that obtains in society. We are aware of nothing more ruinous, than the acquiescence of whole multitudes in a low standard of qualifications for Heaven. The distinct aim is to be righteous now, that, after the death and the resurrection you may be righteous still—to be holy now, that you may be holy still. But hold it not enough, that you are free from the dishonesties which would forfeit the mere respect and confidence of the world or from the profligacies which even the world itself would hold to be disgraceful. There is a certain amount of morality, which is in demand upon earth, but which is miserably short of the requisite preparation for Heaven—the holiness indispensable there, is a universal an unspotted and withal a mental and spiritual holiness. It is this which distinguishes the morality of a regenerated and aspiring saint, from the morality of a respectable citizen, who still is but a citizen of the world, with his conversation not in heaven, with neither his heart nor his treasure there. The righteous of our text would recoil from the least act of unfaithfulness, from being unfaithful in the least as from being unfaithful in much. The holy of our text would shrink in sensitive aversion and alarm from the first approaches of evil,

from the incipient contaminations of thought and fancy and feeling, as from the foul and final contaminations of the outward history. Both are diligent to be found of Christ without spot and blameless, in the great day of account—glorifying the Lord with their soul and spirit, as well as with their bodies—aspiring after those graces, which, unseen by every earthly eye, belong to the hidden man of the heart, and in the sight of heaven are of great price—and so proceeding onward from strength to strength on this lofty path of obedience, till they appear perfect before God in Zion.

We feel that we have not nearly exhausted the subject of our text, by these brief and almost miscellaneous observations. The truth is, it is a great deal too unwieldy for any single address, and we shall therefore conclude with the notice of one specimen that might be alleged for the importance of the view that we have just given in purging theology from error. If the moral character then of these future states of existence, were distinctly understood and consistently applied, it would serve directly and decisively to extinguish antinomianism. It would in fact reduce that heresy to a contradiction in terms. There is no sound and scriptural Christian, who ever thinks of virtue as the price of heaven. It is something a great deal higher, it is heaven itself—the very essence, as we have already said, of heaven's blessedness. It occupies therefore a much higher place than the secondary and the subordinate one, ascribed to it even by many of the writers termed evangelical—who view it mainly as a token or an evidence that heaven will be ours. Instead of which it is the very substance of heaven—a sample on hand of the identical good, which, in larger measure and purer quality, is afterwards awaiting us—an entrance on the path which leads to heaven; or rather an actual lodgement of ourselves within that line of demarcation which separates the heaven of the New Testament from the hell of the New Testament. For heaven is not so much a locality as a character; and we, by a moral transition from the old to the new character, have in fact crossed the threshold, and are now rejoicing within the confines of God's spiritual family.

By the doctrine of justification through faith, we understand that Christ purchased our right of admittance into heaven—or opened its door for us. Is there aught antinomian in this? The obstacle, the legal obstacle, between us and a life of prosperous and never-ending virtue, is now broken down; and is it upon that event, that we are to relinquish the path which has just been opened to welcome and invite our advancing footsteps? The doctrine of justification by faith is not an obstacle to virtue—it is but an introduction to it. It is in truth the removal of an obstacle—the unfastening of that drag which before held us in apathy and despair; and restrained us from breaking forth on that career of obedience, in which, with the hope of glory before us, we purify ourselves even as Christ is pure. The purpose of His death was not to supersede, but to stimulate our obedience. "He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The object of His promises is not to lull our indolence, but rouse us to activity. "Having received these promises therefore, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

We expatiate no further; but shall be happy, if, as the fruit of these imperfect observations, you can be made to recognise how distinctly practical a business the work of Christianity is. It is simply to destroy one character, and to build up another in its room; to resist the temptations which vitiate and debase, and make all the graces and moralities which enter into the composition of perfect virtue the objects of our most strenuous cultivation. In the expediting of this mighty transformation, on the completion of which there hinges our eternity, we have need of believing prayer; a thorough renunciation of all dependence on our own strength; a thorough reliance on the proffered strength and aid of the upper sanctuary; a deep sense of our infirmities, and constant application for that Spirit who has promised to help them—that, in the language of the Apostle we may strive mightily, according to the grace which worketh in us mightily.

SERMON XLIII.

Light in Darkness.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CONVOCATION OF MINISTERS IN EDINBURGH.

“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.”—PSALM. CXII. 4.

The great lesson in this text is the connection which obtains between integrity of purpose and clearness of perception—insomuch that a duteous conformity to what is right, is generally followed up by a ready and luminous discernment of what is true. It tells us that if we have but grace to do as we ought, we shall be made to see as we ought; or, in other words, that, if right morally, we are in the high way of becoming right intellectually. This great lesson of a connection between the right and the true—of a strong reciprocal influence between the heart on the one hand, and the understanding on the other—of an action and reaction between the moral and intellectual departments of our nature. We say of this, that it is a lesson repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, and that in various places both of the Old and the New Testament. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” “Righteousness keepeth the upright in the way.” “Light is sown for the righteous.” Or, still more specifically—“To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant.” To the same purpose there is that magnificent passage in Isaiah, where he tells the Israelites of those acts of charity and uprightness which form an acceptable fast unto the Lord, and after the enumeration of which, he makes the moral effloresce thus into the intellectual—“And then shall his light break forth as the morning, and the glory of the Lord shall be his reward, and the Lord shall guide him continually.” We have repeated averments to the like effect in the New Testament. “If thine eye be single”—that is, not vacillating doubly and ambiguously between God and the world, between a treasure on earth and a treasure in heaven; but,

instead of this, if it be singly and devotedly intent on the one thing needful—“if thine eye be thus single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” To the same purpose we are told by the Saviour, “If a man hath my commandments and keepeth them, to him will I manifest myself.” All proving a relationship, in the order of cause and effect, between our being led to do aright and our being made to discern aright; or, in other words, all proving that the commandment of the Lord has not only the property of guiding the footsteps, but also of enlightening the eyes.

And before proceeding further, we may as well exhibit a few of those passages, which lay before us the reverse process of a connection between disobedience and spiritual darkness, in counterpart to the connection between obedience and spiritual discernment. “The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble.” If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” It is because their deeds are evil that they love the darkness, and so are enveloped therein. The frightful progress of degeneracy, as represented in the first chapter of the Romans, is but a series of descending steps from darkness to a more sunken and abandoned vice; and, reciprocally, from vice to a more hopeless and profound darkness. He that lacketh the virtues of the gospel, says Peter, is blind, and cannot see afar off. He that hateth his brother, says John, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes—all evidences which might be multiplied tenfold, of the close and powerful reciprocity which obtains between these two elements, the will and the understanding—insomuch that either a rectitude or an obliquity in the one, will lead to a like rectitude and a like perversity in the other also.

This remarkable, and certainly most

important mental phenomenon, if it may be so called, admits of a twofold explanation—one a natural, another a Christian explanation. In attempting to lay down the former, we might, if we had the time for it, and were this the place for philosophising in such a walk of inquiry, we might expatiate both on the darkening and the illuminating processes; and tell what the laws or what the tendencies of mind, which were concerned in them. We could, perhaps, in the first place have demonstrated wherein lay the sophistry of evil affections; and how it is that if, in virtue of their lawless usurpation, conscience is for a time disposed from her supremacy—the objects of mental vision are distorted thereby, and seen in an inverted order or seen out of their places. We might thus have made palpable the darkening and disturbing influence of a moral anarchy, so as to disqualify for right perceptions; and to overcloud, if we may term it, the panorama of the soul, or whole region of its contemplations. And on the other hand, we believe it could be made manifest, why the element of moral rectitude becomes also an element or medium of intellectual transparency—insomuch, that if right principles are in play, such is the mechanism of our spiritual nature, right perceptions will come in the train of them; and that in virtue of our moral or spiritual well-being, we see things in a truer perspective, and with a larger command over the domain of human thought. Some have carried this speculation so far, and maintained such to be the connection between righteousness and truth, or such the connection between a clear conscience and a clear intellect, that its influence is felt even in the investigations of physical science; and that at all events it is of paramount efficacy in the guidance and enlightenment of the mind, when treating of moral and practical questions.

It is obvious that this is a topic on which we cannot here dwell, and will therefore hasten onward to our Christian explanation of the phenomenon in question; and which we thus term only for the purpose of distinction, because there is no discrepancy between it and the natural explanation. There is in truth a marvellous harmony between the economy of nature and the economy of grace;

and though it be the Spirit of God who is the undoubted author of all that distinguishes the children of light from the children of this world, yet it will generally be found, we believe, that even at the very time when He works most influentially, and with greatest power in the heart of man, He does it without violence, and so as not to overbear the laws of the human spirit, or any of the processes of our mental philosophy. But neither can we linger at this topic; and will therefore at once state what we hold to be the real ligament of connection between the uprightness of our text and the light which ariseth out of darkness. The link of concatenation then which binds together these two elements—the intervening power who makes sure the connection between them—is this same Spirit of God, who will not suffer the upright to walk in darkness, but will guide him to all needful truth; and more particularly, when beset with perplexities on every side, and uncertain where to turn, this beneficent agent opens a way for him to walk in—and, causing the word of God to shine upon all the intricacies which are before him, makes it a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. For observe the functions ascribed to the Spirit of God throughout the Bible. These are exceedingly various; for, Author as He is of every good and every perfect gift, He adapts His ministrations to all the moral and all the mental exigencies of our nature. He at one time inspires the purposes of integrity, and gives strength for the execution of them; and at another he operates on the understandings of men—causing them to apprehend aright, not only in the general that truth which is unto salvation; but, helping them in every time of need, teaches how to strike out the path of wisdom and of duty amid the difficulties with which they are encompassed. Consider Him then as the fountain both of our light and of our strength; and couple with this the undoubted Scripture information, that, in dealing with the spirits of men, He, personal agent as He is, is personally affected by our treatment of Himself, and more particularly by the use we make, be it faithful or unfaithful, of the gifts he may have been pleased to bestow on us—at one time grieved, resisted,

finally quenched, nay at length provoked to abandon us forever, either when we act not up to the light He hath imparted, or when we fail in being so diligent and laborious as we ought with the strength He has imparted—at another time pleased and encouraged, just as a master is with the docility of his pupils, when we do all we might and all we ought either with the power wherewith He enables us to obey, or with the light whereby He enables us to discern, and so follows it up both with larger powers and larger manifestations—thus fulfilling His own declarations that he who hath to him more shall be given; but from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath—and more especially this most pregnant and precious deliverance, that the Holy Ghost shall be given to those who obey Him. It is thus that He conducts us onward from the humbler to the higher lessons of this His moral and spiritual discipline. And it is this peculiar economy of His, this system of moral penalties and rewards if it may be so termed, which establishes the connection between disobedience and spiritual darkness on the one hand, between obedience and spiritual discernment on the other. With this explanation of the method by which these two elements act and react into each other's hands, we should be at no loss to understand how it is, that if made to do aright, we are also made to see aright—how it is that to the upright a light ariseth out of darkness; and that a guidance as well as a glory from the Lord is made to shine upon all their ways.

And what completes this solution, and carries it onward to effect and fulfilment, is that the Holy Spirit is given to our prayers. If we are indeed in earnest—if it is our single-minded and our intense desire to be as God would have us and to do as God would have us—if the supreme moral ambition by which these bosoms of ours are actuated is to be right, striving with all honesty both to find out the will of our heavenly Master and to do it. These longings and aspirations of the soul will vent themselves in prayer; and, this being the prayer not of the hypocrite which is His abomination, but of the upright, and so His delight, will be followed up by the glorious verification of His own

assurances to His own children—helpless without His aid, and so ever keeping by Him, and cleaving to Him as all their dependence and all their desire. More especially let me single out this assurance, the most comforting of all to those who are in perplexity—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Before proceeding to any special application of the doctrine which has now been propounded, let me, with all possible brevity, interpose two general observations.

First, then, let us observe of evangelical Christianity, which many regard as exclusively a doctrinal, how pre-eminently and emphatically we might say of it that it is a practical system. In this system, doctrine and practice are most intimately blended. And it is not saying all for this to say that the doctrine supplies the motives and the considerations which impel to practice. There is more in it than this. Practice by a sort of reflex influence casts back a light on the principles which gave it birth; and so, as if not to discover, at least to irradiate the doctrine into brighter manifestation. The two influences have a reciprocating virtue, the one on the other; and so change places as, in the language of science, to become antecedents and consequents alternately, and they are such alternate sequences as these which make out an historical progression in the life, and build up a resulting character in the state of a believer—the brighter faith ever germinating a holier practice, and the holier practice repaying the obligation by issuing in a clearer and more confirmed faith. It is the agency of God's Spirit, we again say, which resolves this mystery. He, the fountain of our strength, works in us both to will and to do; and if we, in obedience to His impulse and by His strength work out the bidden duties of the gospel, He, the fountain of our light, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to our souls, sheds a more vivid illumina-

tion than before on the doctrines of the gospel. It is thus that faith and works which are made to stand in such a controversial attitude to each other as described in the pages of authorship, when realized on the living man, meet together in fullest consent and harmony. When brought into actual co-operation, they are found not to be conflicting but conspiring forces. They grow with each other's growth, they strengthen with each other's strength.

But secondly, this most beautiful and beneficent law, by which the conscience and understanding are so related to each other, that the latter is all the more spiritually enlightened in things doctrinal, in proportion as the former is obeyed in things practical and moral—it is a law which meets with its daily exemplifications in the high and hidden walks of Christian experience. We can only afford to mention two specimens of this. The first is that of Augustine at the commencement of his Christianity, who for years had groped in darkness and deepest spiritual distress after the truth as it is in Jesus—seeking for peace with God and finding none, and making a thousand fruitless and fatiguing efforts to force the barrier, which intercepted from the view of his mind the mercies of the gospel. The truth is, he had long been the bondsman of one of those degrading affections which war against the soul—a tyrant appetite which not only enslaved but darkened him. So long as the passion retained its mastery did the understanding remain overclouded, and not till after many a weary struggle he resolved with full effect on the conclusive sacrifice, did he break loose from the imprisonment which held him. No sooner was he emancipated from the thralldom of a forbidden pleasure, than his whole faculties, as if by the removal of a stricture, were set at liberty; and the same Spirit who strengthened him for the moral conquest over a besetting sin, ushered him into the light of a glorious manifestation. When the chains of a most degrading bondage fell from his person, then the scales fell from his eyes. This is the real substance of church history; and it most strikingly corroborates the lesson of our text, when we find in the case of Augustine, that a great practical

achievement and a great doctrinal enlargement went hand in hand—insomuch that it may be said of this noblest champion of orthodoxy in ancient times, that, contemporaneously with his most strenuous performance of a thing essential to be done, was his at length clear and confident perception of a thing essential to be believed; and it forms indeed a magnificent illustration of the harmony between faith and works, that on the moment when the Spirit enabled him for an indispensable act of personal righteousness, did he reveal the imputed righteousness of Christ as the alone ground of a sinner's justification, and which henceforth became the rest and the rejoicing of his soul.

Our second specimen is that of a Christian in modern times, alike eminent with Augustine in the highest fields both of Christian experience and Christian authorship—we mean Jonathan Edwards, of America, who tells us in his most instructive diary, as the general result of all his experience, that his seasons of greatest temptation, and which therefore when overcome gave birth to the greatest of his moral victories, were followed up by his seasons of brightest illumination; and that never were his views both of duty and of doctrine more transparent and exhilarating, than when carried in triumph through those more arduous contests of principle, which overbear the almost, but which serve the more to confirm and to elevate and to signalize the altogether Christian.

But we must now be done with these generalities, on which we never should have ventured to give so bare an outline, so brief and synoptical a view from the pulpit, were it not for the audience of able and accomplished theologians now before me, who know well how to fill up the deficiencies of our rapid and imperfect sketch; and, aware of the extreme difficulty which attends the compression of much within little room, will I am sure award to me their indulgence, and that in very proportion to their intelligence in these things. We now proceed then to our special applications, premising in one sentence that the light which follows in the train of uprightness, is not always that general or doctrinal light which may be termed the light of salvation—but,

more specifically, that light which shows to an inquirer when in perplexity, the path in which he should walk. It is a common proverb, that where there is a will there is a way, and the lesson on which we are now to build the few observations which it remains for us to make, may be regarded as the exaltation of this proverb, or if you will, the religious version of it. And the lesson is shortly this—that if it be your intent and resolved will in the face of every trial, to do what is right in the sight of God, God will open up a way for you. It is a lesson in perfect keeping with that most important verse. that if any is willing to do the will of God, he shall know of Christ's doctrine whether it be of God. In other words, he who willeth aright shall be made to know aright.

In order then that our text may be brought to bear with effect on your present circumstances, we should attend to what the darkness is in which you are now involved; and what the light is which, if made to arise, would clear it away. There is one very obvious cause of difficulty, and so of darkness in any question, whether of wisdom or duty; and that is when, made up of various elements, the solution of it hinges, not on a single but on several, nay perhaps on many considerations. The well known effect of complication is to obscure any subject, and so it may be as to make the treatment of it tenfold more arduous and unmanageable than before. This holds true even of such topics as are purely intellectual; and there is no class of profound thinkers more thoroughly aware of it, than those who have laboured and with most success on the high walk of the physical and mathematical sciences. One of the best examples that can be given is the problem of the three bodies. It is comparatively an easy task to calculate the path of the earth's movements—when, having only to do with two bodies, you view it as acted upon only by its gravitation to the sun; but it has a gravitation also towards the moon, and it is not to be told how much the introduction of this new element has added to the difficulty of the task. And the difficulty is enhanced in a rapidly increasing and multiple ratio, if you admit more forces into the computation; or take into your

reckoning one planetary influence after another, and so as to require at each of these successive stretches a fresh draught on a still higher and more recondite calculus than before—till far out of sight and lost to the eye of the general world, the whole speculation to ordinary minds becomes utterly inextricable.

Now if there is something so very baffling in the mere complexity of a subject, what it may well be thought can be so utterly hopeless, than that we shall come to a clear and satisfactory determination on our own church question—a question which, if not made up, has at least been mixed up with many and diverse elements. We are first told of the Bibles as being the great statute-book of heaven, and of the paramount authority which belongs to its requirements; but this has been brought into comparison, nay into conflict, with a statute-book on earth—that we mean of the civil government under which we live; and in that oft-repeated watch-word, the law of the land, we are told of the authority which belongs to its requirements. Then we are told of the duty we owe to God, as being our first and greatest obligation; but to honour the king and to obey magistrates—these also are duties, graven and inscribed as heaven's own laws on the tablet of revelation. Next we are told of religious liberty, or liberty in things ecclesiastical, as being the inviolable birth-right of every Christian; but we further hear that for the sake of its advantages, we have consented to the terms of a National Establishment—and then the relations of Church and State come into play, and serve if not to perplex, at least mightily to complicate the argument. And then to bring our instances to a close, of which we have only selected a few without nearly exhausting them, we may often listen to a learned discourse on temporalities and spiritualities, and the line of demarcation between them; and if we are not presented by this with any new conception, at least a new nomenclature has been brought to our ears—fitted, were it for nothing else, to throw a deeper disguise over the question, and still more to impress thousands with the conviction, that altogether it is a question which is too many for them. Certain it is that such

a confession is often heard to escape from the lips of those innumerable talkers upon this most engrossing at present of all subjects. They candidly admit that they have not a head for it; and so the conviction grows apace throughout that numerous class of society, who think but cursorily and superficially on every question, that ours is indeed the most helpless and irreducible of all speculations.

But while such is the aspect which our question bears to the precipitate and the careless, let me not be understood to represent it as so very recondite, so very inaccessible, that, were but the attention fully given, one even of an ordinary mind might not find his way through it. The truth is that there might be the semblance of a collision between various duties, and yet notwithstanding a decisive and clear path. For example, it is the indispensable duty of every Christian to be pure, and it is his duty to be peaceable. If it be possible as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men. But it may so happen that the maintenance of these two virtues, the graces of purity and peace, at the same time or on the same occasion, might not be possible. But the scriptural deliverance of first pure and then peaceable, here interposes its authoritative sanction, and relieves us from all ambiguity. In like manner the supreme, the indispensable duty of every creature is to obey God. But it is the duty of every subject to obey magistrates, and this too is the oft-repeated injunction of the New Testament. But there may, as systematically and for whole generations together in the primitive ages of our faith; and there may, as incidentally and for these few years back in our own land, be a collision between these two authorities—when as before the perplexity is again cut short by the scriptural saying, We ought to obey God rather than man. Here comes in one grand principle which simplifies all because it subordinates all; and, like the rod of Aaron, swallows up the rods of the magicians. Thus it is that one great virtue of central and presiding authority over the rest, has borne our church through her hitherto upright and consistent way, in the midst of every attempt to seduce or to frighten her sons from their propriety; nor has it yet been given to all the skill and machinations of her adver-

saries, to enchant her from the path of allegiance to her God.

But the darkness of which I have hitherto spoken—that proceeding from the complexity alone of any given question, and presenting but an intellectual difficulty in the way of its solution—may be overcome by dint of a more steadfast and persevering attention, or more vigorous appliance than before of the merely intellectual powers. But there is another sort of darkness, proceeding from a wholly distinct source, and only to be overcome in another way—we mean the darkness which gathers over a question on which our own personal interest is suspended, and where the judgment of man is apt to be blinded and bewildered by that most deceitful of all sophistry, the sophistry of his own affections—when in balancing between two terms of an alternative self intervenes with its mighty and preponderating bias, and turns the scale against the whole weight of reason and conscience on the other side; or, to express it otherwise, when the objects of deliberation are seen through a medium of selfishness, and though not complicated, are at least mightily bedimmed and distorted thereby. It is the darkness thus originated which our text has properly to do with, because a darkness which for the dispersion of it needs not so much an intellectual as a moral counteractive. It is obviously that sort of darkness which integrity of heart and of purpose is fitted to dispel—a darkness you will observe which settles and sits fast on the minds of the sordid and the fearful; but which vanishes and gives way before the untroubled eye of him, whose serene and single-minded purpose it is to be as he ought, and to do as he ought.

And now my venerable fathers and brethren of the Established Church of Scotland, I will not speak of it as a certainty, that if you persevere in the high walk of uprightness on which you have entered, the secularities of that Establishment will be wrested from your hands. It would not be venturing far however to speak of it as a probability, and a hazard; and surely, at the very least, not to speak of it as a possibility were downright affectation. In this its lowest and least appalling form, you have been in the habit of regarding it for years; and even when

a crisis was obviously drawing nearer, and the symptoms of some great and approaching overthrow looked more menacing than before—let the majorities of our church attest whether they have been the calculations of worldly prudence, or the high behests of principle, which had the ascendant over you. And still I rejoice to believe, that, whatever be the shades or diversities of sentiment upon lesser questions, the tie of that great and common principle which hitherto has bound us together remains unbroken—that I speak in the hearing of men firmly resolved as ever to lose all and to suffer all, rather than surrender the birth-right of those prerogatives which we inherit from our fathers, or compromise the sacred liberty wherewith Christ has made us free—of men whose paramount question is what is duty, that best stepping-stone to the solution of the other question, what is wisdom. For it is when in this spirit of uprightness, this blessed frame of simplicity and godly sincerity, that light is made to arise, and Wisdom is justified of her children.

This is not the place for attempting any specific delineation of the path which wisdom prescribes in our present eventful circumstances; nor will I utter one word that might indicate my opinion or even my leanings on the question, of what specifically and practically the church at present ought to do. But surely this is the place for urging both on myself and others, the moral preparation which all experience demonstrates to have an enlightening effect upon the understanding, and all Scripture affirms to be of sovereign efficacy in bringing down the Spirit of wisdom from above. This has been the object of your prayers; and it is the identical object, however feeble in execution, of our preaching. The great lesson of our text is, that if we purpose aright, we shall be made to see aright; and that the integrity of our wills shall be followed up by light in the understandings. God will not abandon to darkness those who cast their care and their confidence upon Himself; and who can say with the apostle—He is my

helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me. The man who can lift this honest and unfaltering prayer—Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting—the man who can say this fearlessly, has nothing else to fear. God will establish the just—for it is said the righteous God trieth the heart and reins. Commit then thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. It is He who by the light of his Holy Spirit makes good the connection between singleness of purpose and wisdom of conduct; and thus I understand the text, that He maketh wise the simple, and giveth understanding to the simple. Ye men of God, who make the Bible the supreme directory of your hearts and consciences, you will not be long left in uncertainty. He will make your way clear and open before you.—If before Him we come with the docility of little children, He will cause us in understanding to be men. He that is spiritual judgeth all things; and though, because himself judged of no man, he may be the object of derision and contempt to a world that does not comprehend him—yet if thou commit thy way unto the Lord and trust also to Him, He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?—Though a host should encamp against me my heart shall not fear. Though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident. For in the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall he hide me. He shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy: I will sing, yea I will sing praises to the Lord.

SERMON XLIV.

The Outward Business of the House of God.

A SERMON PREACHED AT GLASGOW, OCTOBER 16, 1843.

“And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God.”—NEHEMIAH, XI. 16.

THE outward business of the house of God is of chief necessity and importance at the commencement of a Church, or at some of those great changes and enlargements which it is often made to undergo. At the outset of the Jewish Church, beside the regulations for the maintenance of the priesthood and distribution of the various offices, we read much of the time and labour expended on the structure of the tabernacle. The same thing might be observed on the occasion of great enlargements, or revivals, or deliverances,—as at the rearing and successive great repairs of the temple in Jerusalem; and more noticeably still in the doings of Ezra and Nehemiah, on their return from their captivity, and the re-establishment both of their national and sacred polity. At the commencement, too, of the Christian Church, he who was the most gifted of its apostles—though pre-eminently a man of faith and prayer, and perhaps the most conversant among them in the vitalities of that high and hidden walk which constitutes the new obedience of the gospel—still did he busy himself most of all with the matters of a mere external regulation, as journeys and collections, and the various questions of Church government and Church order. And descending from these primitive to later and uninspired times, where shall we find a more striking exemplification of the same union, than among the fathers of our own Church? We mean the devotedness of their piety as combined with the varied and profound wisdom of their economics. Had their conceptions all been realized, on the subject of schools and colleges, and a provision for the poor, as well as the various parts and offices of our great ecclesiastical institute, never, perhaps, was a more goodly apparatus devised, not for the Christian instruction alone, but for the moral, nay for

the civil and secular well-being of the people in any land. Though these conceptions were not realised, though they were frustrated by the resistance of men in power, and by the unprincipled rapacity of the nobles in these days—this should not prevent us from doing homage to the conceptions themselves, as having been fraught with all the wisdom of experience, and of profoundest skill in the management, we could even say the philosophy, of human affairs.

Let us, therefore take a lesson from these great master spirits of a former age. Their spirituality did not so monopolise them, as to dispossess from their minds all value for the matters of external regulation, or cause them to under-rate as an object unworthy of their most earnest attention the outward business of the house of God. Bishop Butler has written a sermon, the least known of his works, on the use of externals in religion. But his topic is not exactly ours; for what he philosophises on is chiefly the influence of form, and ceremony, and music, and investiture, and such other visible accompaniments, on the devotional feelings of a worshipper. This is not just our subject, which relates more to the polity and plat or platform of a Church as distinguished from its doctrine, and from all that discipline which has to do with the moral and religious state of those who partake in its ordinances. The outward forms are not altogether the same with the outward business of the house of God.

Yet the inward should take precedency of the outward, both in the order of influence and in the order of time. And it was, we trust, the force of a strong inward sentiment which led to our recent memorable disruption from the now Enthralled, and the consequent formation of the Free Church of Scotland. It was an inward and a right spirit, we hope,

which animated the devotions and the doings of its First General Assembly. It has, we are confidently persuaded, been an inward principle all along, which has borne up her ministers in the midst of their painful surrenders and arduous services; and which, most difficult of all, has hitherto maintained amongst them all the charities of a substantial harmony and peace; and that, too, when engaged with such hazardous and exciting topics, as on the arena of an earthly politics, would have stirred up all the passions of a fierce and heated partizanship. But the inward principle should not prevent, nay the very strength of it will prompt us onward to the outward business of the house of God. To these it falls, necessarily and naturally, that we should now address ourselves. It will form a main object in our present Assembly; and it is for this reason that I have selected our text, and propose to found upon it some remarks on the importance of such other things as are to come under the deliberative wisdom of my Fathers and Brethren, and on their subserviency to that spiritual religion, which, not as a main ingredient only, but in its very substance and being, forms the great staple or element in the vital prosperity of a Church.

First, then, there is nothing in the doctrine of a spiritual influence, or in the undoubted position that whatever is good or true in religion is the product of the Holy Spirit's operation—there is nothing in all this which supersedes the importance or the uses of an external machinery, the setting up of which and the working of which belong to the outward business of the house of God. It is very true that no man is savingly enlightened in the doctrines of the Gospel, or strengthened and enabled for the performance of its duties, but by the demonstration and power of the Spirit upon his soul. Yet, as it is only through the Bible that He enlightens, opening our eyes to behold the wondrous things contained in this book; and as when He works in man to will and to do, and so to set him a-working, still it is by giving enforcement and effect to the lessons of this said Bible—there is positively nothing in the doctrine of a celestial agency which should at all set aside the terrestrial operation of multiplying and disseminating by thousands

of copies the Word of God, which can only be done by means of these very outward things, the construction of printing-presses. And what is true of the word read in private is alike true of the word spoken in public, that it only takes effect when the Spirit sends it home; but this requires that men should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, and so requires another preparation of outward things—even the erection of numerous churches all over the land. Our Saviour after his resurrection bade the apostles go to Jerusalem, and wait there till they should be endued with power from on high; or, in other words, there was a certain outward thing which they were told to do, ere the inward grace or inward illumination could be conferred upon them. The doctrine of a supernatural influence from heaven above did not supersede, nay, it required a given natural performance beforehand on the earth below, even that of bending their footsteps to the place which the Saviour's precept pointed out, and where the Saviour's promise was to be fulfilled upon them. And still there are not only certain prescribed performances, but certain appointed places of meeting between the Spirit of God and the spirit of men; and, to make out the co-operation which this implies, man has to work outwardly, and with the powers of his body, while God works inwardly on the functions and faculties of his soul. One of these places is the Bible, which it is our part duteously and diligently to read and give earnest heed unto—aye and until the day dawns and the day-star arises in our hearts, even by God opening our eyes to behold the wondrous things contained in His law. Another of these places is the church, where we are bidden assemble ourselves together, even as Cornelius was bidden hold a church in his house, that both he and his family might hear the words of Peter; and, as then, so now, it is while the minister is in the act of speaking that the Holy Ghost often falls on the earnest and attentive listener when in the act of hearing. We must not slight the natural performance, though of no value singly or apart, or without the supernatural endowment; and still less when the one is the prescribed road to the other—even as the apostles when on the road to Jeru-

salem were on the road to the high and heavenly illuminations of the day of Pentecost. And, yet, when doing these things, it is with outward things that we are engaged in the doing of; and, so also, when laying down the forms, and the processes, and the offices of a church, in obedience to the commandment of Him who says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Had the apostles disobeyed, and not gone to Jerusalem, they would have waited in vain at any other than the bidden place for the illuminations of Pentecost. And should we neglect either our reading of the Bible, or our acts of attendance on the house of prayer, we have no reason to expect that in any other than such bidden ways will the Spirit of God descend upon our souls. And thus, too, it is, that should the guides and the rulers of our ecclesiastical polity fail in providing either a right scriptural education, or the services of a rightly ordered church for the people of the land—outward things as schools and churches are, and outward business as it is to build up a framework or construct a directory of public worship; yet if these things are not done, and done rightly, a spiritual barrenness might otherwise rest upon our territory, and our else fertile land, by the showers of grace being withheld from it, might, in the spiritual sense of the term, remain a dreary and desolate wilderness.

Let it not therefore be said of these views that they go to materialise religion. On the contrary it is our direct aim to spiritualise it—as much so as it was that of the Apostles when they performed the outward thing of going up to Jerusalem with the object of waiting there till they should be endued with power from on high—or as much so as the devout and desirous reader of his Bible, who, while engaged and persevering in this outward exercise, gives earnest heed thereunto, till the day dawn and the day-star arise in his heart. Did we stop short at the routine of mechanical observance of these things, this would be to materialise religion; but this we leave to wretched Puseyism when satisfied with the *opus operatum*, after having acquitted its repetitions on the service-book, or its genuflections before the illuminated altar. Our churches and sacraments are not the resting places of a deceitful security—but

our watch-towers whence we look for a blessing from on high, our meeting-places with God whom it is our part to worship, not with idle prostrations or in an empty superstitious reverence for places and forms, but to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The irrigations of Egypt do not terminate in themselves. They have respect to the overflowing of the Nile; and without a descent from above, they would prove but an empty apparatus of dry and deserted channels through which nothing passed to fertilise the now barren territory. Yet who will deny the good of these irrigations, or the perfect rationality of the object which the cultivators of the soil there have in the construction of them? And the same holds true of our ecclesiastical apparatus, whether it be of church-buildings, or church forms, or church offices—of absolute nothingness in themselves, an unmeaning system of empty tubes or naked architecture, without the blessing from on high, without the descent of living water from the upper Sanctuary. But who on this account should dispute the worth, the rational, enlightened, nay spiritual purpose of such a machinery as this—or who should undervalue either the outward framework or outward business of the house of God? Only let us look beyond and above all that is visible or external; and with as intent and wistful an eye as that wherewith the people of Egypt gaze upon their tutelary river and watch its elevations—so let us never cease from our attitude of expectancy and dependence upon Him who is the Fountain of living waters, but ever pray to the Father of every good and perfect gift that He would breathe into the framework set up by human hands, and which but for Him were a lifeless skeleton, that He would cause its dry bones to live.

Let us trust therefore that we have now sufficiently reconciled even the most spiritual of our hearers to the outward business of the house of God, by making it palpable that means and machinery in religion, while utterly worthless as a substitute, may be of the uttermost worth and importance as a help to the life of God in the souls of men—deriving in fact their principal if not all their value from their subserviency to this high and noble end. Let me now conclude with

one or two illustrations applicable to the present exigencies attendant on the outset, and eminently conducive to a prosperous settlement in these lands of the Free Church of Scotland.

First then, we shall instance the proposed restoration of the ancient and useful order of Deacons in our ecclesiastical polity. We do not enter in detail at present on the nature of their official duties, though even this might not be a topic at all times unsuitable for the pulpit—seeing that the Apostle Paul (or rather the heavenly Agent who inspired him) in one of his epistles to Timothy, where he treats of the qualifications of applicants, and lays down rules for the distribution for the Church's alms, has deemed this very topic to be not unworthy of a place in the Bible. But we would rather dwell for a little on another and far higher benefit arising from the institution of a deaconship, and adverted to in Scripture when relating the first establishment of this economy in the Church. We are there told that the business, the proper and peculiar business of this order of men, fell at first into the hands of the Apostles; but that they wanted to be quit of it, and on this ground, that it was not reason for them to leave the word of God and to serve tables: And so seven honest men had to be chosen, on whom this service might be devolved, for the express purpose that the Apostles might give themselves wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Here you will at once perceive the direct subserviency of the outward to the spiritual—the use and the immediate effect of a merely external arrangement for the doing of an external work, in the enlargement of these two greatest and best of our spiritual ministrations, which are prayer and the preaching of the gospel. It relieved and disengaged the apostles, setting them free for the dedication of their entire strength and time to that work which is strictly apostolical. After a result so precious, let no man undervalue the worth and importance of outward things. Even the godliest of our ministers of Christ, they who have gained the loftiest ascents in the high and hidden walk of Christian experience, must no longer despise them—for so far, in this instance, from disturbing, or in aught diminishing that

which was going on in the higher regions of the Church, these central and more sacred departments of the Church's business, these upper spheres of ecclesiastical labour were all the more replenished and quickened thereby.

It were in exact analogy with this high and scriptural example, did we plead for the revival of our deaconship, that the ministers of religion might be disburdened of all those secularities which ought never to have been accumulated upon their persons; and that, freed from all anxiety about the things of this life, they might prosecute without distraction the duties of their sacred calling, and give themselves wholly to the business of winning souls. But this we barely and briefly state, and shall not, at present, enlarge upon. We now bear respect to another class of men altogether. It is well known that the cessation of deacons in our church, by the transference of their duties to office-bearers of a higher degree, has secularised the work of the eldership. And, let us no longer undervalue even the spiritual importance of outward things, seeing that the restoration of this ancient order, and the re-assumption by them of their own proper and original duties, might emancipate the higher functionaries for their higher labours, so that elders shall become what they were in purer and better days—fellow-workers with their pastors in the cure of souls, and important helps in the ministry of the gospel.

Now, look to the existing state of matters in our church, and see whether in the reformation for which we plead, there be not a most precious, and, at the same time, the most seasonable of all adaptations to the present exigency of our affairs. The number of ministers who have quitted the old establishment is four hundred and seventy. The number, I understand, of available probationers is about one hundred and thirty, who, after they have received ordination, will swell the account of ministers to six hundred in all. But the number of congregations already formed, or in progress towards this, is at least eight hundred—and this, too, a number never falling back, but subject to constant, almost daily accessions, had we only the means of an adequate supply, or a sufficiency of labourers

wherewith to meet the ever-growing demand for more full and frequent ministrations. Now, we do not want precipitately to enlarge the work of any of our office-bearers beyond their fitness, or even their inclination for the work. But would even so much only as one-tenth from among the several thousands of our elders so far conquer their diffidence as to come forward and help us in our present necessity—would they but venture on what very many of them are so well qualified to do, to conduct the public readings and devotions of our solemn assemblies—would they but thus keep together for a time our embryo congregations, fostering and carrying them forward till we had so far hastened the preparation of our students as to provide a commensurate supply of licentiates, and under the blessing of Him who is Lord of the harvest, to send forth enough of labourers in full equipment for the plenteous harvest of our vast and increasing population—Then so urgent, so growing is the disposition everywhere to pass over from the State-fettered to the Free Church of Scotland, that with but the extraordinary help for a few years of some hundreds in the eldership, we might convert, what will otherwise be a limited and partial, into a great national movement; and might thus be enabled, when in full possession of all the towns and almost all the parishes, to get up a pure and efficient gospel ministry for the great bulk of the families in our land.

Yet let it not be forgotten, that, even in the days of the New Testament, an apostle, and he the most abundant of them all in his spiritual ministrations, did charge himself with the produce of those collections, which were made by the richer disciples in one place, and designed for the relief of the poorer in another. And, in like manner, there is a fund made up of weekly gatherings, the contributions of men who give as God hath prospered them, of which we shall say nothing more particularly now, than that, instead of being intended for the supply of the temporal wants of any, the far higher aim of its distribution will be the supply of the spiritual wants of all our brethren; and so as that the blessing of a gospel ministry shall overspread the whole of Scotland, even to the most re-

mote and destitute places of its territory, chequered as it is with all the varieties of human fortune, from lordly affluence, or prosperous and princely merchandise in one quarter, to extreme and helpless poverty in another. Surely when the object is so sacred, as an equal and full provision of the bread of life for all, the having to do with such a department of the Church's affairs is something more than having to do with the Church's secularities. There is so much of religiousness in the principle on which the contributors of this fund are led to give for its support and extension, and so much of what is strictly religious in the application of it, that we confess our desire to see it in some way associated with the functions of our eldership; and be it in order to stimulate its collectors by urging upon them the mighty importance and solemn responsibilities of their office, or to quicken and sustain, nay elevate the liberties of their respective districts, or finally to charge themselves with the custody and transmission of these sacred offerings—we feel as if there were a singular grace and good keeping and propriety in having the care and cognizance of an interest so precious committed to their hands. We would not, therefore, wholly dissever these high office-bearers, and next to the ministers of the gospel, from the management of the Church's alms, more especially from those alms which are set apart for the sustentation of the gospel ordinances throughout the country at large. They should be men of prayer, but not, therefore, disjoined from the business of charity, and in particular of that charity the offerings of which are consecrated to the support of the great Home Mission which labours in every part of our land for the good of human souls. The prayers of faith in company with such offerings will, like those of Cornelius, come up in memorial before God.

Ere I conclude, there is one general topic which I should like briefly to touch upon—relating to the machinery of our Church's business, and for which we have a sanction and a model in the New Testament. It is not a lesson respecting the duties of any one office, but a lesson grounded on the undoubted fact, that in the primitive Church, even as moulded

and fashioned by the hands of the Apostles themselves, there did obtain a great multiplicity of offices. Look at the construction of the Church in Corinth, with its goodly apparatus of offices and office-bearers—complex as the human body, to which, with its various members, it has fitly been compared; and where all moved in perfect harmony, because each confined itself to its own functions, free of all disturbing interference, or of any inroad on the province of the others. It is not alone the skilful distribution of parts that we are called upon to admire; but what I would have you especially to notice is the recognition given here of a great principle, and which is applied by inspired men to ecclesiastical, even as it is by uninspired men to all other business—even the principle and philosophy of the division of labour. In the matters of ecclesiastical government, all Scripture is full of it. We find it as far back as in Jethro's advice to Moses. In the polity of the Old Testament Church, as exemplified in the very chapter from which our text is taken, the subdivision of employment seems to have been carried as far as possible. And also in the Church of the New Testament, its gifted Apostles, though largely and supernaturally endowed from on high, instead of taking all upon themselves, were glad to have the benefit of this principle. And accordingly what an array of distinct functions and distinct functionaries is set before us in the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. When we read there of a Church as made up of many helps, and diversities, and various members of a great and complex body politic, we cannot but be struck with the marvellous harmony which obtains between the harmony of grace and the harmony of Nature. On the one hand, we find that constitutionally and naturally there is an exceeding variety of talents and dispositions and particular aptitudes among men; and on the other hand, corresponding to this, we observe of the Spirit, that, in calling and qualifying men for their respective Church offices, He, instead of accumulating all his gifts upon one person, divided to every man severally as He will. There is here a lesson to ourselves—for this too, like all

other Scripture, is written for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come. And the lessons seems obviously to be this—that there ought to be a far larger and more subdivided agency for the public business of our Church. It is not law alone, it is not logic alone, it is not oratory alone—indispensable and most efficient though each of them be within their several spheres of usefulness—yet it is not these, either singly or altogether, which should bear universal rule in the midst of us. These may all exist, in marvellous power and perfection too, without much of what is familiarly termed the knowledge of business, without much discernment of human nature, without much either of intuitive skill or acquired experience in the management of human affairs. We should therefore invite a far larger number both of ministers and elders to come forth on the walks of public and official employment, and these should be put into a far better state of subdivision and in more skilful relationship to each other than heretofore. It is not by a few rapid generalisations, or schemes of committees, flung off at a single heat by the pen of a ready writer—it is not thus that our Church can be made either to start aright or to prosper on her way. What we have most to dread and to deprecate is a hasty universalism that would engross all. If, instead of aspiring and having to do with everything, each satisfied with his own peculiar excellence would labour to do one thing well—this were in far better accordance with the apostolic injunction of each man thinking soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man—this were in far better keeping with the limited faculties of our nature, with the real mediocrity of the human powers.

Let it not be imagined that it is with the ambition of the few that I now hold a reckoning—it is with the indolence of the many. It is not against those who do engage in the public service of the Church that I now speak—for this were affixing a stigma on some of our best and most patriotic men—but against those who do not step forward to that service, and whom we now call on to come over and help us—help those who overladen with work are ready to sink under the

burden of their manifold employments. It is impossible that the business of the Church can be well done with so stinted an agency as ours; and therefore we invite not in fives or in tens but in fifties at least, so many ministers and as many elders, out of whom an adequate number, not of large but of small, and these really efficient and serviceable and well assorted committees might be formed—that each may have but his one committee, or at least but his one convenership to attend to, and that the business of our Church might proceed in a style worthy of its great cause, and worthy too of those great ancestors, the Fathers of the Scottish Reformation, who, not in the depth of their piety alone, but in the profoundness of their secular wisdom and skill in building up whether the right polity or right platform of a Church, were the most remarkable men of their day.

In conclusion, let us not forget the final outgoing of the Apostle upon this subject, when, after having assigned the distribution of the Church's offices, according to the respective gifts of the occupiers, and whom he discharged from all encroachments on each other's functions or provinces—then proceeds to show them a more excellent way, and breaks forth into a descant (one of the most eloquent passages in holy writ) on the powers and properties of that charity which harmonises all, which amalgamates all. Let all our things be done in that spirit of love which is there inculcated so beautifully—love to each other—love to those who are engaged with ourselves in this great battle for the spiritual liberties of Scotland—above all love to the souls of our people—nay love to our enemies in this sore struggle, who now watch for our halting, and have confidently predicted that we shall at length fall to pieces by falling out among ourselves. Let it be our determination and our care to disappoint these calculations. Let patience have its

perfect work in our souls; and not by sternness or striving, but by the meekness of wisdom and at the bidding of high principle, let us triumph over every provocation whether on the part of friends or adversaries, that all our heart-burnings and all our wretched jealousies might vanish and give way before the omnipotence of Christian charity.

The principle which we have now brought to bear on the matters of public Christianity is prolific also of applications, manifold and innumerable, to the concerns of personal Christianity. What we have spoken of as essential to the prosperity of a church, is also essential to the prosperity of religion in the heart and habits of an individual. I cannot, at present, expatiate on this; but in one brief sentence let me try to urge it home upon my hearers—that they may learn to blend the outward with the inward, the deeds of the land with the devotions and aspirations of the heart, so as to be ever rising from services to supplications, and from supplications to be again falling back upon services. Are they pressing onward to such a spiritual light as they have never realised, or to such heights of sanctification as they have never yet attained—let them try the combination which we now recommend, and see whether a blessing and an enlargement will not come out of it. When they read their Bibles, let them pray with all earnestness for the Spirit—when they pray for the Spirit, let them read with all earnestness their Bibles. Let their performances and their petitions go hand in hand—looking with as much dependence for grace and help from above as if God did all—labouring with as great diligence among the duties of life below as if man did all. O! may such be the spirit of our assembly, and of all its members, improving themselves as men of industry and wisdom, and yet as men of faith and of deepest piety.









