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SERMONS

FOR THE TIMES

AND THE PEOPLE.

BY

REV. I. D. WILLIAMSON

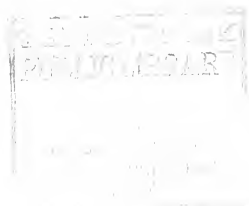
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# SERMONS

## FOR THE PEOPLE.

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### SERMON I.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Romans 1: 16.

THE Gospel of Christ, what is it? It is somewhat remarkable, that it should be necessary to ask such a question as this, in relation to a system of religion which has been extensively known, in the world, for some eighteen hundred years—upon which, vast libraries have been written, and to the exposition and defence of which much of the learning and talent of the civilized world have been devoted during many centuries. True, it is a system remote in its origin: it was first propagated in a foreign tongue, and among a people whose customs, and modes of thought and speech were essentially different from our own; and it is quite natural

that, with us, there should be doubt and uncertainty in regard to some things in the detail of particulars. But surely, it is not a little surprising, that, in the nineteenth century—in a land of Bibles and Schools, and christian institutions, it should still be necessary to inquire for the primary objects, and distinguishing characteristics of the Gospel, as a system of religion. And, yet, this is the same in which the inquiry is here propounded. We ask not, for its particulars—its modes and forms of worship; nor, yet, for its prominent doctrines and teachings; but what is it, as a whole? In what necessity or want of humanity does it originate? What end does it propose to accomplish? And what is it as a system of religion?

A moment's reflection will satisfy the candid mind, that this is not a work of supererogation. The world, nay, not even the Christian world, has as yet arrived at any thing like unanimity in regard to these important and fundamental subjects of inquiry.

With some, Christianity is an attempt, on the part of its author, to interfere with the divine government, particularly with the justice of Heaven; and by the introduction of certain agencies to insert new principles into the economy

of the Most High ; and thus, to *create* a system of truth and duty, which otherwise would have had no existence.

Others regard it as a kind of afterthought of the Deity himself; an expedient, which he voluntarily adopted to escape from grave and serious difficulties, in which he found himself involved by a somewhat successful attempt of Satan to frustrate his original plan. To the first of these, the essential feature of the Gospel is, that it is propitiatory, and designed to placate the wrath, satisfy the justice and secure the favor of God, so that guilty man could escape the just reward of his doings. And to the latter, its cardinal virtue is, that it is remedial, and intended to operate as a cure for gigantic evils which had grown up, as it were, unbidden and unprovided for, in the government of God, as at first established.

Others there are, who recognizing the eternity of God and his truth, and the immutability of the principles of the divine government, look upon the Gospel, not as the creator of new truths or duties, but as the revelator of the true government of God—the herald of duties, old as creation, and of truths which—

“Had from eternity stood,  
And shall to eternity stand.”

Again, there are others, to whom Christianity is not, in the ordinary sense, a system of Divinity. It does not propose to teach men "dogmatic theology," but merely to improve and cultivate their spiritual natures, by the exhibition of a model of perfection in Christ, its author. It is therefore "a spirit and a life." It asks not for faith, but for works alone. It is wide and catholic in its views to a remarkable degree, so far as faith is concerned. It embraces in its folds, seals with its signet, and claims as its own, every man who manifests its spirit; and asks not whether his faith be Mahomedan, Pagan, Jew, or Christian, so that his life is formed after a certain pattern.

These are some of the aspects in which men view the Gospel of Christ; and I have alluded to them here, not so much for the purpose of controverting them, at large, as with a view of enabling you to perceive the importance and necessity of the investigation upon which we are entering. With these conflicting opinions before us, it surely cannot be deemed impertinent to ask, what is the Gospel of Christ? What the objects it proposes to accomplish? What the ministry it has to perform?

Every system of religion may be presumed to

originate in some real or fancied necessity, and to be designed for some specific purpose. The various systems that have originated in the wisdom of the world, though widely different and far asunder as the poles, present, nevertheless, a wonderful uniformity in the objects they propose to accomplish. The means are various, but without an exception, the *end* they seek, is in some way to interfere with, and modify the government of their gods. To soften the heart, move the pity, appease the wrath or change the disposition and purposes of their divinities, is the one single object which they always keep stedfastly in view. Their forms and ceremonies, rites and privations, sacrifices and sufferings, all look to this object, and are designed to secure this end. They seek ever to operate upon God rather than man. But the Gospel of Christ is peculiar in the fact that it is

1. A religion whose objects and ministries begin and end with man.

It seeks, not to have an effect upon God, or in any manner to interfere with his plans, or alter, or frustrate his purposes. It recognizes the great truth, that God is eternal and immutable, and that all his ways are holy, just and good; so that none of them could be changed for

the better, and should not be changed for the worse. On the contrary, he is in himself the sum and substance of all that is truly pure and excellent, and all his purposes are kind and gracious, and even his judgments wise, benevolent and true,

Hence the Gospel writes no forms and modes of worship—prescribes no rites and ceremonies—exacts no pains and sacrifices, as the means of *pro-curing* or securing the mercy of God; for that mercy flows freely and copiously from the exhaustless fountain above; and until the stars shall go out, and the sun himself shall fade and die, that stream, so full and free, “shall flow on, and flow ever,” and its healing waters shall bear life and peace to the world.

The Gospel has no parade of means or appliances for bending the will of God to suit the whim or convenience of a frail creature of earth; but it exerts all its power, and devotes all its energies to man, and is satisfied when it has raised him up to communion with his God and reconciliation to him. This, then, is a peculiar characteristic of Christianity as distinguished from the various systems of the world. It seeks not to affect God, but man, and for man all its ministries are designed.

2. In regard to the particular and specific work it proposes to accomplish for man, I observe as follows:—

It is designed to comfort him in all his sorrows, and to sustain and support him under the ills that are unavoidably incident to the present world. Hence, its author, when about to depart from this sphere of labor, graciously promised his faint and fearful disciples, that he would not “leave them comfortless.”

Though he went his way, and they should see his face no more; and though temptations and persecutions should assail them; yet, he would “send the comforter” to strengthen them in all their weaknesses—to support them in all their conflicts—to sustain and cheer them in all their sufferings, and soothe the anguish of their spirits in every hour of sorrow and affliction. Hence, also, the Great Apostle to the Gentiles, in speaking of the time when God preached the Gospel unto Abraham, gives the object of this communication of truth divine in these words: “Wherein God being willing, more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, hath confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we might have strong consolation*, who

have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul sure and stedfast." So, then, the Gospel is man's comforter, and one of its important objects is, to give us "Good hope and everlasting consolation through faith." Its language is ever, like that of the Prophet of old, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God," and its voice is the substance of that which so sweetly and gently said, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me."

In this view of the Gospel, you may find the true secret of that singular fortitude, patience, and equanimity that shone so conspicuously in the early Christians, in the midst of trials and difficulties that might well have appalled the stoutest heart. Immured in the dungeon of the prisoner, with the iron chain clanking upon their limbs—facing the furious multitude, that came out to hunt them down like beasts of prey, or yielding up their lives at the martyr's stake, you find them calm and self-possessed, rejoicing in hope, and singing praises to God; for the Gospel was their comforter, and it performed its appropriate work in cheering them in all their troubles, and shedding the light of its joy upon the darkest night of their sorrows. And thus, in every age,



the blessed influences of the Gospel have been seen in the comfort it has poured so abundantly and freely into the hearts of the afflicted and sorrowful. The poor have found in it hope and strength, and the smitten in spirit solace and support. It has gone with a blessed and healing influence into the abodes of woe, where no word of comfort was heard before ; it has visited the chamber of sickness, where the waning flame of life was pale and dim, and it has lighted up a radiant smile of resignation and joy in the countenance of the sick and the dying. And when the "pale monarch of the tomb" has prevailed, it has stood in the midst of the desolate household, whose idol was shattered and dead, and it has whispered its words of comfort, to soothe the widow's anguish, and cheer the orphan in the loneliness of bereavement. Thus has it ever been man's best and kindest comforter ; and it differs from the systems of men in the fact, that while they seek to alarm the fears and excite all possible apprehensions of evil, *it* labors to calm each doubt, and "ease the anxious, throbbing breast," with assurances of a never-failing care and protection from on high.

Again, the Gospel as a system of religion, is intended to train, purify, and exalt the moral nature, and save from the dominion of sin.

Hence it is said of him who was its author, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." "His name, also, was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins." So Peter said, "Unto you, first, God having raised up Jesus, hath sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Thus, it appears, that the Gospel is designed to save from sin. The difference between it and other systems, in this respect, is simply this:—They would teach how man can sin and yet manage to escape the consequences; but *this* would instruct us how to live and sin not. *They* would offer substitutes for a life of obedience; but *this* informs us how to present the life itself, holy and acceptable to God.

We have seen, in brief, what the Gospel proposes to do, and we may, perhaps, add with propriety, that its work may all be comprised in the idea of "reconciliation to God." In it, God is, "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

We now propose to consider its adaptation to the proposed end, and the means by which it seeks its accomplishment. Our view is, that all the Gospel proposes to do for man, on earth, it would perform by a manifestation of truth to the understanding, and impressing it upon the heart.

If it comforts man at all, it is by the power of those heart-cheering truths that it communicates, and if it exalts and purifies the inner man, and saves from sin, it is in accordance with that prayer of the Savior, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Hence he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth."

The Gospel, therefore, contains no long code of moral precepts for the regulation of men's hands: it descends to no minute particulars of human conduct; but it lays down broad and far reaching principles, and seeks to guide men in conformity to them, by infusing into the heart those sacred and divine truths which lay hold upon the affections, and give tone to the character, and direction to the conduct. Would it guide man in the way of duty? It does it not so much by laws, or commands, and rules of life, outwardly, as by implanting in the soul those divine truths which "work by love and purify the heart." Would it direct men's hands in their labors? Its aim is to reach them through the heart, for thus only can sincere and genuine fruits be produced. Christ well knew that all else was hypocrisy and deceit.

With the views above noted, the best answer I can give to the question proposed in the outset of our discourse, will be as follows :

*The Gospel of Christ is an authoritative revelation of a positive system of divine truth, and it was in the character of a herald and witness of this truth that Jesus came into the world.*

Its design is not to *create*, but to *reveal* truth. It attempts not to interfere with the principles of the divine government, or change them, but to proclaim those principles as they exist. Its aim is not, to procure for man, by sacrifices, and substitution, a destiny different from that which was designed by the Creator. but to announce that destiny to the world, that humanity might rejoice and act as becometh the heirs of an inheritance so divine. It is not its design to make men children of God, except in a characteristic sense ; but it certifies us, that we are children, and founds its obligations of obedience on that truth. It attempts not to make men brethren, but announces the truth, that they *are* brethren, and exhorts them to recognise and act upon that relationship which already exists. By the influence of truths like these, it would elevate man to the dignity of his nature, and assimilate him to his father God.

It is not, therefore, a mere code of morals, nor yet a mere intangible "Spirit and Life;" but it is a positive and substantial system of revealed truth divine. In its truths there is a spirit, that stirreth in the heart of every one that believeth, and leads to a life like unto that of the Son of God—a morality pure as its fountain; but that spirit, as manifested by man, that life, and that morality, are the fruits of the Gospel, and not the Gospel itself. The results they are, of the operation of its truths, and not the truths themselves. If this spirit and life are appealed to as evidences of discipleship, it is because they are the fruits of a living christian faith, and where these fruits are to be found, the presumption is, that the seed has been sown. But if they grow spontaneously in the heart of the Mussulman it no more follows that he is a christian, and entitled to be called or recognized as such, than it follows that a Pagan is a Jew, or a devotee of the law, because "he does by nature the things contained in the law."

The truth is, the christian spirit and life, are in perfect accordance with the purest and best impulses of man's spiritual nature. The truths of the Gospel do but quicken those impulses into life, and cause them to bring forth fruit abundantly.

But, at the same time, they may, and often do, bring forth their fruit spontaneously, and manifest themselves in the man who never heard of christianity, but all whose teachings have been opposed to it, and who scouts the whole of it as a fable. What then? Is he a christian? Nay. A good man and true, he may be, worthy of all honor and esteem. But a christian he is not; for the Gospel propounds great and momentous truths—heart cheering, soul purifying truths, demands man's faith, and ever and always makes that faith the first step in the christian life. To call a man a christian who believes in Mahomet, and condemns christianity in toto, is to confound all terms as distinctive names; and however pure he may be in spirit, such an appellation applied to him, is either an attempt at deception, or a proof of unpardonable ignorance. Christianity is a teacher of truth, sublime and glorious, and he that believeth not must stand condemned as unsuited to receive the christian name.

So says our text, "It is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." Why not say, to every one that manifests its spirit? Why, but because it presents truths to be believed, in which resides its mighty power, and

without which, it were lifeless and powerless as the dead letter of Seneca or Socrates?

The great teacher and founder of the christian system bears frequent and explicit testimony on this point. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Why not say, "this is the work of God, that ye manifest a certain spirit?" The answer is, because he claimed to be a teacher, sent from God, to proclaim truths of deep and undying importance. These truths were to be believed, and without that faith no man can be his disciple. Thus, in all his ministry, he announced his doctrines and taught as one having authority, and for no one thing did he so often, or so severely chide his disciples, as for their slowness of heart to believe. Even after his resurrection he "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen." And he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

All this does not much resemble the language of one who cared not whether a man believed

one thing or another, but would as soon own for his disciple a believer as an unbeliever.

If you look at the record given of the labors of the Apostles, in promulgating the religion of Christ, you will find them boldly challenging the faith of the world ; and their success is recorded in the brief sentence, “ and multitudes believed.”

When Philip taught the Ethiopian Eunuch, it was no dry code of morals, no intangible spirit he inculcated, but truth that demanded faith, and laid hold upon the affections only by that means. He desired to be enrolled among the disciples of Christ. “ What doth hinder that I should be baptized ?” Mark the answer. “ If thou believest thou mayest.”

All these instances clearly intimate that the Gospel is a system of truth, and that the first and important step towards becoming a disciple of Christ, is to believe on him. Christianity stands out clearly before the world, peremptorily and authoritatively challenging man's faith ; and all this pleasant talk about its being no matter what a man believes, however fashionable it may be, and however it may pass for liberality and charity, is, in most cases, but a pretext for baptizing rankest infidelity in the name of Christ, and has no more affinity with the precept and



example of Jesus and his early followers, than light has with darkness. It was not Christ who said I am no teacher of truth, nor do I care whether you believe in the doctrines of the Pharisees, or those of Moses and the Prophets, only manifest the right spirit, and ye shall be my disciples, whether ye believe in me or the traditions of the elders. Nor did the disciples say to the heathen, to whom they preached, "We come not to you as teachers to disturb your notions of truth, but merely as the advocates of a certain spirit and life. Believe in your idols if you please, only partake of this spirit and we will enroll you in the ranks of the disciples, and baptize you in the name of Christ, though the steps of a thousand altars are worn with your bended knees."

But they went forth as men having glorious truths to preach. They boldly challenged faith on the part of their hearers, and when an inquirer asked what he should do, the answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." They heard the commission of the Master, saying, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in my name," and full well did they understand that they were not thus sent forth to teach without being furnished with solemn truths which were to form the subjects of their communications.

If Jesus knew the nature of his own mission, it was that of a teacher who came to bear witness to the truth. If Paul knew his commission, it was that of a "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity;" and if any, or all the Apostles, may be presumed to understand what they received from the Master, then is the Gospel a system of divine, heaven-descended truth, and faith in it the first and essential step in the way of the Christian life. I do not now speak of the points of difference that distinguish the various forms of Christianity as being essential, for many of them are of little importance, and not to be magnified into indispensable things in a Christian faith. But I speak of the Gospel itself, as a system, and say, that faith in it is essential, and without it no man has taken the first step towards becoming a Christian.

Do not go to the opposite extreme. I do not say that Christianity is *merely* a system of abstract truth having nothing to do with a man's spirit or life, or, that faith is *all* that is necessary. I do not say, that faith is the last and only step, but only that it is the *first*, the initiatory step, and of course, no man has advanced a single line towards Christianity, who does not "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

I yield to none in heartfelt admiration of the

Christian spirit, or in a just appreciation of the exalted worth of the Christian life, but I maintain, that spirit and that life to be the fruit, rather than the substance of Christianity, so that both faith and works are necessary. The Gospel is a system of divine truth, proclaiming doctrines whose spirit is of God, and whose fruits are precious as life is dear; and yet, it is an idolatrous homage paid to these fruits which exalts them above their cause, and immolates faith itself upon their altar; and in its eagerness to glorify them sinks the Gospel down to a mere code of morals lifeless as those of the ancients; or an intangible spirit whose presence may be somewhere, but whose body is nowhere. Nay, but the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." It has truths, glorious and sublime to teach; claims it has, high and imperious claims upon the faith of man, nor can natural purity of spirit or excellency of life absolve from the obligation of obedience to the command to believe in Christ, for faith it is, that works by love and purifies the heart.

No other system, or negation of a system, can speak to the worn, the weary and the sorrowful with such words of comfort as are here spoken;

or so wipe the tears from the eyes of afflicted and weeping humanity. No other system can so nerve the soul with strength and energy in the great battle of life, as it is nerved by the power of Christian faith. No other words can so appeal to the better nature of man, so quicken and warm the moral energies of the soul, so purify the spirit, or so cause man to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Well then did the Apostle say, "It is the power of God unto salvation," and that, of it, he was not ashamed; and well may we count the wisdom of the world as foolishness in the comparison, and while many are saying, "Lo! here, and, lo! there," let us cleave to the old Gospel of the Savior, which has stood the test of ages; which will come out unharmed from every conflict, and prove itself at last the great power of God, by which he will reconcile the world unto himself.

## SERMON II.

### THE GOSPEL FINISHED.

“Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”  
Hebrews xii: 2.

THE object of the present discourse is to consider Christianity as a finished and complete system of religion. Jesus is not only the author, but the *finisher* of the Christian faith. His Gospel is no mere essay, or attempt to commence a system which was to be left for others to improve and perfect; but it is, in itself, the closing scene in a stupendous drama, the consummation of a great work of revelation which had been in progress for ages; and its perfection is evinced in the fact, that during the time it has been in the world, all attempts to improve it have signally failed. Many have tried their skill at this work. Wise, learned, eloquent men, Schoolmen, Sages and Philosophers, have made strong and persevering efforts to improve upon the Gospel, and give the world a better and more perfect system. But all their efforts have been vain, and it is yet manifest, that the original is better

than the improvement, as the sun is more luminous than any taper kindled by man.

As a matter of course, a religion thus perfect did not spring into existence in a moment. Such is not the order of nature. The river does not gush up in full tide from the ground. But it commences in a thousand springs, whose waters flow on and mingle, until they become a swelling flood, where the ships float and the sea monsters play. The sun comes not up instantly, deluging the earth with a sudden burst of light. But faintly, at first, his rays tinge the eastern horizon, and while the shadows of the dark night linger upon the earth, higher and still higher mounts the sun, until at last, his broad light is poured in full splendor upon the world, and it is day. So of divine truth; it was, and of necessity must have been, gradual in its approach. Stars there were, that shed their twinkling rays upon the night of human ignorance, far back in the ages of antiquity; beams there were, that streamed up from the sun of truth, in the horizon, long before the Savior came, and these cast their twilight upon the ages of the past, and led the wise and the good to look with ardent longings for the coming day. Gradually that day opened, upon the world. John the Baptist her-

alded its near approach, and in Christ its clear and steady light shone in full glory; and from that time onward, no luminary has eclipsed that light; but, on the contrary, those who have shone most brilliantly, have borrowed their rays from that central sun.

If you seek the reason of this gradual development of divine light and truth, you will find it in the fact, that humanity itself is progressive. It begins with a tender infancy, and from age to age, it grows by slow and toilsome steps, advancing under culture and discipline, expanding in intellect and increasing in moral stature, and thus it must continue to grow, until it arrives at the measure of the stature of Christ, who is the perfect man, whom none may exceed. Hence, it is easy to perceive, that the revelations of truth divine must of necessity be gradual. In every age, that truth must unfold itself in such manner as is adapted to the capacity of man, and shine with such light as he can endure. Its full splendor, poured in an instantaneous flood, would have dazzled the eyes, and left men in that worst of all darkness, which is produced by an excess of light. Hence we find that Christ, in his ministry, recognized Moses and the prophets; referred to their teachings as authoritative and

true ; said he came not to destroy but to fulfil them. and announced it as his mission to perfect what had been thus begun. The Gospel is therefore said to be “built upon the foundation of Moses and the prophets,” and it goes onward and upward with the temple until its topstone is laid ; and thus Jesus is the finisher of the faith.

These revelations having been thus gradually introduced, and advanced from the lowest to the highest, are henceforward adapted to the wants, and suited to the circumstances of humanity, in all its forms and phases, and in all stages of its development, from infancy up to manhood. And hence, this wonderful volume of our Father’s grace, which contains the record of these progressive revelations, has a word of instruction for one and for all. There are none so ignorant, that they may not find here truths adapted to their capacities—none so wise that they may not find here depths of wisdom which they cannot fathom or exhaust. The little child, may here find God speaking to him as a child, and the hoary head, may hear him also uttering the deep and profound treasures of knowledge which the world cannot comprehend. The poor are met with words of sympathy and hope, and the rich with needful caution and admonition.



There is no depth of sorrow or adversity upon which comfort does not flow from this sacred fountain, nor height of prosperity that is not hailed with salutary caution ; nor is there a web of circumstances whose meshes are so thick or intricate, that there is not here an analogy and a word fitly spoken, that may be appropriately applied. So " nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it," without marring its symmetry, or soiling its beauty ; for it is finished and complete.

The perfection of this work will be more clearly seen, as we attempt to trace its progress from the commencement to the completion.

Begin, then, with Moses and the revelations made by him. He found his people slaves in Egypt. They were poor, degraded, and ignorant. The chain of the oppressor was upon their limbs, and his yoke upon their necks. The world around them was full of idols, and they were themselves credulous and superstitious. A thousand Gods claimed their adoration, and demanded their service. To a people thus situated, the first and most needful lesson was, the unity of God. They needed, above all things, and before all else, to be taught that there was One being, high above all the Gods of the world, and that

he alone was God. And it is manifest that this lesson could only be taught to such a people in one way. To them a display of the higher moral attributes of the Deity would have been but a pleasing drama, from which no truth would have dawned upon their understandings. As well might you discourse to a child of the profoundest depths of mathematics, as to such a people of the moral attributes of God. They might, indeed, have learned thus, that the being presented was very good; but that was not the question. They asked not which among all the beings claiming their devotions was *best*; but they desired to know which was *God*. And that question could only be satisfactorily solved to such a people, by a test of power. One being might have been amiable and kind, and yet all his plans and purposes might be frustrated by another, and more powerful arm. But Moses came with a being whom he alleged to be God over all—aye, the only God, able to do all his pleasure, whose sway none could resist, whose dominion none could dispute; and, under the circumstances, it is manifest that the test of truth must necessarily be in a display of his power. That proof came, and the revelations God made of himself were precisely such as met the case, and were calculated to im-

press upon the minds of the people the great truth, that he alone was God. It came, in the wonders of his resistless power, in works that no God in whom the people trusted could equal or counterfeit. The skill of the magicians was set at nought, and they were confounded before the Lord. The plague smote the cattle, the arrows of death flew thickly, and the first born of Egypt were smitten and dead—the locusts came upon the wings of the wind, and every green thing was destroyed—the waters sent out their frogs, and the dust its vermin—the waves of the sea were turned back, and the hosts of Pharaoh melted away, and the power of the mighty was broken at the word of the Lord.

In all these things, we see revealed an arm of power, mighty beyond all comparison, stronger than all the Gods of the nations. But we look in vain for an exhibition of the milder glories of the divine character, or the high moral attributes of the Deity. We see no illustration of infinite love and boundless goodness, nor even an exhibition of the justice and righteousness of the Most High. And why not? Simply because he was teaching children, as it were, the mere alphabet of his religion. He was impressing upon their minds, that which they needed first

of all to know, that "the Lord was God, and beside him there was none else." And hence you find the reason given for these wonderful displays of his power, always this—"that they may know that I am God." This was the first lesson, and no step could be made in advance until that point was settled beyond all cavil or controversy; and the means employed to illustrate and enforce this lesson, were precisely such as met the wants, and corresponded to the condition of the people.

If we pursue the subject, we shall find further revelations, and higher views gradually unfolding themselves, as the people were prepared to receive them. The choice has been made. Moses is their Leader, and the Lord is their God; and now, other and higher views are presented. The attributes of God, which had been veiled or obscured under the amazing exhibitions of his power, begin to shine forth. At the rock, where the waters gushed forth under the rod of Moses—at Sinai, where the storm raged and the earthquake shook the foundations of the mountains, we see the same power that parted the waves of the sea, and smote the hosts of Pharaoh. But that is not all. We hear, also, the "still small voice," and power is coupled with other and

milder attributes as we proceed. We see the emblem of his wisdom in the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to guide them on their way. We see his justice in the fact, that he smote them often for their sins, and rewarded them for their obedience; and we discover his goodness in the manna that descended and fed them in that perilous journey.

And so in the Law, given by Moses, God is revealed as a being of retributive and distributive justice, as well as faithfulness and truth. It is no longer the mere fact, that God is a being of infinite power, and irresistible might, that appears; but something of his character and the principles of his government are unfolded. He rules indeed, with a sway that none can dispute, but it is no longer seen as an arbitrary sway. He lays justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and reigns king over all, whose throne is established in righteousness, justice and truth. And such were the only views of God, that the people were, as yet, prepared to receive or appreciate.

Follow on, from Moses to the Prophets, and you shall find the river of truth augmenting by new springs, and growing broader and deeper. Higher revelations of God; new disclosures of

the excellencies of his character, are continually appearing, both in the history of his chosen people, and in the direct communications of his word. He reigns as king of Israel. His power none can resist, his wisdom none can deceive—his dominion and glory none can rival. He punishes the disobedient, redresses the wrongs of his servants, and manifests his mercy in the pardon of the penitent. He discovers his compassion, in that, he pleads the cause of the poor, and raises up the down trodden and oppressed. In short, he is seen as the good king, whose power is the defense, whose wisdom is the guide, and whose goodness is the joy and confidence of his people. David tunes his lyre and teaches them the praises of the Lord, the king, and calls upon them to bless his holy name, “for he is good and his mercy endureth for ever.” Isaiah utters forth his burning words of pathos and power, and moves their hearts to rejoice in the goodness of him whose “arm is not shortened that he cannot save,” and whose eye never slumbers or sleeps. And all the prophets display the glory of God, and speak in glowing numbers of the excellency of the majesty of the Lord. The types and ceremonies of the law speak in mute but powerful eloquence of the mercy of God, and shadow forth the better things to come.

Still, it is observable, that the predominant idea of God is that of a ruler or king, and to him the people looked as a gracious sovereign or governor. Thus, came first, the truth, that "the Lord was God alone," to an ignorant people, in the midst of an idolatrous world, and by exhibitions of his power; and then gradually his glories are unfolded, and they are led to see him, not only as a Being of unrivalled power, but also in the character of a good and gracious king.

Thus, also, they saw themselves elevated from the degradation of slaves to the privileges of citizenship; and were no more servants in bonds, but fellow citizens in that kingdom whose ruler was God, and whose throne was in the heavens.

But the work was not yet complete. There were further revelations of God to be made. Christ came, and immediately there opens a new era in the display of the perfections of God. That Almighty arm, the wonders of whose power were so often seen in Israel, which caused even Moses to quake and tremble with fear,—that arm of the Lord, "strong and mighty," is still seen, neither palsied or shortened. But it is the arm of the God and Savior, not of Israel alone, but of the world. It is the arm of a friend and benefactor. The stern features of the king are

softened and mellowed in the new light in which they appear, and the monarch is seen as a Father, and the *subjects* are his children. The manifestations of his power are now exhibitions of the depths of his love. The miracles of Moses were miracles of power; those of the prophets and Jews of old were miracles of justice, in the main; but those of Christ were miracles of love and mercy. Justice is now seen to be administered in the tenderness of mercy, righteousness and peace have embraced and kissed each other; and all the attributes of God are unfolded as modifications of divine love, in which they all centre and harmonize, and this is the essence of God himself.

Man too, is raised to new relations and new dignity and hope. He is no longer the slave, or servant in bonds, nor yet merely a citizen in a kingdom, but is a *child* of the family of God, and an *heir* of the Father's estate. So Christ says, "I call you no more servants, but friends." And Paul says, "Now, therefore, ye are no more servants, but sons, and if a son then an heir." Having thus revealed God in the highest aspect, that man can possibly conceive of him, while he inhabits the flesh, that of a universal Father of pure and perfect love;



and having raised man to the highest possible dignity, that of a child and heir of God; and announced for him a destiny glorious as thought can conceive, even life and immortality, demonstrated in that miracle of life, his own resurrection, his work was done. He had concentrated the truths of the past in one focus—he had laid open the fountain from which they all flowed; he had led man up as far as he could go in the way of comprehending God; he had elevated him to the highest possible dignity that heart could wish, and taught him to expect a destiny exalted as the angels of the upper heavens, and his labor was ended. The great temple which God had been raising to his praise and man's good, was completed, the Gospel was finished, and he went his way.

If it be asked why all these truths were not, at once, and at an earlier period revealed to the world, the reply is: because the order of nature in all its departments is that of progressive development. You might as well ask why the sun does not rise instantly to its meridian height? or why the spring does not come as a flash of electricity? or why not teach a child to solve the deepest problems of Euclid, before having instructed him in so much of the rudiments of

science as the notation of figures? The truth is, God taught as fast as man could comprehend. If there are what you deem low and unworthy views of God in the Bible, it is worth your while to remember that they were crude and uncultivated minds to which they were presented; and to inquire whether they were not as high views as those minds were capable of comprehending. And before they are expunged from the Bible, it might be proper to ask, whether there are not multitudes on earth, to whom these are as much as they can conceive of God? If you do not need to pause with Moses at the burning bush, then go on, and learn of Christ, and you shall have enough to learn; but do not quench the light which gives to your more ignorant brother all the knowledge of God that he is capable of receiving.

I have said that Christ revealed God in the highest aspect, presented man in the most exalted relations, and taught him to look for a destiny as holy as heart could wish. And herein I wish you to perceive the truth of the text. He is "the *finisher* of our faith."

Eighteen hundred years have rolled away, and during all that time the oracles of God have been silent, except as they speak in the record of the

past. And though the wisdom of the world has been taxed to its utmost, yet no new attribute of God has been discovered, no new principle in the economy of his government has been brought to light, no new relation or higher destiny for man has been pointed out, nor have half the mines of Gospel wealth been explored. It was finished; and all the light worth having, that has shone upon the world, has been borrowed from this sun of truth.

But, it is asked, why should revelations cease? Why not go on, and give us new, and further revelations? Where would you go? Will you give to man a higher or purer idea of God than that which proclaims him the Universal Father, whose name and nature is Love? To some, a "Great Positive Mind" dwelling in the "vortex of eternity," and sending forth worlds and systems of worlds by laws as purely material as those by which the lava is ejected from the volcano, may be a higher view. But I see in such a God, nothing more worthy of trust, confidence or adoration, than I perceive in electricity; and therefore I cleave to the Father of the Gospel, as a better and holier view of God.

Will you seek for man a higher origin, or a more noble extraction, than to make him a child of the living God? Others may trace their ori-

gin to the laws of matter, or find their remote ancestors among the lower orders of animals, from which they have arisen by the evolutions of matter, like those by which vegetables grow up from the earth, and die, and nourish other forms. But for me, I am satisfied to call God my father and man my brother, and ask no better origin or relationship.

Will you give to man a more exalted or purer destiny than that of Life and Immortality as announced in the Gospel? The hells of Swedenborg, or the spheres of a more modern Seer, may to some appear better. But I am content with life and immortality at God's right hand, in that "house not made with hands;" and in that blessed land where the flowers never fade, and there shall be "no more death, nor sorrow or crying, neither shall there be any more pain." I prefer to a long series of "developments," that one change, which shall come "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and transform us into the "image of the heavenly," and clothe us with "immortality, incorruption and glory."

But even if it were possible to obtain "higher views," no man would have a right to claim that they were "Gospel views." If, having gone up the mount of vision, as far as Christ can lead

you, even to the summit ; you are anxious to see more, and choose to make a balloon ascension on your own account, there can be no earthly objection. Only, do not attempt to engraft your discoveries upon Christianity, or present them as a part and parcel of the Gospel of Christ. The truth is, they are your property, and you can take them to any market you please ; only, do not ask for them the sanction and authority of Christ, nor adulterate his Gospel with these spurious interpolations. His Gospel was *finished* long ago ; and if you have another Gospel, that is yours, and Christ has nothing to do with it.

Will it be said that Christianity is exhausted, and no longer able to meet the wants of an enlightened age ? It is not the first age, that has gloated over the idea of its wisdom, and uttered its " great swelling words of vanity," imagining itself wiser than God. But instead of having exhausted Christianity, the truth is, not a tythe of the race has, as yet, began to comprehend Moses and the Prophets. How many are there, out of some nine or ten hundred millions of human beings now on earth, who have learned that first and simplest of the principles of divine truth, which proclaims the Lord as God alone,

one and indivisible? All over the world the temples of idolatry are reared, and the very heavens are dark with the smoke of incense offered to Gods, that are no Gods. And yet, Christianity is exhausted is it? Even among those who profess to be Christians, how many are there who have learned to look upon God as a Father, and upon themselves as children and heirs of immortality? The great mass look upon God as an austere and hard master, and themselves subjects or servants laboring for hire; and upon religion as a mere expedient to secure heaven and keep out of hell. No thought have they, that they are children; and that the estate is theirs, not because of the magnitude of their works or the fidelity of their services, but by virtue of the fact, that God has made them heirs, and joint heirs with Christ. Ages shall roll away, ere man shall have learned the meaning of that word, which proclaims God as a Father and man as a brother.

And when that shall have been fully comprehended, the Gospel shall have higher lessons to teach. Fourier, that wonderful man, whose intellect could with equal facility grasp a universe or inspect a mite, teaches what he calls the "solidarity" of the human race, and dwells at

length on the subject of "universal unity." His admirers laud him to the skies, and it has been said that the announcement of this single doctrine is enough to immortalize any man. Yet ages before Fourier was born, the Apostle had learned of the Lord Jesus, that "we are all members one of another," so truly united in one body, that "when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." And that is what Fourier means by "solidarity." And so when Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," he uttered the great law of universal unity, not only of man with man, but with all spiritual intelligences, a unity so perfect and complete, that a thrill of joy goes up from earth to heaven when man is happy. And now, in the nineteenth century, when this great truth is announced under a new name by the French Philosopher, nine tenths of the church denounce him as an infidel; and the balance open their eyes and gaze in astonishment at the *new* and wonderful discovery that has been made. And yet Christianity is exhausted is it? I give Fourier credit for his labors to introduce this great principle into the organization of human society, and the

affairs of the world. With how much success, time must determine, but that he labored with a true heart and great ability is unquestionable. But what I wish to say is, that he discovered no new attribute of the Deity, no new principle of his government, or rule of human duty. He gave to man no new or higher relation, or more exalted destiny. And why? Simply because the Gospel is a finished and complete system. Let that be fully understood and reduced to practice, and all Fourier's visions of the perfect state of man on earth shall be more than realized; and without it, they will be but dreams. When that Gospel shall be comprehended, and all its riches counted, then it will be time to talk of "higher revelations." But that time is not yet, nor will it arrive while the earth is man's dwelling place, and his intellect is clouded by the veil of the flesh. Until then, let us hold fast to Christ, and look stedfastly unto him as "the author and finisher of our faith."



## SERMON III.

### THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”

I Corinthians 1 : 25.

THIS text is a strong and emphatic mode of expressing the infinite superiority of the wisdom of God, over the wisdom of man ; and it furnishes the reason on which is founded the previous assertion, that, “The world by wisdom knew not God.” Such knowledge is too vast and high to be explored by the feeble powers of men.

The object of the present discourse is, to illustrate the necessity of a divine revelation, from the fact, that the great truths of the Gospel are not originally cognizable by the unaided reason of man, or attainable by any efforts of human philosophy ; and, therefore, if communicated at all, it must of necessity be, by revelation.

I disclaim, in the outset, any intention of degrading reason, or plucking one laurel from the brow of the philosophers of the world. But, I affirm, that human reason has its sphere of operation, and there are bounds that it may not pass. Reason is the “eye of the soul,” but there

are things it cannot see—distances there are, it cannot traverse—darkness which it cannot penetrate—clouds so dense as to mock all its efforts. It is not speaking disparagingly of the human eye to say, that it cannot of itself, unaided, see the multitude of stars that are brought to light by the telescope; nor is it an attempt to persuade men to discard the use of their eyes, to insist that, in some things, and for some purposes the magnifying glass is necessary.

There are some truths, that the wisdom of man can clearly perceive, without any apparent effort, because they are open to the view, and plainly manifest to the meanest capacity. Other truths there are, the knowledge of which is obtained by the most plain and obvious modes of reasoning, such as may be readily apprehended; being but one step removed from those that are immediately perceptible without any effort of ratiocination. Others there are, that can only be discovered by deep and laborious processes of investigation, such as the popular mind can scarcely comprehend. Some must be sought by induction and analogy—some by philosophical experiment or chemical analysis, and some by deep abstruse mathematical demonstration. But it is evident that, all along, there is an ascend-

ing scale, by which the intellect advances, step by step, from the most obvious facts, up to those sublime truths that measure the distances of the stars, and require the giant mind of a Newton or Galileo for their comprehension. And it is equally evident, that somewhere, there must be a limit to this upward course—boundaries there must be, that cannot be passed. Nay, there are limits all along. At every stage of progress, the philosopher finds, on either hand, darkness that he cannot penetrate, and interminable labyrinths, that he cannot explore, and is compelled to leave their intricate windings in the same darkness in which he found them.

Now, the idea of a revelation supposes, that the thing revealed was, otherwise, beyond the grasp of human wisdom. There is no need of a revelation from God to teach man Botany or Chemistry, or any of the branches of natural philosophy, for the simple reason that we can discover these things by the diligent use of the powers and faculties with which we are endued. But why the necessity of a revelation in anything? Evidently because the wisdom of man could not reach even the foolishness of God. It treats of matters that lie without the domain of man's unaided reason, and in relation to which, with-

out a revelation, he must have remained in utter ignorance.

Take now, if you please, the first great lesson of divine truth, which teaches the unity and supremacy of God, and see the truth of our position in application thereunto. Granted, that the highest and soundest principles of human reason, faithfully applied, might lead to the conclusion, that there is at work in this universe, an agent more powerful than man; and tracing effects up to their causes, we might arrive at the idea of some great unknown first cause of all things. And that, is the highest point to which unaided reason in her loftiest flights could carry us. All beyond that must come by revelation. No system of induction or analogy—no acuteness of analysis—no multitude of philosophical experiments—no depths of mathematical science could advance the next step, and announce this great first cause, as a self-existent and spiritual intelligence, who unrivalled and alone is God—who saw the end from the beginning, and who rules supreme among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. These are great truths that lie beyond the scope of mortal vision, when unaided by a revelation.

And hence, we find, that of all the nations of

antiquity, the Jews stood alone in their knowledge of God, as one supreme and eternal spirit. And it is remarkable, that they did not profess to have made these discoveries by the superiority of their intellectual powers, or the greater depth of their philosophical investigations: nor did they propagate them by the ordinary methods of disseminating the doctrines of men. On the contrary, they testified that they were taught by revelation, and proclaimed on the authority of God himself. Be this as it may, the fact is undoubted, that the knowledge of God, as one and supreme, was confined to that little spot of earth where dwelt the descendants of Abraham. Elsewhere, all over the wide earth, Polytheism and Idolatry prevailed for ages. There were wise men in these days—men who “shed great thoughts as easily as the oak looseneth her leaves”—men whose giant minds could grapple with things profound—who towered high, and shone as brilliant lights in the world, and whose wisdom streams over the darkness of the past, and glimmers even upon the present. And yet, not all their wisdom could lead them up to the knowledge of God, or prevent them from bowing at the shrines of idolatry. Rome had her sages and philosophers, whose names are the admiration of

the world, even until now. Yet Rome had a vast catalogue of Gods, whose names, even, would defy the efforts of any common memory ; and her wise men, not less than her ignorant multitudes, worshipped at these altars. They saw not—could not see so much of divine truth, as that there was one, and but one living and true God. And Greece, too, was learned and wise in her day. At Athens, stood her temples and altars to Gods without number ; and there, were congregated the sages and philosophers of that age. And yet, in all their wisdom, they knew not God. When Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, he said, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious ; for when I passed by and beheld your devotions, I saw an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown God.’” A confession, this, that there, even in the focus of light, emanating from the wisdom of the world, God was unknown.

And so it is to the present time. All over the earth, Polytheism abounds ; the temples of idols are reared high, and incense goes up from ten thousand altars ; and no nation or people has learned so much of God, as to have the assurance, that he alone is God, except those who have learned it, directly or indirectly, from the

revelation of his word. With these facts in view, judge ye, whether I am justified in saying, that here is the limit of human wisdom, and that the truths of the Gospel lie without the domain of the unaided reason of man.

It is in vain to say, there are satisfactory modes of reasoning by which the existence of God can be proved; because the announcement of a truth beforehand, is a different thing from the recognition, or even the proof of a truth after it is announced. When Leverrier announced the existence of a planet without the orbit of Uranus, it was an easy matter to prove the truth of his alleged fact; but, it by no means follows that any of the shepherds of old might have made the discovery with the naked eye, in their nightly vigils upon the plains. Besides, the profoundest philosopher must have his data, the mathematician his terms, before he can proceed to discover truth. The French philosopher above alluded to, had the suspicions of those that had gone before him. He had given, the volume of the outermost planet hitherto known—its orbit, and its perturbations or deviations from the regular course of that orbit. On these, he founded his calculations, and with wonderful accuracy, pointed his finger to the very spot in the heavens

where dwelt that "stranger in the skies," whose existence had hitherto been a problem with man. But now, it is an easy matter for the common observer to prove the existence of this planet; and yet it does not follow that he might have discovered it without the aid of Leverrier, or that he could have solved the problem without the terms and data necessary for its solution. And so in the case under consideration; let revelation, the telescope of the soul, enlarge the human vision, and reveal to man, God's unity and eternity, and then it is easy to see that it harmonizes with right reason, and with all the light thus poured upon the world; and, taking the fixed truths of revelation as axioms, man may frame a very satisfactory method of proving the existence of one God. That conclusion, however, was announced beforehand, and is not a discovery of human wisdom. But take away the light of revelation—strip man of all truths and principles for the knowledge of which he is indebted to revelation, and then see if he can search and find out God. It matters not how clearly you may, now, prove the existence of one God; that truth was announced first, as a revelation from God, and in proof that it is indeed a revelation, and above all the efforts of the human



intellect, and beyond the original cognizance of the reason of man, I point you to the fact, that the world has not yet obtained that much of divine truth, and has yet to see the first man, who has arrived at that truth, by his own investigations, and without the aid of the Bible, either directly or indirectly obtained.

If we ascend one step higher in the knowledge of God, and consider the attributes that are ascribed to him, in his revelations, it will, at once be perceived, that they are still further from the grasp of the intellect, in its own strength. Evidently, if reason alone cannot reach the idea of God, as one eternal spirit, indivisible and supreme, it cannot proceed to a discovery of the attributes and purposes of that unknown and mysterious being. That God is infinite in goodness, that he is a being of justice, even handed and sure, that his merey endureth for ever, and his purpose is to redeem man from sin, and raise him to life and immortality, at his own right hand; *these* are the announcements of revelation. Truths they are, that the wisdom of man never could discover, never has discovered. No process of induction from data known to simple reason, no method of analysis or experiment, or demonstration, can be applied to them, nor is man without

a revelation in possession of any terms by the aid of which he can solve the problem of the character or purposes of God. For this reason, among all the Gods formed by the wisdom of the world, there is no one that can, in any proper or enlightened sense of the word, be called either holy, just or good.

On the contrary, power, stern, iron power, guided by whim or caprice, is the prominent attribute that secures the servile homage of their worshippers. This power it is, rather than goodness, or justice, or mercy, that is invoked full often, to take vengeance upon enemies; to interpose for defence, or to spare the avenging arm. But to do justice and right for their own sake, to have mercy on the penitent because of mercy itself, to work goodness and truth, invocations were not, and are not made to the Gods of the world. Never did man lay hold upon the idea of a God, who, with unvarying impartiality, will render unto all their just dues, plead the cause of the poor and needy, and have mercy abundantly upon the wayward and wandering, until that idea was presented in the Bible and unto this day, such a God is all unknown, where no light has penetrated from the revelation of the Most High. Never did the intellect of man in

its loftiest flights, behold the light of the knowledge of a God whose character was such, that with no offering but a contrite heart, he might be invoked for pardon, on account of his own mercy and grace alone—never did man know a God whose forgiveness might be asked even for murderers, until that light blazed from the cross of Christ, in that prayer of prayers, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Should we go on further, and examine other developments of truths, as revealed in Christ, we shall find the truth of our position still more plainly manifest. The universal brotherhood of man, which overlooks the distinctions of nations, tribes, and sects, and binds all kindred and tongues of the earth, in one common bond of union, making them one in interest, one in duty, and one in destiny for ever—the purpose of God to raise man from death, and exalt, purify and train him for communion with himself, and all that is good—the great principle of overcoming evil with good, and the triumph of good over all that bears the name of evil, *these* are great and momentous truths, that the unaided wisdom of the world never discovered, and the necessity of a revelation for their announcement is evident from the fact, that unto this day they are un-

known on the earth, save where the light of the Gospel has found its way.

I have heard indeed of a "New Philosophy;" which claims the name of "Spiritual Philosophy," which professes to be far superior to the revelation of God—and promises "to give access to the structure and laws of the whole material and spiritual universe." It glorifies reason and philosophy, as the only safe guides to the temple of truth, and warns man with earnestness to abjure all authority, and lean upon reason as the safe and unvarying rule. It is no part of my intention to canvass, at length, the claims of this New Philosophy, or examine how far it leads men on towards a knowledge of God and his truths. I notice it merely as a curiosity among the numerous vagaries of the human intellect, and direct your attention to a single point. It is a cardinal principle in this philosophy, that the reason of man, each for himself, is his only guide, and able to conduct him to a knowledge of the truth. All *special* revelations from God are to be discarded, and all truth that has shone upon the world is to be considered as the fruit of the efforts of the human mind, without direct or special aid from God. And yet, it puts into our hands a large volume

called "Nature's Divine Revelations ;" as if nature was better qualified and more likely to make revelations than nature's God. That nature should select some favorite, and in a special and extraordinary manner reveal to him all her secrets, it regards as quite reasonable ; but that the author of nature should inspire men "to speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," or reveal himself to the world, in any other manner, than through his silent and speechless works, it deems in the highest degree preposterous. *Nature's* revelations may be uttered by a sleeping boy, and written and printed in a book, but the voice of the Prophets is not to be heeded, and the book that contains God's revelations is quite Apocryphal.

It is singular, too, that according to the account given, and notwithstanding the deification of reason, these "Nature's Divine Revelations," are not the result of the investigations of human reason, in its natural state, or in the ordinary sense. The human mind could not reach them while veiled in the flesh. And so we are told in the beginning, that this extraordinary book "contains the consecutive reasonings and revelations of a spirit, freed by a certain process, the philosophy of which will be explained, from the

obstructing influence of the material organization, and exalted to a position that gave access to the laws of the whole material and spiritual universe." It seems, then, that the seer himself had need of *special* revelations. He could not grasp these truths, and to obviate the difficulty, instead of calling on God for light, he procured the aid of a certain *man*, who, by a "peculiar process," liberated his spirit; and anon upward and still upward went the adventurous youth, through sphere after sphere, until he reached the seventh, and saw things unutterable; and these are written down, and printed in a book, and now we have "Nature's Divine Revelations" specially communicated to a man who denies all special revelations from God.

If the account given be correct, it is easy to see how all the revelations of this book may have been obtained by the liberated spirit of the seer; for he saw them plainly, by a direct insight; but how we are to be certified of their truth,—we whose misfortune it is still to be encompassed by "the obstructing influence of this material organization,"—*we* whose "interiors" have not been opened by this new and philosophical process, and who have not been up into the spheres—how *we* are to know or judge of

the truth of these representations, does not so clearly appear; unless, indeed, we are to take them on the authority of the Seer; and surely that ought not to be; for a philosophy that abjures all authority, ought not to ask us to receive such astounding wonders on the authority of a man of twenty years. And yet, for the life of me, I cannot see what other foundation is furnished, on which we are to build our faith in "Nature's divine revelations." So then, even here, after all these "great swelling words of vanity" about the powers of reason, the truth is admitted, that reason has its bounds, that it cannot pass—that it must be liberated, and its sphere of vision enlarged, ere it can perceive even the truths of nature; and the difference is, that the New Philosophers choose to rely on man for this enlargement of vision, while we prefer to receive it from God.

Now I profess to you that I am willing to follow reason as far as it can go, and bow to her decisions in all that comes within the sphere of her vision. I would learn of philosophy all that she has to teach, and thank God for the knowledge thus to be obtained. But when reason would "quit her sphere and rush into the skies," or when philosophy would attempt to raise the

inferior up to superior natures, it is to me no philosophy, no reason. When it comes to the point, that I must be aided to pass a line that I cannot pass in my own strength; I choose to rely on God for that aid, rather than any inventions of man; for I know that "the foolishness of God is wiser than man."

Nor does the fact, that God has made a revelation to man, necessarily suppose that there should be a perfect harmony of opinion among those who embrace that revelation as a rule of faith. Imperfect creatures as we are, limited in all our powers and capacities, differing as we do in our mental peculiarities, and seeing, as we must, "through a glass darkly," it cannot be expected, that even divine light should strike every mind in equal measure, or with the same shades of color, or hues of brightness. Upon subjects the most trite and common, and in relation to the simplest matters of every day's experience and observation, men differ in opinion. How then can it be expected that there should be perfect unanimity upon those high and spiritual truths, which reason cannot reach, and of which revelation itself can bring to our minds but a faint and feeble conception? Let not the devotee of reason triumph; for among the worship-



pers at her shrine, there is quite as much, nay, more contrariety of opinion, than among those who bow at the altars of revelation. Nor let philosophy boast, for it cannot escape your observation, that there are as many systems of philosophy as of religion in the world. He that forsakes revelation for nature, in hopes of securing harmony of opinion, will find himself sadly mistaken in the end, for he will soon discover, that the interpreters of nature differ as widely as the expounders of scripture.

Of what we have said, thus far, in this discourse, this is the sum. Reason has its bounds, philosophy its sphere. Within these bounds, and that sphere, they are useful, and should be diligently employed. But they must not attempt to overleap the barriers that compass them around. They cannot grasp the infinite, nor cross the line that separates the material from the spiritual world, or bring one truth to light in regard to superior beings. They cannot reveal God to the world, or unveil his glories, or announce his purposes. These, if taught at all, must be taught by revelation from God himself. And hence the necessity of a revelation from him. When once announced, reason may approve, and philosophy corroborate them, but they cannot

bring them to light. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man," and vain are all the efforts of the intellect of men to go up, in its own strength, and grasp the deep and unfathomable wisdom of the infinite mind.

But I cannot enlarge. In my next discourse I purpose to present you with another view of the subject, in an attempt to illustrate the mode or manner of revelation, and the channels through which it must necessarily come. Meantime, let us "hold fast the profession of faith without wavering," and of the volume of divine grace and truth say with the poet,—

"When feeble reason, tired and blind,  
Sinks helpless and afraid,  
This blest supporter of the mind  
Affords her powerful aid."

## SERMON IV.

### THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD.

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”  
John 1: 14.

THERE has been much diversity of opinion, among Christian professors, upon the subject of the “Logos” or word, mentioned in the commencement of this chapter, as being “with God in the beginning,” and also, as being God himself. The advocates of the doctrine of the Trinity, have confidently appealed to this portion of the sacred record as proof positive of the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; while, on the other hand, many attempts have been made to show that such a sentiment is not fairly involved in the language of the inspired penman. It is not my purpose, to enter upon that controversy at all, in the present discourse. I only wish to say that, in this case, as in most others, there is a great truth at the bottom of much error. The doctrine of the deity of Jesus, sacred and important as it is deemed, and erroneous as I surely consider it, as commonly understood, is

nevertheless not entirely destitute of foundation in truth. It is but a distorted and exaggerated form of the important doctrine set forth in the text, long known in the church under the name of "The incarnation of the divine word."

Some indeed insist upon "the incarnation of God" as being the proper form of expression, to designate the idea presented in the text, which says, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Let those who take this view of the matter, use the phraseology which suits them best. I will not contend with them on that ground. The truth itself is what I would seek. Whether it is called "the incarnation of the word," or "the incarnation of God," is of little consequence; and whether ingenuity may deduce from it, the metaphysical abstraction of a Trinity in Unity, and a Unity in Trinity, is of still less importance. The truth here indicated I take to be, that in some intelligible sense the divine word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, in the person of Christ. In him its glory was concentrated, and seen as the image of the Father God. This is the important truth to which I invite your attention at this time, and the necessity and propriety of which I desire to unfold.

It has been shown, in a former discourse, that the human mind is so limited in its powers, that it cannot, of itself, search out and comprehend every thing. There is a boundary that it cannot pass. There are truths upon which, in their naked essence, it cannot look, for in relation to them there is, for man, no direct insight; and, therefore, if they come to him at all, they must come by revelation. And even when thus revealed, the idea of them can only be learned from resemblances, and analogies, or contrasts. They cannot be seen with the eye, and can only be presented to the mental vision, in types and shadows, or clothed in forms of which we are cognizant, and which we can comprehend, thus enabling us to form an idea of the unknown from its resemblance to the known.

In all our researches, it is important for us to bear this truth constantly in mind, lest we attempt to overleap barriers that we cannot pass. We should distinctly understand how far we can go, and where we must pause, and seek the aid of the revelations of God. Without descending to particulars, it is sufficient for our present purpose to say, that our own nature constitutes one of those impenetrable boundaries, to a direct and perfect vision. I mean to say, that we can

neither see directly, or comprehend by any effort of our intellectual powers, any being above ourselves. Indeed, below us, there are in all the creatures of God, mysteries that we cannot comprehend, and multitudes of phenomena that we cannot explain. The instinct of the beast is as incomprehensible to us, as the workings of an angel's mind ; only its operations and effects being visible. At the same time, we can know something, clearly and definitely, of the orders of being below us, because they present tangible forms and doings, which we can submit to a direct examination, and prove by observation and experience. But when we come to an order of beings above us, who exist not in material bodies, visible to our eyes, or tangible to the senses ; no matter how small the distance that separates us, we arrive at a line that we cannot pass.

Angels may dwell in myriad hosts all around us. The difference between many of them and us, may be, that they have merely put off this clothing of the flesh, and exist as pure spiritual beings, while we are yet tenants of this "earthly house." And from these, the ascending scale may go onward and upward, advancing at every step in dignity and glory, until it arrives at the

bright seraph, that shines with brilliant light, at God's right hand, and dwells hard by the eternal throne. All this may be, and yet what know we of these beings? Nay, what *can* we know of them by any direct insight, or by any effort of our intellectual powers? It is manifest, that, while we remain in these bodies, and are under the necessity of using this material organism, as the receptacle and vehicle of our knowledge, we are, and by the irrevocable law of our being must be, separated from them by a gulf, which, so far as we are concerned, is utterly and hopelessly impassable. Confined to the earth, communing with the material, we cannot go to them, but if there is communication at all, they must come to us. With senses clouded by the veil of the flesh, and at best able only "to see through a glass darkly," those higher forms of life are too ethereal to meet our view. No optics of ours can discover them, or know them, so that if they would be known at all, they must reveal themselves. And it is equally evident, that this can only be done through such forms, and by such types and shadows, as man can see and comprehend. The inflexible law I take to be, that the inferior cannot rise, in his own strength, and grasp the superior. Nor can that superior, even, make

himself known, except by the adoption of forms and agencies, that can speak to the inferior, through the channels, by which alone, light is communicated to him. The forms of the spiritual world, all its scenery and imagery, are unseen by mortal eyes, and its language, if language it has, is an unknown tongue upon the earth. Gabriel himself might speak in that language, with power to thrill through all the hosts of heaven, and, yet, it would come to mortals with a voice as void of meaning, as that in which the eloquence of Paul would fall upon the ears of a tender infant. I suppose the general idea here presented is perfectly apparent to the meanest capacity. And it is for this reason, that imagination, in every age, and in all grades of improvement, where it would present an idea of its conceptions of spiritual beings, has presented them in forms, and given them shapes, and clothed their ideas in human language. In no other way could the understandings of men be reached. So are we constituted, that we cannot separate the idea of a being, from some form, or conceive of an intelligent creature, without giving him some shape, or imagine that he can speak to us, without employing some language, that we can understand. Suppose, for example, there is one



spiritual being, lower than any other, yet, just above man. Though in one sense near to us, yet, evidently, the partition wall between us, is all impassable and impenetrable, so far as we are concerned. Leave man to himself—let him task all his powers of mind to the very utmost of his ability, and he cannot learn or know, the first or simplest truth, in regard to that superior being. All that he can know, upon that subject, must come to him by revelation. And it is also manifest, that this spirit, if disposed to reveal himself to man, and commune with him, must of necessity, pass the line that separates the material from the spiritual, at least in form, and clothe himself, and all the ideas he would communicate, in such forms, as are cognizable by a spirit, veiled in the flesh. In no other way could the communication be made. He cannot release man from the flesh. He cannot give to man the clear vision of a pure spirit, or raise him up to an unobstructed view of the spiritual world; and he must, therefore, come down to man as he finds him; and speak to him, in the language, and through the agencies of the earth.

If we pursue this train of thought, and carry it up to God, and the knowledge of him, the principle will be the same, and still more appa-

rent. If we cannot, of ourselves, go up to the comprehension of the lowest imaginable grade of spiritual intelligences ; well may we ask, " Who by searching can find out God ? " " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," his excellent glory. He is a spirit, " whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain," and no height of intellectual greatness, or acuteness of mental vision can enable us to see God, with direct and palpable vision, nor can we take the first step towards the attainment of that knowledge. Plainly, and positively confined to the earth, communing only with the temporal, we cannot move a line towards the infinite and the eternal, for they are numbered among the things " not seen." With our feeble faculties we cannot, by any possibility, go up to God, and if we know him at all, he must lessen the distance, by which we are separated, by coming down to us, and revealing himself.

And here, also, it is evident, that this can only be done, in condescension to our state, and our capacities. If he would teach us his truth, he must, of necessity, come to us, and reach our minds through the channels by which we receive intelligence. He must veil himself in forms with which we are acquainted. He must address these eyes, and these ears, and these hearts, through

those agencies by which they are accessible. If he would speak to us, he must needs speak in a human language, for that only do we understand. If he would appear to us, he must embody his invisible essence, in some form, visible to those eyes, and thus reveal himself; for that essence we cannot see. Hence any revelation from God to man, if it would be preserved, and perpetuated, beyond the date of its delivery, must be preserved in human language. As a necessary consequence, it must be encompassed with the imperfections of that language, which alone is the vehicle, in which it can be borne down to subsequent ages. If we had a permanent and perfect language, which never changed in the slightest degree, we might then look for perfection, in the records of divine revelation. But when it is remembered, that language, as an instrument of thought, is always imperfect, and changing, and that all revelations must clothe themselves in this form, it will not lead to surprise, or skepticism, if we find many, and even great imperfections in the book of revelation. The revelation *itself* may, indeed, be perfect in truth. But the *record* of that revelation—the vehicle in which it is conveyed, that is another matter—it is a human invention, and must needs be imperfect.

Consider now, that God were about to make a revelation of himself to the world. We cannot go up to God, and of course, he must stoop, and come down to us. No eye can see him, in his essential being, no mind grasp his infinitude. What could be done? How could he reveal himself to such beings as we are, except, by veiling his glories in shadows, upon which we could look, and manifesting himself in forms, that we can see and understand? The language of a God is unknown to man, and the wisdom of the eternal mind uttered in that voice, would be senseless as the roar of the thunder. The dialects of earth, even, are but a poor channel for the communication of such depths of wisdom, yet, they must necessarily be employed, and through them God must speak to man, if he would speak, in an intelligible manner. And this is one mode, in which God's word came to the world.

But it was not the only form of communicating the word of truth. It came, also, in the breathings of the divine spirit, upon the human soul. It embodied itself in the dispensations of God's providence, forages, in the discipline of his chosen and peculiar people. It whispered in the voice of the prophets, and seers, of old. It veiled itself in the ceremonies, types, and symbols of the

law, and shone in the "shekinah" that dwelt in the "Holy of Holies." It spake to Moses in the burning bush, and to the children of Israel from the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. It was seen in the waters, that flowed from the rock, and in the manna that came from heaven. It was heard in the thunder, that shook the mountain, and in the "still small voice," that spake of love and mercy. In all these, God came down to the capacity of man, and manifested himself by agencies, that came within the scope of human vision.

But all these revelations of God were imperfect, and inadequate to convey a full and competent idea of the excellent majesty of the Most High. Divine truth had spoken in types and shadows—it had clothed itself in the language of earth, but it had, not yet, put on its most clear and comprehensible garb. It remained to be "made flesh and dwell amongst us." It must needs put off its superior glory, and come to us in a form that could be seen and felt, and understood by men. It must speak with man's voice, live man's life, and act man's part in the world. It must present us the idea of God, as manifested in the form of humanity, and that, is the highest form that man can compre-

hend, and embraces all, that he can know of God.

And thus, it came in Christ, through whom God was manifested in the flesh. In him, man saw the "brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person." In him, shone the glory of the Father, "full of grace and truth." It thus, came to the earth, and dwelt with men. It spake, in that voice, which sounded from Olivet, and moved in that heavenly form, which walked the streets of the holy city, while endless throngs crowded around him. It was seen, in that wonderful being, who sat by the sea of Galilee, teaching the wisdom of God, and who spake to the waves and bade their tumult be still. Its power was manifested, in the miracles he wrought, and was evident, when the blind eyes were opened—the lepers were cleansed—the maniac restored to his right mind—the lame man leaped as a hart—and the dead cast off the habiliments of the grave, and came forth to life. It was exhibited in that unearthly love, which so distinguished him of Nazareth, from the ordinary mass of humanity—leading him to sympathize with all human want and human woe—to labor to overcome evil with good—to endure contumely and abuse—when reviled not to revile again—to

lay down his life for our sakes, and to expire, at last, with a prayer for enemies upon his lips. This was, indeed, God, manifested in the human form, and it was the highest form, in which man could see him. Henceforward, to know God, was not to investigate theories, or interpret words of doubtful import ; but an Apostle could say, " Our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." For this reason he is called " Emanuel," " God with us," not because he was the very, and eternal God, in all the fullness of his immortal years ; nor yet, because he was the second person in the Trinity of God's, but because he was the embodiment of the divine word—the image of God—the personification of all that God could communicate of himself to the world—the living, moving, active, tangible form, in which God set forth the glories of his character, in light softened and mellowed, to meet the vision of man, so that, he could see, what otherwise, would have been invisible. And all this, was no mere arbitrary arrangement, but it was the result of the laws of man's being, and his relation to God, and was made necessary by the fact, that no human wisdom, or human knowledge could, of itself, go up and take hold on the comprehension

of higher natures, much less, reach the infinite God, or look upon him without a veil between. So, then, to man it was indispensable, that the word should be made flesh, and dwell among us, for thus, and thus only, could we know God.

It follows, then, as a matter of course, from this view of the subject, that the best and clearest—nay, the only true and infallible rule for learning the true character of God, is in Christ, the image of the invisible Father, the personification of the divine word. The Deity, in his essence, we cannot see, nor can imagination itself, conceive the fullness of God, in the perfection of his divine nature, and apart, from the idea of a person, and a form. But we can see the form, in which God has been pleased to manifest himself. We can see, and appreciate it, as it moves in works of mercy, and with words of peace, among the children of men.

Human language, too, is a poor and imperfect vehicle, in which to convey to human minds, an idea, of an infinite and invisible spirit. Words, and phrases, applied to such a subject, though big with meaning, are liable, to be misunderstood, perverted, or abused. Their clearest teachings may, often, be mistaken by the honest mind and mischievous ingenuity may wrest



them, from their legitimate import; and in the process of translation from one language to another, their original meaning may be nearly lost. But, happily, there is, in Christ, a permanent, a substantial, and an unchanging form, in which God's word is presented to our minds. It is a form that never varies, a form traced not merely in words as footsteps in the sand, but stamped upon the history of the world, inwrought in its progress, engraved upon humanity, in mighty deeds, whose impress cannot be obliterated. More durable than statue, carved from granite or marble, that form divine, sculptured in works that never die, stands there, in the record of the past, and the state of the present—its outline clear and distinct, its features beaming with the light of God. It never varies, and however much men may err, in their interpretations of words and phrases, there is no mistaking the image there presented.

Accordingly, we find, that there has never been much difference of opinion in regard to the character of Christ. Men have wrangled much about his nature, and doctrines, and work, and the mode and form in which he will manifest his character; and have speculated as to what he will be in the future; but what he *was*, and *is*.

and has been, is not a questionable matter. The great elements of his character are seen alike. Whether he is viewed as the substitute, taking upon himself the penalty of the violated law, that man may escape; or, as the victim upon whom God poured out the vials of his wrath, that he might spare man, and yet be appeased; or as the martyr, who saw the terrible amount of suffering, which his devotion to human interests would cost him, and yet went up to the altar, with an unfaltering step, and laid down his life for our sakes; in either of these aspects, it is observable, that however derogatory, to God, some of them may be, the character of Christ is one of most exalted worth. They accord to him an unearthly and preponderating benevolence, such as mortal man has never, before or since, seen, in any of the sons of earth. And even the infidel, who rejects the claims of Jesus to a divine commission, sees him, as a being of vast and active benevolence of character, and testifies his admiration of a being, so patient, mild, and good.

Now, would we but look unto Jesus, and consider him as the representative of God, and remember, that he is the embodiment of the divine word, we should then perceive, in that beautiful character so clearly delineated, God himself, in

all his glory, reflected as in a mirror, and our wranglings about the divine character would cease. We should then understand, that such as was Christ, in all the excellencies of his character, the purity of his life, and the depths of his love, such is God; for "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us," for this very purpose, that God might thus reveal himself in a form, that man could comprehend. But the difficulty is, that men have separated between Christ and God, and made the character of one, the opposite of the other. Could we but know, that Jesus is the image of God, oh! how many of the dark superstitions of the world—those phantoms, that so waste our faith, would flee away, and how brightly would the glory of God shine in the face of his anointed; for there, and there only, can God be seen. Darken counsel as you will by words without knowledge; fritter away, as you please, the meaning of words and phrases; magnify, if you must, every word that would shroud the divine character, in appearances of wrath and vengeance, yet in Christ, there is a solid land-mark, that cannot be perverted or mistaken. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The living likeness, the express image of God is thus presented, and

there it stands, the same in all ages, shining with a clear and unmistakable light, to correct all that is dark or false, in man's conceptions of God, and to lead us up, to see the image of the invisible Creator. Upon that blessed embodiment of the Deity, let us fix a stedfast eye, and an unfaltering faith, until its transforming power shall change us into its likeness, and thus make us partakers of the divine nature.

## SERMON V.

### AUTHORITY.

“For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.” Matt. vii: 29.

THERE is a deep significance, a very solemn and momentous importance in that word “Authority,” as applied to the present state of man, and his prospects for the future. The world is, at this moment, a great battle field, and the conflict is between authority on the one hand, and individual liberty and independence on the other. It is not unlikely, that in this, as in most conflicts of the kind, both parties may have gone to extremes, the one claiming an unjust and tyrannical authority, and the other, demanding an unbridled and dangerous liberty. However this may be, it is certain, that the old foundations of the past are upturned—men have cut loose from the moorings that have so long bound them—the lethargy of long ages is over, and humanity is alive and awake to a sense of its interests, its dignity, its rights, its duty and destiny. Crowns fall like meteors in the clear sky of a winter’s

night ; and thrones where strong despotism has sat proudly and securely for ages, are endangered by the spirit of liberty, that has gone abroad in the earth, rousing the nations to a sense of the omnipotence of truth and justice. It will be a blessed thing for the world, if in thus departing from the past, men do not spread their sails, and launch out into unknown and untried seas, to encounter furious storms, or be dashed upon dangerous rocks, where imagination sees only deep, calm and tranquil waters, and fair, gentle breezes. Happy, indeed, if in attempting to avoid the Scylla of authority, they strike not upon the Charybdis of anarchy and licentiousness.

Of the political affairs of the world, however, I have little to say. I leave that to those to whom it appropriately belongs. Yet I cannot avoid seeing, in these movements, the same great principle, that is in operation, in the domain of religion ; for here, too, the question of " authority " is widely agitated, and with an absorbing interest.

On the one hand, is the strict conservative, who holds on, with a death grasp, to things as they are. He surrenders his reason and intellect blindly to the authority of the past. The

Church is his oracle. The decisions of the Pope, the Institutes of Calvin, or the teachings of Luther, or Wesley, are to him landmarks that he may not pass; and to vary from these, by the breadth of a thousandth part of a hair, is akin to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. To him, reason is carnal, and not to be trusted, for a moment, in competition with these high authorities, to whom it must submissively bow, nor dare think its own thoughts, or follow its own decisions.

On the other hand, is the radical, exulting and rioting in the excess of his newly discovered liberty. He has discovered that he has a soul—a *free* soul; and that God has given him the liberty of exercising the powers with which that soul is endued. But between the use, and abuse of this liberty he knows no distinction. He talks eloquently of freedom, but knows not, that there is but a single step between liberty and licentiousness. He has discovered that man has too long and too blindly submitted to the authority of his fellow man; and instead of wisely discriminating between the true and the false, he forthwith rushes to the opposite extreme, and denounces all authority, except that of his own individual soul. It is not enough for him to say,

that the decisions of churches, councils, conclaves, synods, cardinals and popes, are not binding upon his conscience, but he lays his hands upon the oracles of God, and repudiates the Authority of the Most High. Not enough, to deny the authority of Luther, Calvin and Wesley, but the patriarchs and prophets, "who in time past spake to the fathers as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," come in for a full share of the general condemnation, and are to him but the propagators of the obsolete superstitions of the past; and Jesus himself, is but the unauthorized teacher of a system of philosophy whose authority is no greater than that of Plato or Socrates; and all his miracles, as recorded in the New Testament, are but tales invented to secure from an ignorant multitude, a blind and fanatical idolatry.

These are the two extremes; and somewhere between them, it is presumed, there lies a vein of truth. If we can strike that vein, we cannot fail of being benefitted by this investigation.

One thing is clearly evident, not only from the text, of our present discourse, but also, from all the history of the teachings of Christ; and that is, "He taught as one having authority." He did not, as others, come to the people with



fine spun theories, and endeavor to explain their philosophy, or convince them of their truth by abstruce reasonings. But he announced great truths, authoritatively. In opposition to the opinions and maxims of ages, he presented no array of logic, no philosophical disquisitions, but "VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU" was his ultimate appeal, and to his works he pointed as the seal of his divine commission. It seems impossible for any man to read the record of the teachings of Christ, without being forcibly impressed with this peculiarity, in his method of instruction. That he claimed authority is beyond all doubt, and if he did not possess it, he must be placed, not among the wise philosophers, but among the most ardent imposters of the world.

Let it be observed then, that there is a real necessity for such a thing as authority, in matters of religion, as in every department of human knowledge. The true question is not, how we shall secure absolute individual independence of thought and faith? It is not, how shall we rid ourselves of all authority, and manage to get along without any teacher or guide, upon whom we can depend? But it is, now, precisely as it was with the disciples, when they asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" To some one or more

we must go, and there is no alternative, but to remain in utter ignorance. Men may talk of freedom of thought, as opposed to all reliance upon authority, and boast of self reliance and mental independence. They may sneer at the slavery of those, who submit to receive any thing upon the authority of others; and such things may answer for the "ad-captandum" spoutings of an unfledged orator, who assays to offer the incense of flattery to the Goddess of Freedom, on the Fourth of July. But the sober truth is, it is all TALK, and not a whit above the veriest gasconade imaginable. There is no living man, who can move, at any tolerable pace, in the march of improvement, without reliance upon authority. I repeat, what has been often said, no man, in this short life, has the time, even if he has the ability, to investigate for himself, or to demonstrate the grounds of his faith, in one of a thousand of the things that he most assuredly believes, and in reference to which he acts every day of his life. The mass of what we call our knowledge, rests upon authority.

Every teacher of science knows, that there are many things that his pupils must take for granted, as they proceed. He cannot pause to demonstrate every thing; but his authority must be

taken, and without it, there would be little of progress in knowledge. So of everything. The history of the world, in all past time, rests upon authority. He that would learn anything of the by-gone ages, must not go out to an indiscriminate war upon those who have recorded the events of the world, and reject their authority entirely; but he must inquire for authority, that is reliable, and on that he must depend. The history of Greece and Rome, of Alexander and Cæsar, and, indeed, of all men, and all nations, must come to us, if it comes at all, resting upon the basis of authority, and it is vain to attempt to build upon any other foundation, in these matters.

In every department of human learning, the case is much the same. Let a man commence the study of any branch of Natural Philosophy, rejecting the authority of all his predecessors, and he will soon find, that he needs some one to guide, and teach him. He cannot perform for himself, even if he had the means, one in a thousand of the demonstrations and experiments, necessary at every step of his progress. For these, he depends upon the authority of those who have gone before him, and without this aid, he could not, in a life time, advance beyond the

vestibule of the temple of science. Who deems it necessary to perform for himself, the experiments of Sir Humphrey Davy, or of Franklin, in order to adopt their conclusions? Who thinks he must, of necessity, enter upon an examination of the proof of the Copernican system—deny the teachings of Gallileo, or reject the discoveries of Herschell, until his own eyes have seen the wonders therein brought to light? Or who imagines that his mental freedom requires him to denounce the authority of Newton, and go over again with all his calculations and demonstrations? The truth is, the world has been content to recognize authority in these matters, and, on that basis, to receive those great natural principles, that lie at the foundation of these sciences. And it is well, that it is so, otherwise, instead of progressing, we should have remained where they left us; nay, far behind them, for of the masses of the world, there is not one in a hundred million, who, without their aid, could have come up within hailing distance of these lights of the world. The part of wisdom is, not to deny authority, but to seek for that which is best, and follow on, in the path thus marked out, if haply it may lead to new discoveries, and richer mines of truth.

Take another illustration, and see how necessary is this reliance upon the authority of others. The passenger steps on board the ship, to sail for a distant land. He knows nothing of navigation, but for all that relates to his progress and safety, on the voyage, he relies, with confidence, upon the authority of the navigator; and, secure in that confidence, he lays him down and sleeps sweetly upon the waste of waters, though, for himself, he knows not so much as the north from the south, or whether his vessel is "heading" for Labrador or Cape Horn.

Nor, can the most skillful navigator cut loose from authority, and depend upon himself alone. He has his compass, and that compass varies with every degree of longitude. He has his tables of variation, prepared by others, and resting on their authority for correctness; and on these he relies, and shapes his course through unknown seas. He has his chronometer, but he has not tested its accuracy. Others have given him its rate, and on their authority he depends. He has his chart, whether correct or not, he cannot tell, from his own knowledge. He has never sounded the waters, nor explored the bays and inlets, or seen the rocks, shoals, and islands, he there finds laid down. Nevertheless, he con-

sults his chart, and relies on the authority of others. He makes his observation, and depends upon others for the correctness of his instrument. He then consults his nautical tables, prepared for him by other heads and hands—tables that he could not make or test; but he takes them as authority, and on this basis makes his calculations; and thus, for chart, and compass, and time, and all the means of safety, he depends upon authority. Without this, there is not a living man who could, with safety, navigate the ocean. The slightest mistake might run the finest ship upon rocks or shoals, and land passengers and crew in eternity. And yet, relying upon the authority of others, there are thousands, every day, out upon the deep waters, periling life, property, and all that is dear, in the midst of dangers not a few. So, then, in all the affairs of life, we must have authority, for the business of the world could not proceed a single day without it.

But when we come to matters of religion, we approach a class of subjects, where this reliance upon authority is still more necessary. They are things removed from the fields of mathematical demonstration, and the ordinary tests of personal insight, or philosophical experiment.

Moral, spiritual truths they are, above the domain of unaided reason—not originally cognizable by the intellect, even in its loftiest flights—fit subjects for revelation—truths, indeed, which the wisdom of the world, and all the philosophy of the schools has failed to discover. Evidently, then, insomuch as these truths are removed from the gross and sensible experience of the world, and above the grasp of the unaided reason of man, by that much is there a necessity that they should be taught, by one “having authority,” upon which undoubted reliance can be placed. There is, probably, some truth, in many things that we hear, of the evils that flow from a blind and indiscriminate submission to authority; but it may well be doubted, after all, if the world has been more injured, by its credulity, than its skepticism. Depend upon it, the evils complained of, are not to be remedied by rashly rushing to the other extreme, and denying all authority; for I insist upon it, as an unalterable arrangement of the Creator, that man must have, and must submit to authority, in every department of human knowledge; and the more in religion, because its truths are of a character that cannot be submitted to the sensible, and tangible tests, that apply to the physical and exact sciences.

If there were no other proof, of the absolute and indispensable necessity of this recognition of authority, it would be found in the case of those who have professed to cast off all authority in matters of religion, and endeavored to manage without it. The reformers, in the days of the reformation, and those that followed them, boldly asserted their individual freedom, and denounced the authority of the church; and loudly did they cry, and heartily have Protestants, from that day to this, cried, "no authority but God and his word." All this is well. Yet, after all, it is evident, that, instead of escaping from authority, it was but a change of masters. Calvin and Luther, expected from the people, a deference scarcely less profound, than that, which they had previously paid to the church. If Luther denied the authority of the Pope to cut him off from the church, he, at the same time, claimed authority to excommunicate the Pope, which he did, in due form. And unto this day, the authority of these names, except in secular power, is scarcely less, over their followers, than that of the old church over the Catholic. The cry of abjuration of authority had little of truth in it, for it was but casting off one yoke, to put on another.

It is remarkable, also, that frequently those



who most vehemently denounce all authority, are themselves its most passive instruments.

The noted Abner Kneeland, a few years ago, in the city of New York, sent out his manifesto of mental freedom. To no authority would he bow. The teachings of Christ were not binding upon him, for he was a free man, and none should control his faith. Yet, was he, all this time, the passive instrument of another, spending his time and wasting his substance in searching for hidden treasures, of the existence of which he had no earthly evidence, but the authority of a silly child, who professed to have a vision above the ordinary sight of mortals. And this was his renunciation of all authority!

Take another illustration. There are men in this country, who declaim long and loud against authority. Freedom and independence of thought are their watchwords. No man must be bound by aught, but the perceptions of his own soul. Christ himself, must have no divine commission or authority, nor must any man bow to any thing above himself, in matters of faith. And so the pulpit, in some parts, and the press in others, teems with denunciations of authority, and eulogies upon liberty of thought. And one would suppose that these men had really discovered

some method of dispensing with all that wears the semblance of authority, in matters of religious faith. But, by a more near inspection, you will find, that this is far from being the fact. Blindly have some of them bowed to the dictum of the youthful seer of Poughkeepsie, receiving, upon his authority, things unutterable; and, with lowly reverence, do others bend a listening ear to the teachings of the Apostles of German Transcendentalism, or Neology, which, though exploded at home, has sought acceptance abroad; and is offered, at low prices, wherever a mart can be found. Not on earth is there a set of men, who swallow their faith more greedily, as furnished by their masters, or shine more brilliantly in borrowed plumage, than these professors of originality, and boasters of freedom, from all allegiance to authority. All of which illustrates the point in hand, and shows, that man cannot dispense with authority, if he would; and most men would not, if they could.

Said I not truly then, in the outset, that there is necessarily such a thing as authority in religion, as in every thing else? And, is it not true, that the proper question is, not how to get along without authority, but where shall we seek and find that which we can rely upon with confidence and safety?

If what we have said thus far, is correct, it will be seen, that it is no accidental circumstance, that Christ “taught as one having authority.” But, on the contrary, in this truth, is exhibited the fact, that he was a teacher adapted to the wants of the world. God, in his infinite wisdom, saw, that man needed, and that he must have authority, upon which he could lean, in his hours of weakness. That, without it, he would be ever, out at sea, without a chart or compass, to be driven by the winds and waves, he knew not where. For this reason he gave him a guide. He sent forth the divine teacher, not merely to instruct, in the language of human wisdom, and human philosophy ; but to announce truths of undying importance, and in his name, and upon his authority, to proclaim them to the world, that through ages to come, they might remain, solid land-marks, resting upon their own immutable foundation, which cannot be removed.

It is no part of my object, in the present discourse, to prove the authority of Christ. I only intended to show, that such authority is necessary, and that the principle is admitted in all the affairs of life, and ought not to be rejected in religion. In these, vastly momentous concerns, if we would have a faith and hope, that shall be

in any tolerable degree, stable and enduring, they must rest upon nothing short of the authority of heaven. That authority I see in Christ. Not in an ideal Christ; nor in Christ, the philosopher, better indeed than Plato, still a mere fallible man, and as a teacher liable to err; nor yet, in Christ, the moralist, who came to teach a system of moral laws, by precept and example, having no basis in doctrinal truth. But I find it in the veritable, old-fashioned Christ of the New Testament, who came commissioned of God, to reveal truth to the world; "who spake as never man spake," who "taught as one having authority," and who was "approved of God by signs, and miracles, and wonders, which God did by him, in the midst of the people." Such a teacher can alone meet the wants of the world, and to such authority, there is an undying necessity, that the men of every age should bow.

The manner in which Christ comes with such authority, duly authenticated, is reserved for the subject of another discourse.

I have, at present, only to add, that the world has never seen a better, or safer guide. No mortal man can truly say, that he relied upon the Savior as authority, and lost, either in morals,

or in happiness, by adhering steadfastly to him · or that he was betrayed into dangerous, or pernicious errors, either in faith or practice, by bowing submissively to his teachings. Shall this authority be renounced? Shall it be lowered down to a level with the doubtful reasonings of Plato, or the faint hopes of the philosophers? Nay, but let the Gospel of Christ stand where it has securely stood, amid the storms of ages, resting upon the firm foundation of authority, derived from God himself, and certified by the messenger, whom he has sent forth into the world, “full of grace and truth.”

## SERMON VI.

### MIRACLES.

“ Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” John ix : 32, 33.

IN the preceding lecture, it was shown, that the great truths of the Gospel must, of necessity, be taught, and received by authority; and our present object is to show, that miracles are the proper and appropriate proof of the possession of authority. The text indicates the nature of the argument. It is the language of the young man who had been blind from his birth, and whose sight had been given him, by the Savior. It was uttered in answer to the Pharisees, who sought to evade the force of this notable miracle; and who pretended not to know whence Jesus was, even after they could no longer deny that he had performed this wonderful deed. But the young man insisted, that the miracle was proof, that he was from God. I shall have occasion to refer, more at large, to the circumstances connected with this affair, in the sequel, and I pass them for the present, in order to give you

a view of the general principle involved in the controversy.

Of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, it should be remarked, in general, that they claim to be genuine miracles, wrought not by human agency or human means, but by the immediate power of God, and for the express purpose of attesting the authority of those, at whose instance they were wrought. Take, for example, those mighty works, that are said to have been wrought by Moses, and we find not this great leader of Israel claiming, that he was able to perform these wonders by his superior insight into the arts of the magicians, nor yet by his greater knowledge of the laws of nature; nor, indeed, in any sense, by his own power, or by any philosophical process. But he pointed to them as real miracles, and as evidence of the presence and power of God.

And so of the miracles of Christ. He never pretended, that they were wrought by his own strength, or by any natural process, that he had discovered; but always insisted, that they were the evidences that God was with him, and asked the people to believe him "for his works sake." In both these cases, the position is, that Moses and Jesus were authoritative teachers of God,

and the proof of their divine mission is in the miracles, that they performed ; and now, what I wish you to perceive is, that this is the only really pertinent evidence by which such truth could be proved.

Begin with Moses, and see the pertinency of the proof to the proposition to be established. His mission was to teach an ignorant people, the name, and the worship, of one only living and true God. This could only be done by authority ; for, even if Moses himself, had soared so high as to grasp this idea, besides him there was not another man in Israel, who could have reached it, nor is it to be supposed, for a moment, that the ignorant multitude could follow him, through the intricate labyrinths of thought, by which he had educed the sublime idea of one spiritual and eternal God, from the confused mass of idolatry with which he was surrounded. He might have discoursed to them of the deep things of God, and explained the philosophy of the thing, until the day of his death, and it would have passed like an idle dream, or vanished like footprints in the sand, and after all, if the people had believed in God, it would have been on the authority of Moses, for his reasonings they could not have comprehended.



But the truth was, Moses did not pretend, that this was a discovery he had made, by his own efforts. He asserts, on the contrary, that it came from God, and that he was authorized to announce it to the world. But how was he to prove his authority? Not by the superiority of his truths; for of these the people could not judge, either in regard to their character or origin. He might have argued the divinity of his mission from the nature of his communications, from the beginning to the end of his days, and it would have accomplished nothing. That single stroke of his rod, which caused the waters to gush from the rock, as they fainted and thirsted in the wilderness, would appeal to them with more power, and effect, and testify more evidently of the truth of his pretensions, than volumes of eloquence, or huge masses of metaphysical reasonings. And so of Christ. We have before seen, that no philosophy was ever able to declare the great truths of the Gospel; nor could the people have comprehended the method by which they had been evolved from nature, or philosophy, had they been so evolved. To them, then, they must of necessity rest upon authority. But how was that authority to be proved? Surely not by philosophical experiment, or by

mathematical demonstration, for of such proof the proposition is not susceptible. But the miracles that he wrought, evinced the presence with him, of an invisible and all powerful spirit, whose power was above all human might ; and whose wisdom and knowledge might, therefore, be safely presumed to transcend all the efforts of the human intellect. And this is the only method I can imagine, by which the proposition could be made evident to the world.

The rationalist, on the one hand, may demand, that this truth shall be made manifestly evident by an appeal to reason alone. And I answer, reason can do nothing in the premises, until the data is furnished upon which to proceed. The naked, and isolated proposition, that a particular man is divinely authorized to announce truths to the world, truths that are above all human philosophy, is one for which reason furnishes no test. It may be true, or it may be false, and reason can move not a line in the decision of that question, until the data is furnished by the one who makes the claim. You might as well ask an astronomer, to lay aside his telescope and all his instruments, and then demand, that he shall demonstrate from reason, the size of the spots upon the sun, or the height of the

mountains in the moon. The truth is, reason can do nothing in the case, until the premises are furnished. And so here; when one claims to come with divine authority, it is to be expected that the evidences on which that claim is rested, will be presented, and reason can do nothing towards a solution of the question until the data is thus furnished. Neither natural or moral philosophy can do this. But it is in the miracles. To these Christ always appealed. And so the young man in the text, appealed to the miracle which had just been performed, as proof of the authority of Christ. He met the objections of the crafty Pharisees, by an appeal to this. When they said he kept not the Sabbath day, and therefore could not be from God, his answer was, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not, one thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see." That was a solid land-mark, which could not be moved. He was born blind, and Jesus had opened his eyes, to see the blessed sun in the firmament, and all the ravishing beauties of a world which had been a world of thick darkness and perpetual night. To him, that fact was worth volumes of speculation. Without it, he could draw no conclusion in regard to the authority of Jesus; but with it, he had the

premises from which he could draw a fair inference, that he came from God.

On the other hand, the man who claims a higher spirituality, than he is willing to allow to the Gospel, may talk of spiritual natures, and the spiritual origin of all things, and demand, that the proof of Christ's authority shall be purely spiritual; and the answer is as follows:

Granting all that is claimed of man's spiritual nature, and the communication of spirit with spirit; yet, it should be remembered, that men are not *purely* spiritual. Their spirits are here on earth, and encompassed with the veil of the flesh; and they must see with their bodily eyes, and use this material organization as the medium of perception and communication. If then, there was with Christ the presence of an invisible and eternal spirit, yet it was not to pure spirits, that this truth must be manifested, but to spirits dwelling in the tabernacle of the flesh. And to such, it is evident, that this spirit of Christ could only be manifested, by clothing itself in material forms, and working by, and through the common agencies, by which man is approached. Hence the miracles; and hence, also, the truth, that they are the appropriate, if not the only means, by which the fact of the divine authority

of Christ, admitting it to be a fact, could have been made manifest to men in the flesh.

If any man is so fortunate, as to have discovered the process of freeing his spirit, from the "obstructing influence of this material organization," either by certain "manipulations," or any other means, so that he can see with his spiritual eyes, and hear with spiritual ears, and appreciate spiritual evidences, it is all well. Only, let him remember, that most men are yet in the flesh, and must be approached as human beings. I insist, that the claims of Christ, to a divine authority, are not less clear, or convincing, because, adapting the evidences to the situation, and wants, of man, he spoke in forms, and through agencies that common men could appreciate, and understand.

If, again, there are men, whose "interiors" are so "developed," that they can believe the truths of the Gospel, from an intuitive perception of their divinity, and without a miracle, then let them so believe; but let them remember, that the great mass of the world is yet, like unbelieving Thomas, who, "except he saw the print of the nail," and "thrust his hand in to the Savior's side," would not believe. If they can see, with spiritual eyes, let them do so; but,

let them not, therefore, pluck out the natural eyes, by which others are obliged to see. A serious conviction of truth, however, compels me to say, that this talk about faith in Christ, without faith in his miracles, is, in general, but a cloak to conceal the rankest infidelity. I have yet to see the first instance of any thing like an abiding faith in Christ, on the part of a man, who rejected the miracles. I have seen such men, who professed to admire the character of Christ, as that of Washington, and his wisdom, as that of Franklin. But I have yet to see the man, who denied the miracles, and would still bow, in reverence, to the name, or authority, of Christ. Indeed, how can such a man regard the authority of Christ? He claimed, that the works he performed, were interpositions of the great power of God, without which he could do nothing. And, if they were deceptions, or performed by some natural process, known only to himself; then, instead of a good man, he was a rank impostor, palming his own works upon the world, as of divine origin, knowing full well, at the time, that the pretence was utterly groundless.

Or, if it be said, that he did not, himself, put forth these pretensions, but that his disciples, and biographers make these claims for him, then it is

easy to see that if these biographers were so ignorant as not to know, or so wicked as to pervert the true facts, in the case, then they are not to be trusted, in any part of their writings, and the whole system is unworthy of credit. And hence, those who reject the miracles, generally reject, also, entirely Christ's authority, thus, practically admitting the truth of our position, that miracles are the only evidence that can prove the divine authority of a messenger from God.

I turn now to the text, and its attendant circumstances, for an illustration of the devious course of infidelity in all ages. It has its various forms, and phases, which, if not changed as often as those of the moon, are, nevertheless, quite as visible, and as clearly marked; and the prototype of the whole may be found in the case of the Pharisees, here presented.

It seems, that there was a young man, who had been born blind, whose custom it was to sit by the way side, and ask alms. Jesus passed that way, and gave him sight. A circumstance so wonderful, naturally created some excitement among the neighbors and friends, and gave rise to different opinions, concerning the strange being who had performed this deed of mercy. Some doubted, whether this was indeed

the same man, that had been blind; "saying, he is like him," while others affirmed, that it was the same man; and they brought him to the Pharisees, who were counted wise men, and their opinion was sought, in the case.

These Pharisees, seemed, at first, to doubt whether any miracle had been wrought. There, indeed, was the young man, who could see, even as others; but whether he had been blind, and if so, how he happened now to see, were matters of doubt. They, therefore, called the parents of the young man, who said, "this is indeed our son, who was born blind, but by what means he seeth, we know not, ask him: he is of age." The appeal was made to him, and he said, a man that was called Jesus had healed him. That part of the controversy was thus settled. That the man was born blind, and that Jesus had given him sight, was beyond all controversy. The next move was to devise some means, by which Christ, and his cause, should receive no benefit from this miracle. This man, say they, is a sinner. Give "God the praise, as for this fellow we know not whence he came."

Herein are shadowed forth the principal phases of skepticism, from that day to the present. At one time, it presents itself in the garb of mate-



rialism, and roundly denies all miraculous works. It affirms, that the miracles of the scripture are unworthy of credence, in any form. Those who professed to work them, were adroit magicians, who deceived the people into the belief, that their tricks of sleight of hand, were really works performed by the agency of the mighty power of God; or they were so regarded and recorded by the ignorant and superstitious historians, who wished to make of their master something more than mortal.

If it has been proved, on the contrary, that the miracles of Christ are utterly unlike the pretended miracles of impostors—that they are attested, by a mass of evidence, that cannot be resisted, showing that they were real and tangible works, actually performed, in the open face of day, and in a manner to preclude all possibility of deception—if all this has been proved, beyond all fair controversy, the other subterfuge of the Pharisees has ever been at hand. True, the works were performed, but the one who performed them is entitled to no great credit after all. It does not prove that he was of God. Give the praise to nature, or philosophy, for these works were done in perfect accordance with the laws of nature, and in a strictly philosophical manner.

Had the affair recorded in the text, and context, occurred in modern times, I should have expected to hear some of the wise men, of the age, address the young man thus, after it had been proved, that he had been born blind, and had received sight from Christ:—"Young man, you seem to think, that this Jesus must be accompanied by the mighty power of God, because he has performed this thing. But you are entirely mistaken. It is a perfectly natural and philosophical process, by which he has opened your eyes. This Jesus, you perceive, is a remarkable man. He is fully "developed" in all parts of his body and mind, so as to present a model man. Look at his phrenological bumps! How perfect they are, indicating an expanded intellect, capable of tracing out all the laws of nature. He is, evidently, well acquainted with the properties of roots and herbs, and their application to the healing art; and is, by this means, able to perform remarkable cures. Besides, he understands all about a certain science, called "animal magnetism," and has a method of laying his hands upon people, and of performing certain manipulations, so that a particular fluid passes from his body to the patient, and produces most astonishing results. By some of

these means, no doubt, he has enabled you to see, but that does not prove, that he is anything more than other men." Nay, said the young man. But, "since the world began, was it not heard that a man opened the eyes of one that was born blind?" And, his conclusion was, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

There is one thing, however, to be said in favor of these ancient Pharisees. If they were the enemies of Christ, they were openly so. They stood forth, boldly, and denounced him as an impostor, and professed no friendship for him, or his religion. They caviled, indeed, about his miracles, and employed all their cunning, to avoid the force of the argument they afforded of the divinity of his mission. But, they did it not, under the garb of friendship, and, instead of courting his name, they openly condemned it. No Pharisee was known to go to the disciples, and explain himself after this manner:—"Sirs, you perceive that we deny the miracles, or rather, we admit the fact, that Jesus gave sight to the young man, that was born blind; for that much seems to be clearly proved. Yet, we maintain, that this fact, is no evidence of his divine authority, because he performed this work by his superior skill, in

the laws and operations of nature. We, therefore, conclude, that, it is our duty to do all we can to prevent the people from imbibing the foolish idea, that he has any special power, or authority, from God. Nevertheless, we beg you to understand, that we do, by no means, reject Christ. On the contrary, we esteem him very highly, for the spirit that he manifests; and we give him all credit, as a philosopher, and doctor. And, besides all this, he teaches a vast amount of good philosophy; and we believe in many of his doctrines. He teaches, that there is one, and but one God, all-good and wise, and that, we also believe. We beg you, therefore, distinctly to understand, that notwithstanding we are compelled, as philosophers, to repudiate all that is miraculous, in the pretensions of your Master, we are, nevertheless, good Christians, and we would be pleased to be admitted to your fellowship, and would fain be baptized in the name of Christ." Nay, the old Pharisees, crafty as they were, did not descend to such a course as this. Such inventions of folly, were reserved for later days. Whether such a plea would have found acceptance, if presented, may, perhaps, be best inferred, from the language of Christ himself, addressed to similar characters. There were

some, who saw his miracles, and yet said, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils." They admitted the fact of the miracle, but denied, that the *power* by which it was performed, was of God. And what said the Master? Did he say, it mattered not whether they recognized God's hand? Nay; but it was this very sin, which he characterized as the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—a sin that not only placed a man without the pale of Christianity, but absolutely precluded the hope, that he would become a Christian. All other blasphemies, and sins, could be taken away. A man might speak against Christ, and do it ignorantly, and yet, when he should see his wonderful works, he might be convinced, and his unbelief be removed. But when a man saw the miracles, and knew that they were wrought, and yet persisted in ascribing them to other agencies than that of God, he rejected the highest and last evidence, and his conversion was hopeless. Whether those who ascribe the miracles to the operations of the laws of nature, are nearer Christianity, than those who ascribed them to the agency of an evil spirit, I will not pretend to decide. Surely, both deny, that the power was of God, and, according to the Savior's teachings, are

very far from his kingdom. If he may judge, they are not only no disciples of his now, but, having rejected the highest evidence of his authority, there is little hope that they will become such.

At the hazard, therefore, of being called a bigot, and of incurring the censure of those who, in their own name, and that of respectable bodies of men, declare that faith in the miracles, as evidence of the power of God, is not a necessary qualification, even in a minister of Christ, I avow my solemn conviction, that no man is entitled to be called a disciple of Christ, who does not believe in the miracles, as evidence of the divine authority of Jesus. To deny them, or to admit the facts, and yet deny the power by which they are performed, if not the thing itself, is akin to that fatal bar to discipleship, called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Here, then, I record my solemn determination, that when I cease to regard the miracles of Christ, as proof of his authority, to which I am bound to bow in matters of faith, my brethren shall know it; for that day, I will go out from you, because I am not of you. A skeptic will I proclaim myself, nor longer claim your name, or your fellowship, as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I entered your ministry with this understanding; I took upon myself its obligations, well knowing your faith in this particular, and when I can no more preach Christ, and his divine authority, as one who performed signs and wonders by the power of God, I will return you the garment you gave me, without having soiled it by a denial of Christ, as the being in whom dwelt, the wisdom and the power of the Most High, and to whom the ultimate appeal must be made, in matters of Christian faith and practice.

## SERMON VII.

### NECESSITY OF FAITH.

“But without faith, it is impossible to please him.”

Heb. xi: 6.

THERE is no virtue more important than faith, except, perhaps, charity, the greatest and most enduring of all. No man can read the New Testament, without noticing how often, and how earnestly, the writers insist upon the absolute and indispensable necessity of faith. “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” Such were the teachings of the Savior. And when an inquiring mortal came to any of the Apostles, and asked what he should do, the answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus do they bear a uniform and clear testimony to the necessity of faith; and, in the text, the great Apostle to the Gentiles places this matter in a peculiarly strong and emphatic light. He asserts, not merely, that faith is useful, or important, but that it is an indispensable element in the Christian character, and without it, it is *impossible* to please God.



I am aware, that skepticism has objected to this passage as unjust, and unreasonable, on the one hand; and on the other, fanaticism has seized upon it as a pretext for all manner of bigotry and exclusiveness. The skeptic avers, that man's faith is not a matter placed at his own control, and that, therefore, the text represents God as a capricious and most unreasonable being, requiring of man what he knows he cannot render, and pleased only with things, that are of little, or no consequence. The fanatic goes to the other extreme. He has his creed, and his confession of faith, and he demands, that all shall bow down and worship by his creed, and believe in all and singular, its articles, on pain of the displeasure of God. He lifts the thong and scourges his fellow man—he rears the stake, and kindles the fire, to burn his brother; or, hurls the javelin at his heart, and seeks justification, in the plea, that he is contending *for*, and enforcing that faith, without which, it is impossible to please God.

There are others, of a more moderate stamp, who truly desire to know truth and duty, and yet, see in the text, a mere arbitrary rule, whose justice they cannot appreciate. They say, truly, that man is, in a great measure, the creature of

circumstances, and his faith moulded, in most cases, by his education, and opportunities of improvement; and they cannot see why this faith should be made the condition of pleasing God; or how it is, that a mere belief in this or that system, should be regarded as an only, and indispensable ground of acceptance.

I hope I shall be able to show each of these three classes, that their objections are based upon a wrong view of the passage. The text is not a mere arbitrary, or capricious rule of acceptance with God, but there is in it a deep and a true philosophy, and, it is in fact, but a declaration of a broad and firm principle, existing in all reason, and growing out of the very nature of things, that cannot be altered.

I begin, then, by saying, that they do great injustice to the Apostle, who construe the term faith, in the text, to mean no more than a *mere belief* in a certain creed, or formula, of any church.

He defines faith, in the context, to be, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And he then goes on to illustrate the point, by an allusion to the faith of the ancient Patriarchs. Abel, and Enoch, and Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob, and Moses, and Gideon, and David, and Samuel, and all

the Prophets, are alluded to, as illustrious examples of faith; and theirs was the faith, without which, he avers, it is impossible to please God. And what was the faith of these ancient Patriarchs, and wherein consisted its excellency? It was not a *mere* belief in a certain creed, carefully revised and purged from all taint of error and heresy; nor was it excellent, because it bowed blindly and obsequiously, at the dictum of Pope, Conclave, Synod, or Priest, either Catholic or Protestant. What knew these worthies of the dogmas of modern theological schools? What cared they about the hair splitting differences between Calvinism and Arminianism, subjects on which the world now goes mad, and on account of which, professing Christians hurl the thunders of eternal damnation at each other, with the most hearty good will? What cared they about your metaphysical squabbles, concerning "free agency," and "fore ordination," and "infant baptism," or no baptism at all, "high church," and "low church," that now enlist the zeal of so many thousands? Why, there is not one of these, that entered into all their thoughts, and they would have listened to them as to an idle dream. And yet, they were men of faith; and are pointed to, as great and il-

lustrious examples of that faith, without which no man can please God. We ask then, again, what was their faith, and wherein consisted its excellency? The answer is, their faith was more than belief in creeds, for these they had not. It stood upon a rock, and looked around upon the world with hopefulness, and up to God with confidence and trust. They had not even "received the promises," but saw them afar off, and such was their confidence in God, that they caught the first faint intimation of his purposes of grace, and were "strong in faith, giving glory to God." Their faith was not the blind assent of a bigot to his creed; nor yet the besotted attachment of a sectarian, to his orthodoxy. But it was the confidence of a child in his father. It was the lofty and confiding trust of a feeble man, in the strong arm of the Lord. A confidence that leaned upon God, believed in his goodness, trusted in his grace, and ventured all upon him, even in those dark and mysterious passages of his government, where the eye of knowledge could not penetrate. They saw hopefulness in him, and the things hoped for, though far in the dim distance of the future, were made by this faith, substantial realities, in reference to which they acted, and for which they labored,

and suffered, and died. And thus it was, that their faith was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" and this is "the faith, without which it is impossible to please God."

To please God, is to walk in the paths of virtue, and obey his laws. Let us look more closely at our subject, and see, if it is not true, that it is absolutely impossible for any man to do this without faith.

1. There is a faith in our fellow-men, without which it is impossible for us to discharge our duty towards them.

There is a maxim employed by some, that in the business affairs of the world, it is necessary to deal with every man as if he were a rogue. In other words, it is necessary to abjure all confidence and faith in man. It is a narrow minded, and false principle of action, having as little foundation in true policy, as it has in justice and Christian duty. It is granted, that in the bargainings of avarice, the hot strife and rivalries, and the endless antagonisms, and competitions of the business world, there may be, to the superficial observer, an apparent justification of this principle, considered merely as a maxim of worldly wisdom, designed to aid in heaping up

gold. But, even here, it may be doubted, if, as a general rule, and in the long run, they do not succeed best, who cherish a warm and generous confidence in their fellow-men. But, however this may be, and of whatever utility the rule may be, in aiding to amass wealth, still no one, I presume, will contend, that it can find favor, when weighed in the balance of a Christian truth and duty.

Christianity demands of us, that we love our neighbor as ourselves, and it places the sum and substance of all duty in this love. But how, I ask, can we love our neighbor, if we have no faith in him? If we look upon him with an evil and suspicious eye, and regard him as a rogue, and a cheat, how shall we love him as a brother, or discharge towards him, the duties of a brother's kindness? You will perceive, at once, that the thing is impossible; but all our acts towards our fellow-men, that rise above gold and pelf, must be founded upon, and proceed from our faith in them. Nay, more than this. There is a degree of faith in man, without which no human society can exist—no earthly business can be done. Thieves and robbers are obliged to have faith in one another, for they cannot live without it. And if you go out into the marts of

business, the roar and bustle of active life, you shall find that, this faith in man, is the element that gives activity and prosperity to the business world; and *that* is the best and most prosperous community, where there is most of this faith. Destroy confidence between man and man, and you sap the very foundations of all the business of the world. Justice becomes but a name, and truth a fiction. But the higher duties of man, the mild charities of the Gospel, and all the kindly offices, that go to make up the character of a true and genuine Christian, these call imperiously for high and exalted views of humanity, and lively and constant faith in our fellow-men. We must learn to look upon man as our brother, and confide in him as such. We must see him, by faith, a child of the same God, and an heir of the same immortality as ourselves. Even when we see him low, debased and degraded, crushed and polluted, with guilt and sin, still must our faith linger around him, confident that some germ of humanity is still left—some drop of blood from the same great heart, still flows in his veins; and we must toil hopefully to awake his better nature, and restore the image of God to his benighted soul. We must have faith enough in man, to assure us, that none are so

far gone as to be placed out of the pale of our benevolent efforts. This is the faith in man, without which it is impossible to please God, simply because, without it no man can perform his duty to his fellow-man.

We talk of infidelity. We frame our creed, and because a man does not believe in all its articles, we denounce him as an infidel. At the same time, it is not unlikely, that he has faith stronger, and more practically active and useful, than any we can boast. The worst and most dangerous kind of infidelity, is that which robs a man of all confidence in his fellow. It looks out upon the world, and sees no affinity between itself, and all the busy beings that pass. It sees no hope *in* or *for* man—obliterates God's image from the soul—freezes up the fountains of benevolence—and paralyses every effort for human improvement, and human good.

I know, it has been said, that our knowledge is a sufficient guide, and that we may act from what we know, and have sufficient motive for a full discharge of every duty. But it is not so. The wounded traveler had fallen among thieves, and they had stripped him of his raiment, and left him bleeding by the way side. There he lay, weltering in gore, faint, feeble, and dying.



The "priest" and the "Levite" passed on the other side. But they did not know him, and had no faith in man. And by chance there came a certain Samaritan that way, and he saw him. He did not know him. He knew that he was a Jew. He knew that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. He did *not* know that the stranger, if warmed to life, would not, viper-like, turn him round, and sting his benefactor. But he had faith, to see a brother in that fallen one. Aye, faith to believe, that even a Jew, was a human being, having claims upon his sympathy and kindness; and, but for that faith, he would have left him to perish. Under its influence, he ran and bound up the wounds of the dying man, pouring in oil and wine—placed him upon his own beast, and brought him to an inn; and on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said, "Take care of him, and whatsoever he spendeth more, when I come I will pay thee." He acted not from knowledge, but faith, and this exercise of the true spirit, which called out the approbation of the Master himself, was the offspring of faith. And if it was an act well pleasing to God, it is evident that, without this faith, it would not have been performed.

And so it is with all Christian duties. They require active faith. He that would toil for human good, must confide in man, and trust him that he is capable of improvement and progression. He must sow, often, in sadness and tears, and hope, even against hope, that in due time he shall reap, if he faint not.

I observe again, There is a faith in God, without which it is impossible to please him; for the simple, and sufficient reason, that it lies at the foundation of all obedience to his laws. The child who has no faith in his father, will not be likely to obey his commands. Or if he yield an outward obedience, it will be but hypocritical servility, and not the obedience of the heart. So, to obey God's laws truly, it is indispensable that we have faith in him. By faith in him, I mean not merely a nominal assent to the truth of the general proposition, that he exists, and that he will reward us for obedience and punish us for disobedience. This makes obedience a mere mercenary affair, and abates much from its merits. It is no pleasure to a parent, to know that his child obeys, merely because he believes he will be punished if he does not. But the parent is well pleased to know that the child confides in his wisdom, and trusts in his goodness, and

obeys because he doubts not that his arrangements are kind and his requirements best. And this is the faith, that man must exercise in God in order truly to serve him, and without it, no man can serve him in an acceptable manner. That skepticism, which stands and parries about evidences, and ventures upon God so far, as there is proof positive, and a clear understanding of the reasons and results of duty, has little resemblance to the true, hearty and confiding faith that God requires. Nor, can it ever give, to human actions a character, that rises one line above the mercenary efforts of the laborer for hire, who does as much as he is sure he will be paid for, and no more. True faith looks up to God with cheerful confidence and trust. It follows in the way of God's appointment, as far as it can see. And when clouds come over the face of the skies, and the path of duty lies through darkness, that human vision cannot penetrate, it follows still. It sees bows of promise in every cloud, stars of hope in every vista, that opens in the heavens. And when the light of the last star has gone out, and all is darkness around and above, even then, it looks upward, and confides in God with unfaltering confidence—believes that his ways are just and equal, his arrange-

ments wise, and all his purposes gracious; and follows his commands, because it cannot doubt, that they are just and right. Without something of this faith in God, no man can persevere in the path of duty. In prosperity, when all things are favorable, a man may perform his duty with but a slight faith. But when adversity comes, when temptations throng around us, and duty is to be done at the sacrifice of present good, then, it requires the higher developments of faith to enable us to do the right, at all hazards, and leave the result with God. There are a thousand circumstances in which a man is called upon to choose between his apparent interest, at present, and his duty. Ambition, interest, friends, and all that can influence us, may call on us to shrink from the path of duty, and so far as human wisdom can see, all these would be subserved, by a departure from the precepts of heaven. Where, then, is the guarantee for duty? What, then, can save from falling? It is the ministry of faith. She looks upward and confides in God. She believes, that his laws are just and true, and in the strength of unfaltering confidence in him, says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," and as for me and my house, come weal or come wo, "I

will serve the Lord." Thus important are the ministries of faith, and it is easy to perceive, that, without it, it is impossible to please God.

Accordingly you find, that in every age the men of virtue, of integrity and truth, those who have stood out as the benefactors of the race, have been men of a lofty and confiding faith. I do not mean to say, that they have been the zealous advocates of one particular creed, or set of theological dogmas, for in these respects, they have been as widely asunder as the poles. But I mean to say, that they have been, one and all, men who had faith in humanity, and in God, who would see in man something to hope for and *in*, and would, at any time, sacrifice all present and apparent interests on the altar of truth and duty, because of their trust in God, and confidence in him. Such were the martyred saints of old, who toiled in the midst of persecutions and sufferings, and met death itself, for the cause of righteousness. They knew that "dangers stood thick through all the way" that they must pass; and yet their faith nerved them to the work, and enabled them to meet the "king of terrors" with a smile, if they met him in the path of duty.

Look at Calvin and Luther, and their few compeers in the work of reformation,—those dauntless spirits who dared, single handed and alone, to stand up and battle against the corruptions of ages, and in the face of all the powers of the earth. They, too, were men of faith. True, their creeds were not such as I can approve, and heaven and earth are not more widely different than their dogmas and mine. But they had a stedfast, an indomitable confidence in God, and a faith in man, sufficient at least to assure them that God's word, and their own consciences, might be trusted to guide them in truth and duty. Did not persecution frown, and gird on his sword? And did not the Vatican thunder long and loud, and red handed war put on his blood-stained garments, and sound the tocsin of battle? Aye. But there they stood, with heavenward eye, confident in God and his truth; unawed by the clanking of chains, or the red glare of the fires kindled for their destruction; and strong in their purposes for human good, though swords gleamed in sunlight ready to drink their blood. And if these men stamped themselves upon their own and subsequent ages, and if they are entitled to be ranked among the number of the benefactors of their race, it is because of

that faith of theirs, without which it is impossible that they could have achieved their victories. Look, again, at the Puritan fathers, and you shall see that they, too, were men of faith. They preferred the perils of the deep, an exile from all that was dear in home and kindred, and a dwelling among the savages of the wilderness, to a departure from their convictions of right. They were men of iron soul—their creed was not my creed, nor have I aught of sympathy in their speculative dogmas. But that Puritan Psalm that went up from the “Mayflower,” as the winter’s wind sighed through her frozen shrouds, on the rock bound coast of New England; and that prayer, which ascended, as they lifted their cold, shivering hands to heaven from Plymouth’s snow-clad rock,—THESE proclaim, that there was in them, a high and holy faith, a stern and unconquerable confidence in God, which feared not to trust him on the boisterous ocean, and believed that his arm would be, their defence, as well in the wilderness, as in the thronged streets of the crowded city. And in this faith, I recognize the true element of their greatness. And if they pleased God, it was because of this faith, for without it, their hearts had failed, and their spirits died within them.

Look, once more, at William Penn, who taught the world a lesson that no other man save him of Nazareth had taught ; that kindness, integrity and truth are a safer defence, even against the savage of the wilderness, than swords and munitions of war. He was a lamb in the midst of wolves. The bow of the savage was bent, and the hatchet red with the blood of the slain. But no sword was in his hand, no mail upon his form. His garb was simple and plain, and in his mouth was the law of kindness. But he had faith, yea, exalted, mighty faith. Faith in man, which believed, that there was a chord in the heart, even of the savage, that would vibrate when touched by the hand of kindness. Faith, that saw in the swarthy brow of the poor Indian, some lineaments of God's image, and bade him consider, and trust him, as a brother. Above all, there was a faith in God, which leaned upon him in cheerful hope, and gave assurance of his protection, in any, and every emergency. And if the name of Penn is immortal ; and if God looked down from heaven in serene, and everlasting complacency, upon that messenger of "peace on earth and good will to men." it is because of his faith, for without that no living man could thus have served God. Do you not



see, then, that there is a good reason for the text, and sound and true philosophy, as well as a great practical lesson of truth, in that word which saith, "Without faith it is impossible to please him?"

## SERMON VIII.

### UNIVERSAL PEACE.

“And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”  
Isaiah ii: 4.

THE doctrine of a millenium, or a thousand years of uninterrupted peace and righteousness on earth, has extensively prevailed in the Christian church. It is believed, that, at this period, the boisterous passions shall yield to the mild and genial influence of Gospel grace and truth—violence and bloodshed shall not be known—man shall be restored to his original state of purity and bliss, and all that is calculated to hurt or destroy shall be done away. At various periods, many have believed this “time of times” to be at hand, and have waited with high and exciting hopes, for the glory of that blessed day to dawn upon their waiting eyes.

I will not moot the vexed question of the date, at which that era is fixed, neither will I affirm, that the scriptures limit the duration of that age to a thousand years; nor am I disposed to indulge in visions of perfect bliss for man on

earth; for I believe that this world will always be a scene of mingled good and ill, and that the pages of man's experience here, will ever be wet with the tears of affliction and sorrow. But, while I admit the probability, that suffering of some sort, will always be the fate of man, while he tabernacles in the flesh; and have little confidence in the Utopian dreams, that have prevailed, in regard to a perfect state of felicity, while surrounded with the "ills flesh is heir to"—at the same time, I remember, that the severest woes of humanity are self-inflicted—the Creator has placed the remedy fully within our power—and both scripture and reason point to a period, when man shall be elevated far above his present condition, and shall be exempt from many of the worst forms of ill, that now bow his head in sorrow, and cause him to go mourning all his days. While on the one hand, I cannot sympathize with the high wrought and visionary expectations in which some indulge, concerning the day of millennial glory, that is to come, nor speculate about its length, or the date of its commencement; on the other, I sympathize still less with that skeptical and gloomy philosophy, which makes the tendency of humanity downward instead of upward—denies the hope of a golden

age to come, and destroys all hopefulness in man. If the one is fanaticism, the other is infidelity.

The testimony of the ancient prophets, and of all the writers of the sacred scriptures, upon this subject, is of uniform tenor, and cheering import. Though the language may be highly figurative, and the imagery gorgeous, as was the custom of the East ; yet, the great idea is clearly seen, in their works, that man is to go onward, and arrive, at length, to a state of purity and happiness, far above all that he has hitherto experienced. The language of our text, and its connection, is clear and explicit upon this subject. “ And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths ; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he will judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and

their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Again, in the eleventh chapter of the prophecy, he says, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf, also, shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow, and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all thy holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Now, it is admitted, that there may be a shade of doubt upon the precise application of this language; and it is certain, that the ideas are dressed in all the splendor of oriental drapery; and yet, I greatly err, if it does not fully sustain the general position I have assumed, that the tendency of humanity is onward and upward, and that the counsel of infinite wisdom has determined, that there shall be a time, when a re-

pose shall come upon the elements of strife—when the spirit of war shall be weary, and righteousness and peace shall prevail on earth.

The same sentiment is dimly shadowed forth in those aspirations, that have always been found in the human mind. It matters not how wise, or great, or rich, an individual may be; he is rarely satisfied with present attainments, or present possessions. He feels in the mysterious depths of his own soul, that he is not all that he may be, and that he does not possess all that he is capable of enjoying. Hence his eager eye is turned, often, and hopefully, to the future. Dim and shadowy, perhaps, but yet positive and clear is the presentiment, that better things are in store for him; and he hopes, even when he knows not why, that somewhere, in the dark and mysterious future before him, there is an oasis in the desert, where the fainting pilgrim may rest—a sunny isle in the stormy sea, where the storm spent mariner may find a calm and peaceful haven at last. It may be, that this is the distant and confused echo of the voice uttered by the old seers of God, who saw, in visions of faith, the glory of the future, and sung of the glorious rest, that God had reserved for the weary children of humanity. But I confess, I see in these

devout aspirations—these distinct and clear presentiments, the shadows of good things to come, the strugglings of the spirit within for a state for which it was made, and which it must ultimately enjoy.

But I leave this argument, as well as that drawn from the scriptures, for you to reflect upon at your leisure. I would view the subject more at length in another light. Apart from the testimony of scripture, and the evidence afforded, by the dim visions, that dawn upon all minds, there is in the nature of man a principle which points clearly to this result; and as this principle is developed in the experience of man, from age to age, it proclaims in a voice, clear as the voice of God himself, that at the very least, all that the text promises shall be fulfilled. Man shall one day turn from the carnage and blood of war, to the blessedness of peace—from the strife and sweat, of the march of devastation, to the quiet and blissful paths of industry—and the toil and treasure, that have hitherto been wasted; yea, worse than wasted, in the work of butchery and wholesale murder, shall be devoted to the fulfilment of man's true destiny on earth, the subjugation of the elements, and the cultivation and fertilization of the world in which we

live. The principle to which I allude, is that of progress, denied, indeed, by some, but, nevertheless, written as I judge upon the very nature of man, never to be obliterated. Man is composed of body, soul, and spirit; or, in more modern language, a physical, an intellectual, and a moral nature, and these all progress, from infancy up to manhood. The body grows, and is developed by degrees; first an infant, then a child, then a youth, and, at last, a full grown man, whose arm is strong to battle with difficulty and danger. So, also, the intellect, is first incapable of understanding or appreciating the least of all truths; but it advances, step by step, until in the strength of intellectual manhood, it grapples with sciences most abstruse, and explores creation in its height and depth, and vast extent. In like manner, the moral nature must progress, through all the stages, from infancy up to the vigor of manhood. It is idle to sit down and wait for some supernatural agency to come, like the shock of a galvanic battery, and transform men, in a moment, into full grown saints, because Heaven's immutable law is, all that is good, or great, in the moral world, as in every thing else, shall be the result of progress, and obtained by exercise and labor.



It is evident then, that so far as individuals are concerned, there is at work a system of progress, by which alone man arrives at physical, moral, or intellectual greatness. And now, the truth to which I would call your attention is, that this same law applies to the whole race, it being but the body of which each individual is a member. And, as in the individual, there is a three-fold aspect, in which we must progress, each aspect having an important bearing upon the other ; so, in the application of this principle to the race, there are three corresponding phases, that this principle assumes. There is, first, the development of the physical man, then the culture of the intellect ; and, last of all, the exaltation of the moral nature, to its true dignity. And it will be observed, that it is an ascending scale by which this movement is made. The intellect is superior to the mere physical powers, and its cultivation supercedes, in a measure, the exercise of brute force. The moral nature rises above the intellectual, and its cultivation shall, at length, be found competent to fulfil all the text premises.

Let us view the subject in this light, and endeavor to trace out some of the developments of this great law of humanity, promising, as I

judge, the full fruition of the vision of the prophet.

The first aspect in which we view man upon the earth, is that of a physical, or material being. All his care is devoted to the wants, and all his training to the improvement of the body. This is an epoch of brute force, and few means have been discovered to save the outlay of bone and sinew. All controversies are merged in the question, which is strongest, and by this alone are decided. Might is exalted over right. War is man's element, and in it man meets man, hand to hand, and the battle is with the strong, and the race to the swift of foot. To train the iron nerve so that man shall be fleet as the deer, strong to wield the sword, hurl the javelin, or twang the bow-string—these are his highest achievements; and an idolatrous homage is paid to him who outstrips his compeers, in the contest of physical strength. The laws, which in one nation of old, doomed a malformed or sickly infant to death, as being not worth the care of raising; the Grecian games, where feats of strength and agility were crowned with laurels; the shows of the *Athletæ*, and the gladiators of Rome, are all the product of an epoch in man's history, which exalts and trains the

physical system, and seeks to secure safety and prosperity, by dint of mere brute strength. All government is, in this age, founded upon, and sustained by force, and all teaching and instruction are based upon authority.

To this phase of man's progress, also, much of the Old Testament appropriately belongs, and for such an age it was designed. Hence, you find it abounding with the most grand and sublime descriptions of the mighty power of God. Before him the hills and mountains tremble, and the earth itself flees away. He utters his voice in the thunder, and the roar of the mighty forest, swept by the furious wind, is but the whispering of his wrath. But while the wonders of his mighty power, and the majesty of his resistless might are presented, full often, we hear, comparatively, but little of the milder beauties of his character. The teachings of the Old Testament are mandatory and authoritative, and their reason is, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." Nothing short of this would have answered, for the intellect and the moral powers were not yet sufficiently developed, to appreciate the power of fine spun reasonings, or the force of moral obligations. Hence, also, we find in this work, many specific rules, for regulating diet, washings, ablutions,

fastings, and the seasons of labor and of rest, all looking to the development of the physical system, and the preservation of the health of the body; matters that no man would think, in this day, of introducing into a system of ethics. Such was the age to which the Old Testament was addressed; an age in which man was in his infancy, and needed to be trained in his material system, as the foundation on which future progress was to be reared. As in the case of an individual, it were unwise to task the intellect, ere the growth and strength of the body were attained, so in the race, the first step in the progressive scale, was to develop the physical system, introducing, at the same time, as much of intellectual culture as the capacity will allow, and moving and governing the while, by such moral motives as can be brought efficiently to bear, upon the soul, in its actual state.

Rising one step higher in this scale of progression, we come to the improvement of the intellect. In this epoch, man tasks his intellect for the means of adorning, pampering, and strengthening the body. What he cannot accomplish by brute force, he now attempts to do by art and cunning. In the former period he lifted the rock from its bed, by the strength of

his muscles ; but now, the engine creaks, and the huge mass is raised on high. Then, he bruises his corn between stones, lifted by the strength of his hand ; but now, he seizes upon the running stream, and compels it to turn the busy mill. Then, he paddled his boat, with an arduous outlay of bone and sinew ; but now, he spreads his canvas, and compels the winds to minister to his pleasure. War is no longer a trial of mere physical strength. It is studied as a science, and practiced as an art. Man no longer meets his enemy face to face, and prostrates him by the single strength of his arm, but he overreaches him by stratagem, or outgenerals him, by the superior power of his intellect. He invents an engine of destruction, and shoots him at a distance.

This is the epoch of worldly wisdom. Theories and visions abound, but the teacher, instead of awing you into the reception of his dogmas, or obedience to his precepts, by the arm of power, entangles you in a web of sophistry, and leads you captive, at his will, by the acuteness of his intellect. Government, too, becomes an intellectual affair, and huge volumes are written in exposition of its principles and laws. In the former period, the patriarch, or the absolute monarch, levied a tax upon the people, and po-

lately informed them, that they must pay it, or lose their heads ; but, in this era, the legislator exercises his intellect, to convince the people that his measure is right, proper, or necessary. And so, in all things, man is endeavoring to accomplish, by dint of intellect, what he has failed to do by might.

Nor are the works of the former period lost. As in the individual, the sports, gambols, and even eccentricities of youth, serve to develop and strengthen the body ; so, in the race, the works and deeds of that age, which we have called the epoch of man's physical growth, lay the foundation for intellectual progress. Deeds of daring, feats of valor, achievements of heroism, mighty developments of the sterner virtues, and solitary instances of gigantic intellectual strength, stand out in the darkness of that iron age, to fire the ambition, and quicken the intellectual energies of all subsequent ages. I do not say, that these periods are distinctly marked, or bounded, by any given date, or that the whole race of man, may, at any time, be founded in the same degree of the scale. The truth is, these epochs extend into each other, so that in the same nation, you often find the features of both at the same time. But, all I affirm is, that there is a

work of progress going on, and that this progress must, of necessity, be first physical, then intellectual ; and that the history of the world clearly shows, in one age, a vast preponderance of physical, and another, of intellectual culture and power.

In the latter period, it may be observed further, that the body, wasted by the endless wear and tear of intellect, deteriorates ; diseases are multiplied, and life itself becomes short.

If I mistake not, this is precisely the stage of human progress, in which we are placed. There are no giants in these days, as there were, in the days of man's physical development, nor do men now, as then, reach the age of centuries. Nor can we boast of our mighty feats of physical strength, as did they of the time of Samson. But everywhere, we are met with the evidences of a most tremendous intellectual activity. The arts and sciences are onward, and not the monk in his cell, or the philosopher in his solitude alone, but the laboring millions are at work, diving into the mysteries of creation. The elements are under our control, and made the ministers of our pleasure. The mountains are tunnelled at their base—the vallies are filled and exalted. The wide ocean is a highway on which we travel

in spite of wind and tide. The fire steed puffs the steam from his iron nostrils, and is off with the speed of the wind, with a thousand in the chariot at his heels; and we have even seized upon the red lightning itself, and made it the bearer of our messages from place to place; so that it is no longer fiction to say, that we may stand here, and catch the living thoughts, as they fall from the lips of our statesmen, in the far distant capitol of our vast republic. All this is the work of intellect, and shows that this is an age of intellectual culture.

Compare the rude hut of old, with the stately temple—the tiny boat paddled with an oar with the mighty steam ship—the bier borne upon men's shoulders with the engine, and rail road car—the hieroglyphics carved upon a rock, or written in wax, with the printing press; and you cannot fail of seeing, that there is a law of progress at work, which has placed this age, intellectually, at an immeasurable distance in advance of all that have preceded it.

The next and last stage of human progress, is, that yet future period, the dawn of which may have begun, spoken of in our text, when "They shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not



lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This is the golden age of moral development, when man shall seek and appreciate the right, the good and the true. Then, the physical man shall conform to the laws impressed upon it by the Creator; and the intellect, which has hitherto run riot, without restraint from the moral powers, shall be devoted to the fulfillment of the law of God. All the vast powers and facilities, that have accumulated during ages of intellectual activity, shall be turned into their proper channels, and lend their mighty aid, in meliorating the condition of man, and giving supremacy to the right. And then, shall man accomplish by moral suasion, what he has long sought in vain to accomplish by brute force and the cunning craftiness of intellect, viz: the control and subjugation of the boisterous passions of the soul, to the law of kindness. Already the dawn of that day has begun. The vast combinations for moral enterprises, that meet you on every hand, prove that moral culture is beginning to attract the attention of the world; and the reluctance and tardiness with which nations now resort to physical force, shows, that man is beginning to understand the power of truth and principle. And who shall say, that man's na-

ture is not capable of vast and incalculable improvement, in a moral point of view? Who shall affirm that this improvement shall not be made? Hitherto, I grant, the intellectual has far outstripped the moral culture of the race. But it was necessary that man should first pass the intellectual epoch, that in it, he might grow, and contrive and invent, and thus augment the means of moral reform, and enlarge his intellect so that it could see the force of moral obligation. And it is now no more certain, that man has progressed intellectually, than that he will progress morally. And I tell you of a truth, this moral development shall not have progressed one tythe the distance, that intellect has already advanced, ere all that the text promises, shall be fulfilled. War shall be looked upon as it really is, a system of wholesale legalized murder, and it shall be understood, that the city or the nation which is established in virtue, and justice, is more strongly fortified, than it would be, if surrounded with walls of adamant high as heaven, with bayonets bristling, swords gleaming, and cannon thundering from every side. Then, the sword shall rest in its scabbard, and banner, spear and plume shall be laid aside, neglected and forgotten, and peace reign throughout the earth. Toil on then,

and toil in hope. Though you sow in sadness and tears, the harvest shall be in smiles and joy. The golden day shall come, when all that prophets have spoken shall be fulfilled to the joy of the whole earth.

## SERMON IX.

### THE DOMINION OF MAN

“And God blessed them; and God said unto them; be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Genesis i: 28.

THIS passage of holy writ contains the first communication of God to man. It was made on that auspicious morning, when the stupendous work of creation was completed, and man, fresh from the forming hand of the Almighty, stood, as the image and representative of God upon the earth, which was henceforward to be the field of his labors.

It gives the assurance of the blessing of him in whom dwells all the fullness of wisdom, and power; and it is, in itself, the “Magna Charta” of human rights, the title, or deed of gift, by which man holds the earth, and claims to exercise dominion over it. The kings of the old world, claiming authority in the western hemisphere, gave letters patent to certain of their subjects, conveying to them the ownership of large sections of country in America, and made them

rulers over the country thus granted. These grants were sought, and prized, as things of great value. But, the text is the original deed, in which, God gave the whole earth to man. These are the letters patent, under the seal and sign of the "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," giving the wide earth, in fee simple, to the human race, and conveying the right of dominion over all the beings, that swarm in its wilds and waters, or cut the ambient air.

The subjugation of the globe, and dominion over it, is, therefore, the destiny and business of man, in this life; and, in that work, God's blessing attends him. To bear some humble part, in the achievement of this destiny, and the exercise of this dominion, is the mission and duty of every man who makes his dwelling place below.

Let those who will, maintain the gloomy doctrine, that man is doomed to a perpetual slavery on earth, and that he must, of necessity, be driven to and fro, the sport and play thing of material evils, for which there is no remedy; I gratefully believe, that humanity is yet destined to assert and maintain the dominion, God has given, and that it shall ultimately come off conqueror, in effecting a complete subjugation. In other words, with God's blessing, man can

subdue the earth, and triumph over the physical evils with which he is surrounded. God commands him to do this, and confirms the dominion thus achieved.

This truth is not merely written in my text, and recognized in all the volume of inspiration, but it is one of those great *first principles*, which dawns upon every human mind, and springs up spontaneously in the intuitions of every human soul. In every age, and in all grades and conditions of human society, man has asserted his claim to the earth, and dominion over it, and has struggled on, in eager, and never-ceasing efforts, for the accomplishment of this destiny. Obstacles have impeded his progress, and difficulties have been reared before him at every step; difficulties from enemies without, and foes within; difficulties from ignorance and inexperience; from folly and unbridled passion; from antagonism and strife; from divided interests and distracted counsels; and from rivalries and competitions, that arm man against his brother, and waste, in useless strife, those energies, which ought to be devoted to the triumph of humanity. Yet, it is remarkable, that the race has never faltered, never paused in its efforts. But, in the midst of the war of untoward elements, the desolations

of famine and pestilence, the carnage and blood of war, and the still more enervating, and paralyzing influences of isolation and personal antagonism, humanity has struggled onward, and preserved its upward course, advancing, step by step, slowly indeed, but surely, towards the subjugation of the earth, and the enjoyment of its rightful dominion. It has been a long and arduous conflict, yet, the advancement already made, gives cheering promise of ultimate success.

Would you realize this progress, and see how far we have advanced, you have but to look at man in his first state on earth. See the humble savage, and mark well the unfriendly powers that surround him, and the thousand enemies he has to meet and subdue. God has, indeed, told him, if not in his word, yet surely, in the deep intuitions of his nature, that he is entitled to dominion; but that dominion must be achieved by subduing and overcoming his enemies. The smoke of his camp fire goes up, curling amid the thickly twined branches of the dense wilderness, in which he dwells and wanders. The wild beasts are around him, roaring for their prey, and ready to devour. In physical strength, and brute force, he is the inferior of the beast. The jaw of the lion, or the paw of the tiger, are too much for

him in single combat. So, with infinite pains he fabricates a bow, and an arrow, a dart, or a javelin, and with these goes out to assert and maintain his dominion over the beasts of the field. But new obstacles meet him. He finds a huge mountain reared, full and impassable, in his way, in whose rocky fastnesses, his enemies dwell safely, beyond the reach of his power. He turns away, and soon comes to the running stream, or the broad river, and again his progress is arrested; and he sits him down upon its bank, and despairs of passing the swelling flood. But, urged on by an irresistible impulse, which is but the presentiment of his destiny, he seeks the means of overcoming these difficulties. The leaf falls, and it floats upon the water. The hint is taken, and, with laborious effort, he constructs a rude canoe, of bark from the tree, and in this, he manages to cross the tide, and glories in the victory thus won. But the very elements are against him. The winter's wind blows piercing and cold, the summer's sun burns scorching and hot; and the rain pours its torrents upon his unsheltered head. To shield himself from these, he flees to a cave, or erects a rude hut from the mud, or from the branches of the forest, and there dwells in comparative security, rejoicing in the victo-



ries he has achieved. And victories, indeed, they are ; not because they are great or considerable in themselves, but because they are the first movements in the battle of ages—degrees they are, in the ascending scale—steps in the ladder, up which man is to ascend to supreme dominion over the earth, demonstrating, beyond all question, that the poor savage feels the divinity that stirreth in every heart, knows that he is born for dominion, and that he labors in a true work, and does his best for himself and his race.

But let the suns of a few ages rise and set, and their dews and rains descend upon the earth, and then mark the contrast ; and see what victories have been won—what marvellous dominion has been achieved !

You see, now, the enlightened and civilized man, clothed in soft and comely raiment, the product of his art. His mind is stored with knowledge ; his eye flashes with the fires of intellect, and his countenance is radiant with the image of the divinity. The lowly hut of the savage is gone ; and, in its stead, is the stately temple, with its fair proportions, and firm foundations, cut from the solid rock, or carved from the pine, or the gnarled oak, whose plume nodded in the breeze, and whose giant arms wrestled

with wind and storm, and defied even the thunder's bolt. The deep, dark forest, is cloven down, and has disappeared, and its ravenous beasts have fled, in fear, from the face of man. The fields are all green and beautiful, and the earth waving with grain for the garner. The wind blows, but man has conquered it. It moves not the granite foundations of his house. It is his servant. The white sails of commerce are unfurled, and the very winds that howl, and seek in vain admittance to that peaceful abode, are working for him, and wafting the riches of other lands to his door. The stream runs as it did of old; but it is no longer an obstacle in man's way. He has seized upon its current, and made it turn the busy mill. The broad river rolls its everlasting tide to the bosom of the ocean. But it is a highway for travel. The light canoe, that moved with so much toil, is gone; but the steamship is there, breasting the tide, and ploughing her way onward, driven by another element, that man has conquered and enlisted in his service. And neither the mighty river, nor old ocean itself, heaves a wave so high, that man will not mount it, and have dominion over it; nor "blows there a gale so fierce," that he will not meet it, and press his

way, onward, in spite of its fury. That old mountain stands there as of yore, its rugged, thunder smitten head, away up among the clouds. But it is tunnelled at its base, and the tramp of the iron fire steed, reverberates through its dark, silent caves and recesses, as like a ball from the cannon's mouth, he goes careering on, with a chariot, and a thousand in his train. The storm rages, indeed; but the shafts from the skies are conducted harmlessly to the ground. Nay, man has gone up into the clouds, and seized, and muzzled the thunder, and grasped the red lightning, and made it a post-boy; and at his bidding, laden with human thoughts, and human words, it goes with a speed, that makes old Time, himself, pause in his rapid flight, and blush to see himself distanced in the race.

These are the victories of man! This the dominion he has achieved! The fire, the earth, and the water, and wind, and wave, and lightning, and steam, have yielded to his sway; and thus "He has taken the giant earth by the throat, and thrown him, and made him swear obedience, on peril of his life."

What do all these things prove? They prove that there is a sacred truth, in that word, which

saith, God has given to man, dominion over the world. When he bade man subdue the earth, he did but set him about a work, which he had given the means, and the power, to accomplish. And, the progress already made, is the sure pledge of ultimate success.

It has thus far, however, been an arduous conflict, which has raised man up to his present dignity, and secured to him that measure of dominion which he enjoys. Great and numerous are the obstacles with which he has grappled, and endless, and ever varying, the means and appliances by which he has sought to overcome them.

In noticing the means by which man's dominion has, thus far, been achieved, it is perfectly obvious, to the most superficial observer, that incoherent, isolated, & fragmentary effort, has ever been comparatively powerless, while combined, united, and well organized action, has told, with tremendous effect, upon the destinies of our race. No single arm, however powerful, no disjointed struggles, however mighty, could, by any possibility, have achieved these victories, or subdued one in a thousand of these enemies. True, there have been men, in every age, who were pioneers in this work, and who led on the united

hosts of the world, and guided their efforts in the contest. And to these, the voice of history gives the praise of the victories achieved. Yet, it is evident, that their strength was not in themselves alone ; but they were mighty, simply because they formed a centre, around which the power of others was congregated. Their victories were won for them, by the combined action of others, and all their success is owing to the circumstance, that they could call out, and concentrate the power of others. Evidently, then, a sentiment of brotherhood, a feeling of common interest, and common sympathy, between man and his fellow man, lies at the foundation of human improvement, and is the main-spring of action, in all labors for the subjugation of the earth, and the achievement of man's rightful dominion. It is for this reason, that Christianity has done more than all else, beneath the sun, to elevate man, and give him the victory over the enemies, with which he is surrounded. Other systems cut humanity in fragments—present their thousand Gods of different and conflicting claims, and interest. The devotees of each are for themselves alone ; and to serve one, is to disobey and offend another ; so that, all are diverse in duty, in interest, and destiny. They

recognize no common tie, that unites the interests of all—no common duty, they are all bound to perform—no common good, they have all to obtain. Hence, their efforts must, of necessity, be what they have ever been, fragmentary, disjointed, and comparatively powerless. It is for this reason, that no heathen nation now upon the face of the earth, has arrived at any tolerable eminence, in those arts and sciences that elevate and ennoble the race, and enable man to assert and maintain his dominion.

But Christianity is a centralizing, and a fraternizing spirit. It makes us all the children of one common father, thus presenting a great central point, around which the thronging myriads of the world may gather, and feel, that they are united in one family. It tells us, that we are all brethren, having the same duty to perform, the same interests to subserve, the same God to worship, the same destiny to achieve on earth, and the same inheritance to receive in the future. Hence the singular fact, so conspicuously written upon the face of the world's history, that while the people, of various climes, have organized and combined their strength, for purposes of war and aggression, while they have raised great armies, and sent them out, in myriad

hosts, to fight their fellows, and subdue man to man; yet, under the banner of CHRIST, alone, will you find a united, or a wide-spread organization, for purposes of benevolence, or for the real elevation of man, and his conquest over the evils, that so waste and destroy humanity. The reason is obvious. Except in Christianity, there is no central sun of action, no common bond of union, and interest, no fraternizing spirit, proclaiming men as brethren, who are, in reality, children of the same Father, and, absolutely, one in interest, one in duty, and one in destiny, now henceforth, and forever.

Let another thing be observed. The dominion of man is limited. It extends over the "fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and over every living thing, that moveth upon the earth." But it does not extend over his fellow man. God gave no such dominion. He did not say, have dominion over your fellow man, and subdue him. But he said, subdue *the earth*, and have dominion over it. Now Christianity recognizes no pre-eminence of one man above another; and neither grants, or allows, one man to lord it over God's heritage. On the contrary, her mandate is, serve God and obey him, and call no man your master upon the earth.

Well had it been for the world, had man remembered this limit to his dominion, and been content to reign over the earth, leaving his fellow man to the enjoyment of that liberty which God has given him.

But the difficulty has been, that instead of battling with his enemies, who were really so, instead of striving for the control of the elements, and all that could hinder the full and free exercise of a legitimate dominion over the earth, man has been seeking to obtain, and preserve an usurped and unholy dominion over his fellow man. Thus, he has been waging war upon himself, fighting with his brother, and wasting his energies in vain and fruitless attempts to subdue humanity,—that humanity, upon which God has stamped his own image, and whose liberty and earthly supremacy he has proclaimed from his throne in the heavens.

For this reason, the history of the world is a history of wars and fightings, from the beginning. The armed hosts, in long and deadly array, have gone out to war, and the battle has been with “confused noise, and garments rolled in blood,” and while the air has been filled with the groans of the dying, and the wail of down-trodden humanity; the shout of victory has been raised in



higher notes, and men have exulted, as if a great good had been obtained. Mistaken men, that they were! That gory battle, so full of carnage and death, was not fought for dominion over the earth. It was fought for dominion over man. It grew out of the question, who should rule with an iron rod over the image of God, on earth. And that victory, over which ye shout so long, and loud, is but the consummation of some plan of tyranny and oppression. It is a loss to the world. It has weakened the race. It has exhausted energies, and absorbed means, which properly directed would have extended the dominion of man over large portions of the earth, now waste and desolate, and thus aided in his advancement to universal dominion. The movement was retrograde, and years must elapse before the powers it has wasted can be regained.

And this is the reason human dominion has been so limited. There are energies enough, and means enough, at the command of man, at any moment, to subdue the earth. But these energies and means have hitherto been absorbed in attempts to sustain thrones of dominion over man. Of course, human nature has ever rebelled against them. Hence, they must be sustained

by the iron arm of war. And I utter but half the truth, when I say, that the treasure, and labor, and life, which have been sacrificed on the altar of this usurped and ungodly dominion of man over man, if properly directed, would have bridged every river, and tunnelled every mountain, and drained every swamp, and reclaimed every desert, and destroyed every venomous beast, and made every inch of God's earth a fertile garden. It would have sent the light of knowledge to every dark corner of the world, and educated every child, that looks upon the sun in the firmament. Aye, had man understood the value of the boon given him in the text, and put his hand diligently and perseveringly to the work God gave him to do, long ere this, the whole earth would have been subdued, and all its parts under the dominion of man. And dear to my heart are the altars of Christian faith and love, because there shines the light of hope, that better, and more glorious times are reserved in the future. From the turmoil and strife of the world, from the clutchings of avarice and vaultings of exhibition; the rivalries and competitions of man, for power over man, and the perpetual antagonisms of all conflicting parties, and interests, it points to a time when discord and strife

shall cease—when men shall be bound in one strong and indissoluble bond of union, and the teeming millions of the earth shall, together, go out to war with every thing, that is calculated to hurt and destroy, and man shall possess, and richly enjoy, the dominion which God has given him. Aye, “dominion over the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth.” Then the “leopard shall lie down with the lamb, and the lion and the ox shall feed together, and a little child shall lead them.”

To such a consummation, even on earth, Christian faith points, and the text is the pledge, that a dominion, such as this, is the earthly destiny of man.

“Lord, for those days we wait; those days  
Are in thy word foretold,  
Fly swifter sun and stars, and bring  
That promised age of gold.”

## SERMON X.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Matt. vi: 33.

THE opinion extensively prevails, that the kingdom of God is far in the distance of an unseen and future world, and that, it can be obtained only, at the expense of the temporal comforts and enjoyments of this life. Its riches are represented as far transcending all the treasures of earth, and much of the labor of the christian ministry has been devoted to the work of persuading men to yield up the one, for the sake of the other. And yet, it is remarkable, that although this theory has been adopted, by general consent, for ages, the practice has been exactly the reverse. The masses of men, everywhere, have been engaged, heart and soul, in eager and never ceasing toil for wealth. The other life is too far off, and its treasures though great, are deemed somewhat uncertain, and though the promises of ultimate gain are most flattering, yet, man has preferred to deal in tangible gold,

and has considered it a safer operation, to engage in a speculation which would make quick returns, even though the profits were comparatively small.

Thus with the multitude. A few, indeed, have withdrawn from the busy scenes of life, despising alike its riches and comforts, and have sought the kingdom of God, in another world, by depriving themselves of all the blessings and enjoyments of the present.

These are the two extremes, which find their consistent representatives, in the monk or recluse, on the one hand, and in the sensualist on the other. Both agree, that either this world or the next must be given up, and there, they separate. One chooses the "Kingdom of God," withdraws from all commerce with the world, secludes himself in some cave or cell, fasts and mortifies his body, and lives a living death, in this beautiful world, that he may secure and enjoy the glories of another. The other, less trustful and patient, chooses the present, and since he can have but one, devotes to that, all the powers of his mind and body. He bows with an earnest devotion at the shrine of mammon, and neglecting the riches of righteously, makes it the first, and greatest object of life, to

heap up shining ore. These are, as I said, the two extremes, and it is easy to see, that they originate in the error with which I started, viz: the supposition, that the kingdom of God is afar off, and between it and the present world, there is an antagonism so perfect, that one can be enjoyed only at the expense of the other.

Between these extremes, the principles and practices of each, are mingled in all shades of character, in the persons of those, who seem to be striving for a sort of middle ground. Some love the world, and in the main, devote themselves to it most heartily, but occasionally, sacrifice a little, or devote a small share of attention to the subject of religion, on the same principle, that they would pay a small premium of the insurance of their lives, or property; or deposit a trifle in a savings bank, to be drawn upon in time of need. Or, they outwardly profess to be absorbed in seeking the kingdom of God, but manage the while to devote a good share of their time to the pursuit of wealth, after a godly sort, hoping thereby to secure earthly comfort, and then, by timely repentance, to smuggle themselves into God's kingdom, at the eleventh hour, notwithstanding they have enriched themselves with the profits of contraband goods; and thus to

make a grand speculation by reaping the reward both of righteousness and sin.

Now, as opposed to these views, and practices, there are two things taught by our Savior. One is, that the "kingdom of God" is here on earth, and is to be sought, and its righteousness practiced in the present world. Hence he instructs us to pray, not, that we may get to a far distant kingdom, but that his kingdom may come to man, on earth. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," is the prayer we are to offer in faith, to the Father of our spirits. The other sentiment to which I alluded, is, that there is a perfect harmony between the kingdom of God, his righteousness, and all the needful temporal blessings of this life. Nay, more, that the one is necessarily involved in, and flows from the other. And this is taught in our text. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It were a flagrant abuse of the text, to consider it as destroying all distinction, between the service of God, and Mammon, or as giving license for the unrestrained service of the latter. Because, elsewhere, its author has given us the most positive assurance, that we cannot serve God and Mam-

mon. Besides, the text, properly considered, so far from encouraging the worship of Mammon, by exalting it to an equality with the service of God, is, in fact, designed to take away the prominent excuse, for this exclusive devotion to the acquisition of wealth. You need not be told, that necessity is the great plea offered for that desperate rush for gold, in which the world is engaged. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," is the strong and emphatic assertion of the Master. But the plea of the devotee, at that shrine, is, "necessity is laid upon me, and I must serve at this altar, or famine, hunger, and nakedness, will be upon me." Nay, sir, you mistake, in this matter. There is no necessity, that you should pine in want, or starve, nor yet, that you should consider this world's goods, as the end and aim of life. There is another, and a better way to secure all temporal comfort. "Take no thought for your body, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewith ye shall be clothed." Why? Simply because your heavenly Father knoweth, that ye have need of these things. They are matters of course. God knows, that we must have them, and he did not overlook this necessity of our nature. But in the arrangements of his providence, the laws of



his kingdom, and the practice of his righteousness, he made provisions for them. Therefore, seek first that kingdom, and the practice of its righteousness. Not because temporal blessings are valueless, or to be despised. Nor, be ye deterred from it, through fear of want. For these things are so necessary, and indispensable, that God knew we must have them, and with infinite and unerring wisdom, so established his kingdom, and arranged his righteousness, that all these things should be added to those who obey him.

To those who have been in the habit of considering the kingdom of God as something exclusively pertaining to another mode of being—a state of blessedness to be obtained in the future, by the sacrifice of all the good things of the present, it may appear strange, to hear, that the kingdom of God has really any connection with the temporal affairs of this life, or, that it has any thing to do with the supply of our physical wants. And yet, this is the doctrine of my text, and, with your leave, I will attempt to show you, that it is no dream of an enthusiast, or blind recommendation of a rash spirit, which cared for nothing but another world. But it is, on the contrary, the offspring of a deep and pro-

found knowledge of the laws of God, and the truths that pertain to his kingdom on earth ; truths, in comparison with which, your huge volumes on political economy, are but the babblings of folly, and all your treatises on the arts of commerce, and the wealth of nations, are vain and futile. The proposition is, that the kingdom of God is on earth, and recognizes the truth, that man needs food, and drink, and clothing, and all temporal comforts ; and the question is, how, or in what manner, these wants are provided for, in the kingdom of God, so that they will flow from the practice of its righteousness ?

It is proper to observe, in the outset, that “ a kingdom ” is a reign or government. As, for instance, the kingdom of Great Britain now belongs to Queen Victoria. Those who seek that kingdom, seek to live under that government, and in obedience to the laws of that realm. And so, the kingdom of God, is his reign, or government. Those who seek it, desire to know, and obey his laws, and to live in conformity with his reign, upon earth. Having thus found his laws, and conformed to the principles of his government, the intimation is, that all temporal good shall follow, as a matter of course.

Let us now commence at the beginning, and

see, if there is not truth in this proposition. I call your attention to the remarkable fact, that the very first thing God did for man, was to give him a work to perform. The first utterance of a law of God was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it." "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." I enter into no discussion of the proper mode of interpreting this portion of the sacred record. Whether it is to be understood literally, or allegorically, is of little consequence to our present purpose. In either case, it is evident, that man was not placed on earth to be idle. To subdue the earth, to dress and keep the garden, was his business. And, if any principle of God's government is here plainly declared, or dimly shadowed forth in allegory, it is, that God's government requires man to be employed in useful labor. Hence, we find, a little further on, in the history of God's dealings with man, this principle is embodied, and set forth in the command, which came authoritatively, from the throne of heaven, saying, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." May we not ask, why this command? The answer is, because God knew that man must have food and clothing, and a

supply of all his physical wants. He knew, also that these can only be obtained by labor, and hence the command.

It is true, that there is, also, a provision for a day of rest and devotion ; and the mistake of the world has been, in the supposition, that this part of the command, which enjoins a Sabbath, is the only part, that has any thing to do with the kingdom of God. I take leave, however, to say, that the injunction to labor, is as clear and obligatory as the command to rest ; and obedience to the one, is as good evidence of citizenship in God's kingdom, as the other. I mean to say, distinctly, that industry is as much a duty as worship, and that one is as much an act of obedience to God as the other.

Now let it be supposed, that thus much of God's law is universally obeyed. Every man is industriously engaged in some useful employment, during six days out of seven. Who does not see, that the result would be precisely what the text affirms. All over the earth, there would be enough, and abundantly enough, to supply the wants of every human being, that God has made, so that, none need have harassing thought, as to what they should eat, or what they should drink. In truth, the wisdom of the divine economy, and

the abundance of his provisions for our wants, are truly wonderful. Consider, for a moment, what vast portions of the earth are waste and desolate, how poorly and imperfectly, even the balance is cultivated. Think what vast multitudes of men are taken from the walks of industry, and engaged in war, and supported, as mere leeches upon the body of humanity—and then, again, what other masses are engaged in unproductive employments, or living in idleness, as drones in the hive; and, yet, it is remarkable, that with all these abstractions, from the productive power of the human race, so liberal and overflowing are the provisions of Almighty goodness, that there is now, and at all times, enough on earth, to make every man, woman, and child, that looks upon the sun in the firmament, comfortable, in a temporal point of view. Let but God's kingdom come, in this, its mere alphabet—let that command be obeyed every where, which requires men to labor six days in the week, and the deepest and darkest fountains of human suffering would be dried up, and, as if the windows of heaven were opened, temporal blessings would be poured out in such abundance, that hunger and nakedness, and want, in every form, should be unknown on earth.

But, it is manifest, that in order to secure this result, in its practical application, it would be necessary, that there should be regulations in regard to the proprietorship, and distribution of the productions of man's industry. And this is provided for in the kingdom of God. "Thou shalt not steal,"—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods," are the prohibitions, which were made to secure, to every man, the quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of the productions of his own labor. What each man produces, is his own. Another may not put forth his hand, and steal it, nor even covet it, for his use.

In the light of the subject, thus far, it is manifest, that if these first principles of the divine reign, were reduced to practice, there would be little fear, that any should suffer for want of a supply of their physical necessities. The difficulty is two-fold; first, that not so much as one quarter of the human race are, at any time, employed in any manner, that adds to the common supply of the wants, of the race; and secondly, such is the structure of human society, and such its laws, that the toiling masses, are either slaves in fact, or are made so in effect, from the circumstance, that others clutch, and eat the fruit of their toil, so soon as it is ripe for the harvest. The applica-

tion of the laws of God would remedy the evil completely, by engaging men in labors, for human good, and by securing to each man the fruit of his toil.

The great difficulty, the parent of the countless evils that men suffer, so far as the things of this world are concerned, is, that men have expatriated themselves from the kingdom of God, and substituted enactments of their own for the laws of the Creator, so that, instead of the reign of God on earth, it has been hitherto the reign of man over his fellow man. In speaking of the laws of man, now, I allude not so much to human governments, and their laws, as to that unwritten code which lies back of all laws of the realm, and is stronger than all acts of Parliament, and runs deeper than any "act to amend an act,"—a code, that determines the form and structure and customs of human society—seeks ever to rob the many to enrich the few—fixes the relative position, that each man shall occupy, the functions he shall perform, the influences he shall exert, and decides the principle on which the wealth of the world shall be distributed. It is a code written indeed in no huge folios, but it is, nevertheless, an iron code, and its stern mandates are rigorous as if written in blood. It says

to this man, dig, and he digs, and wears the flesh from his bones, and yet eats not the fruit of his labor ; and to another it says, you shall not labor, nor place a hand or foot upon an inch of God's earth, unless you give to others the fruit of your toil. It is this, that enables one man to seize the productions of the labor of a thousand, and say to huge masses of his fellows, be ye poor, and toil, and strive, and starve, and it is so. It is this, that enables one man to seat himself in power, and lord it over God's heritage, for no other reason, than, because his father was of noble blood, or else for the still poorer reason, that, by industry, (?) nay, by deception, falsehood, oppression, no matter how, he has secured a heap of dust, that men call gold. It is this, that robs the poor, that it may pamper the rich. Its workings may be seen, consummated, in a measure, in the case of the "green isle of the ocean." Alas ! for poor, ill-fated, down-trodden Erin. The night winds sigh as they breathe upon her woes. Her once stalwart sons walk like hungry skeletons, upon her tear drenched soil ; for, where man says thou shalt not labor, vain is the command of heaven to toil. And her daughters, with maniac eye, and dishevelled hair, stretch out their lean, withered hands, and cry



in vain for bread ; not because there is no bread, but because they have been robbed of that which their hands had made. Talk of the oppressions of government, and point to a Parliament in College Green, as a cure for these gigantic evils. They cannot reach skin deep in an attempt to probe this great ulcer of sin. The difficulty is, that the laws of God's kingdom are set at nought. An arm of power, upheld indeed by government, but in itself back of the throne, has interposed, and set at defiance the law of God which says, "Six days shalt thou labor," and scouted that higher law which gives to man the fruit of his toil, and says, "Thou shalt not steal." And to this end, all the social compacts of this age, as of all preceding ages, are tending, and "to this complexion will they come at last, unless men shall turn from vanity and lies, and seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as the source of all temporal prosperity as well as of all spiritual joy.

And yet, it is a lamentable truth, that in the nineteenth century, with ages of oppression, strife, and contention, casting their shadows upon the world, filled as it is with violence and blood, the wise men of the world, instead of seeking the remedy, in the knowledge and obe-

dience of the laws of God, are poring over the volumes of antiquity, and framing every social compact, after the pattern of some ancient clan, or horde, who lived and plundered the world a thousand years ago. And even the ministers of religion have despaired at the altar—given up the present world as hopeless, and passed an act of divorcement between it and the kingdom of God, declaring that he who would secure the one, must forsake and abjure the other. Long have they prayed, with uplifted hands, and heavenward eye, “thy kingdom come,” and have, at last, concluded that it will not come, but they must go to that in another world.

And now, what I wish to say, further, is this. If the teachings of Christ are worth heeding, then has Christianity something to do with man on earth, and if his expositions of the kingdom of God can be relied on at all, then is that kingdom to be sought, as one that involves those principles of righteousness, which shall secure to all men, every where, a competency of the good things of the world. Why live we, then, at this poor, dying rate? Why content ourselves with a state of anarchy, and rebellion, against the reign of God, where the myriads of the race must suffer all the ills of

abject want, and where even the best of men must be perpetually upon the rack of uncertainty, as to the questions, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewith shall we be clothed? Does not the voice of wisdom cry, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," that all things may be added unto us? I have no schemes to propose, no theories to build up in the premises. If you ask me for the "modus operandi," by which these results are to be realized, I tell you frankly, I do not know them. I am not sufficiently wise for that work. But, I do say, if Jesus did not utterly mistake in this matter, then is it true that there is a system of divine order, called the Kingdom of God, in obedience to which, all earthly wants shall find an abundant supply, and that this system is worth seeking? Instead of frowning upon every word, or thought, that looks to the realization of this idea, or that would disturb the present state of the world, we should make it the first object of our search, to find, and obey, and, in all things, conform to the kingdom of God. Should it be asked, again, why God has not revealed that system, in its operations, and in all its detail of particulars? I answer: he has revealed nothing in detail, for the good reason, that man is de-

signed to be ever a pupil, or learner, in the school of Christ. He is progressive, and hence all outward forms must change as man improves. The beasts are guided by instinct, which never varies, never improves, and forms, with them, need not change. But man is endued with reason, and what dead matter does by its own laws, and the beasts do by instinct, man must learn from experience. And it is well that it is so. A revelation of all the social laws in detail, would have fixed man as immovably in one spot, as the beasts are fixed. It would have said to him, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." But this was not the design of the infinite mind. The intention was, on the contrary, that man should go on in endless approximation to the divinity; and as he thus goes on, the forms of life must, of course, change. The most and best that could be done, was to reveal the great principles that must enter into all social compacts, and leave the application of those principles to the ever changing forms of life, to be found out by the intellect of man. This has been done. God has taught us that all the goods of earth are the product of our toil; but he has left us to seek out the mode of its application. He has established the right of each man to the avails of his labor,

and left man, himself, to apply the great principle of human brotherhood, in the distribution of wealth. He has revealed the Great Law of human unity, and taught us to search for its application to all the affairs of life, and encouraged us to search, by the assurance, that under his divine reign, when truly found, each individual man shall occupy his true position in the great fabric of human society. In obedience to his law, the iron arm of war shall be nerveless and weak, and no more be bathed in the blood of the slain. "Men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks," and, pursuing the peaceful paths of industry, poverty and slavery and oppression shall be no more, for each man shall eat the fruit of his labor, and that fruit shall be abundant, and sweet.

At present, the kingdoms of the world, and all social compacts, and governments, are but an expression of the internal spirit of the people; and that is, "each for himself, alone, to keep all he has, and get all he can," with little regard to the laws of God, or his kingdom. It is of little use, to contend against these outward forms, or labor to batter them down; for when the spirit of the people changes, these forms will die of themselves; and, until that spirit is changed, if these

are destroyed, it will assume other forms, no better, if as good. My only hope, then, rests in the silent and peaceful progress of the kingdom of God, in Christ Jesus the Lord. Let that kingdom come, that reign be established, then shall all the kingdoms of the world, all that is false in its social structure, and all its want, and poverty, and slavery, and oppressions, come to nought, and earth be paradise again.

## SERMON XI.

### OBEDIENCE, THE SOURCE OF EXALTATION

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient, unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”

Philippians ii: 8, 9.

THE wise man of Israel says, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;” and, I presume, if we were to substitute *great* for good, the voice of the world would sanction the sentiment. A *great name* is not, however, necessarily good, for a man may be great, even in infamy and wickedness. Still, the love of exaltation, the desire of distinction, and a name that shall live in the memory and affections of the world, is a strong incentive to human action. For this purpose, men labor, and waste the midnight oil, and strain every nerve, until the day of their death; happy, if by all this effort, they secure a name, that shall live when they are no more. But it is wonderful, among the vast numbers who engage in this race, how few there are who win the prize. In the long lapse of six thousand

years, and among all the vast multitudes of those that have lived and died, and toiled with mighty strugglings, for a name, a few score names are treasured up in the hearts of mankind; but the vast and unnumbered myriads lie in their dust, lost and forgotten. The reason is two-fold; first, because men have sought a *great*, rather than a *good* name; and secondly, they have sought even that, where it is not to be found. A great name among our fellows may be desirable, on some accounts; but, real exaltation of character is infinitely better. Corrupt as man may be, it is nevertheless true, that he does respect the good and true, and he really respects this alone. He may, indeed, join in the shout of the multitude, and vociferate, "long live the king," with the lungs of a stentor; and the king himself, may imagine, that his name is great in the world. But, after all, when you go down into the hearts of the people, and lay bare the secrets, that are hidden there, you shall find, that not one of all that shouting mass of humanity, truly reverences the name of that king, one fraction more, than he was convinced of his real goodness. So that below these shams, and behind these painted masks, there is a deep and voluntary homage paid by the heart of hearts, to the good and true,



and to that only. And hence, all real permanent greatness is founded upon goodness. But men have sought merely to be great, to obtain a name, which should be sounded from sea to sea, caring little whether its greatness was founded upon the right, or the wrong.

We have before seen, that greatness can alone proceed from real goodness. But men have not sought it there. They have girded the sword, and sought a name in carnage and blood. They have led the armed hosts to battle, and hewed down their fellows, rank after rank, and as the shout of victory has gone up on the air, they have imagined, that their names were immortal. But again, the battle is set in array, and the hero falls, his sword broken, and his banner torn. The muffled drum, and the death march, tell that he is gone; the clods of the valley cover him; another hero takes his place; and when a few years have passed, his grave cannot be distinguished, from the resting place of the least of the thousands, that fell by his side. And this is the end of greatness, won by the sword. But is there no way in which man can be exalted, and secure to himself a good name—a name, that shall live and be remembered? Alas, that question has been asked from the beginning, and though all

have believed, that it should be answered, in the affirmative, yet have they sought the boon, in every thing else, except the very thing in which alone it is to be found.

The constant and fatal mistake of the world has been, in associating greatness or exaltation of character with the idea of commanding armies, ruling nations, or governing vast empires. whereas the real truth is, and it is as simple as it is true : all real human greatness is the result of humility and obedience. Every name that is worth having—every character that will endure the test of ages, and live in the affections of the world, has been secured, not by commanding, but by obeying, and grows not from dominion but from obedience. He that would be great must first be good, and he that would be exalted, must humble himself and be obedient. The exaltation of Jesus himself was obtained by this means. “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And what was the consequence? The text answers, “Wherefore” (for this reason, and for this alone,) “God also highly exalted him, and hath given him a name that is above every name.”

One great object of the mission of Jesus was to give us an example which we might safely

follow, and his life is but an illustration of the truth I am endeavoring to unfold. It you look at him in the contrast with those who were called great in his day, you will perceive, that the true element of his greatness is to be found where the text places it.

In an obscure part of Judea, was the little village of Bethlehem. And there came to that village a poor carpenter, and his wife; and the inn being full, they sought shelter, for the night, in a stable; and there a child was born, and they laid it in the manger. The child grew, and came to be a man, and, at the age of about thirty years, commenced his career as a teacher of religion. He secured, for his followers, a few humble fishermen; and they went from place to place, proclaiming a new and despised religion. The great, and the mighty, of that day, looked upon him with contempt. The crowned head, and the mitred priest, laughed him to scorn. They worshipped in the splendid temple, with the assembled multitude; and he, with his few chosen ones, paid his devotions in the mountain, or by the wayside. They were in their pomp, and power, and he, as little heeded, as the enthusiast, who now gathers a rabble around him, to exhort in the street. And, who would have thought, that

there was in that lowly one, a greatness, before which, kings, and priests, sink in the dust? Or, who would have believed, that he should obtain a name, far above them all—a name that should live fresh, and green, in the hearts of a world, when they, and all their pride, should lie forgotten in oblivion? And yet, such is the fact. That carpenter's son, friendless, and poor, as he was—who toiled in persecution, and want, unnoticed of men, except in derision—he lives in all coming ages—his fame is wide as the world, and durable as time. And, as for those the world then called great, they are but rubbish at the foot of his cross; and, all their history will be searched, not for their sakes, but for an illustration of a single sentence that fell from his lips, on the mount, or by the sea of Galilee! But how happens this? Was he the conquering hero, at whose command ten thousand swords would leap from their scabbards, and flash, in sunlight, ready to drink the blood of an enemy? Did he ascend the throne, whose steps were worn, by the bended knees of a prostrate world? And did he thus send abroad his name as greatest among the great? Nay, nothing like it. But, the simple story is, he humbled himself, and became obedient. He pursued the path of duty,

and obeyed the laws of God, though danger, and death, awaited him ; and, therefore, it was that God exalted him, and gave him a name that is above every name. True, he is said to have wrought miracles, and performed many wonderful works. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind. But, these are not the only causes of his greatness, for they are often denied, and derided. Even those who saw them, and could not deny that they were wrought, seized upon them, to reproach him as an emissary of Satan. Even to this day, infidelity scouts them, and counts them as an evidence that he was an impostor. But his sinless obedience to every conviction of truth, and duty, this is the jewel that grows brighter and brighter, with age—and this it is that calls out his name with reverence, and respect, from the tongue of rankest infidelity, itself.

And among those who believe in the miracles, it is not so much the fact, that the works were wonderful, that calls out their respect, as that they were performed in obedience to the law of kindness. Men will gaze and wonder at the tricks of the magician, and call him great in his way. But this is not the greatness of Christ, nor are these mighty works, the only foundation of the

homage, the world pays to his name. So far as they are concerned, though they may convince the intellect, they speak to the *heart*, only because they were miracles of mercy, and our admiration and love are drawn out by the circumstance, that a being endued with such powers, should still be so meek, so mild, so humble and truthful, and so obedient to all that is good and true.

See that obedience manifested, when the tempter showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and said, "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Get thee behind me Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Such was the answer of him, whom the world, and all its glory, could not tempt to an act of disobedience.

Behold, how obedient he was to the law of mercy and love, when the blind spread out their empty hand, and called from darkness, for light! How bowed he to that law, when the maniac glared upon him, and friends plead for his restoration! How obeyed he that law, when the multitude, that thronged around him, called for bread in the wilderness! How bowed he to the law of God, when his enemies smote him, and spat upon

him ! With what submission did he bend in obedience to the divine will, when in the agony, and sweat of Gethsemane, he prayed, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And how did his obedient spirit shine forth, when in submission to the will of heaven, he meekly took that cup of death, and drained its bitter dregs as he died upon the cross. In all these things, you see the truth of his word, when he said, "My meat, and my drink, is to do the will of him that sent me." And this it is, that constitutes the true element of his greatness. This it is, that has exalted his name above every name ; for had his life been stained by an act of disobedience to the laws of humanity, and of God, his fame would have been tarnished by that act. And this is the true reason, why no other name can be compared with his ; because no other man lived in sinless obedience, as he lived. Moses left a name, that was the glory of Israel, but he slew the Egyptian, and broke in pieces the tables of the law, in a passion. David reigned wisely in Israel, and has left a name to be admired ; but he slew the Hittite, that he might obtain his wife. Peter denied his Master, and Paul once persecuted the church, and these last

wrought miracles, as did Jesus. But, compared with him, the glory of their names are faint and dim; because they humbled not themselves, to such obedience, as was found in him.

I have before said, that Christ was our example. In him we see human nature, purified and exalted; and the fact, that he was exalted, through humility and obedience, is but the exhibition of a universal principle, teaching, that man, every where, and always, must find the true dignity of his nature, and all the exaltation of which that nature is capable, by humbling himself, and being obedient to the laws of the Creator. And whether you view this matter, in its application to the physical, intellectual, or moral man, it is in all equally true.

Apply it, for a moment, to the physical system. The body is made subject to certain organic and physical laws, on which the life and health depend. These laws require simple and nutritious food, due attention to exercise, cleanliness, and pure air, and who does not see, that the proper development of the powers of the body, the preservation of health, and length of days, depends upon obedience to these laws. Not one of them, can be disregarded, or violated, with impunity. But, he that sets himself up above



these laws, lives in inactivity, and intemperate eating and drinking, or breathes tainted air, will, as certainly, dwarf his body, cripple its powers, and go down, in decrepitude and weakness, to an early grave, as there is truth in the experience of man. Even here, in its lowest sense, the condition of physical power and greatness, lies in obedience to law, and no man can hope to be exalted, in any other way.

In reading the Old Testament, we find, that there were giants in those days, men performed feats of physical strength, and lived to the age of centuries. I know, these things stagger the credulity of some ; but you should remember that, that was an age of physical culture. To train the iron nerve, so that it should be strong in battle, was first in the thoughts of the people, for then feats of strength were in high repute. Living much in the open air, with a plain and nutritious diet, and constant and healthful exercise, the body grew, and was strong. And if the name of Methuselah, is remembered for his age, or Goliah, of Gath, for his size, or Sampson, for his strength, it was because they were obedient to the physical and organic laws, on which life and health depend. An act of strong rebellion to these laws, would have sent Methuselah

to the grave, in his youth, dwarfed the giant of Gath, or made the sinewy arm of Sampson weak as that of an infant. True it is then, that all physical greatness is to be sought for, and found only in the path of obedience to law.

The same principle is true in the intellectual world. There are natural laws, in obedience to which, the intellect is developed, and becomes active and strong. As an instance. The law of our intellectual constitution is, that the mental powers are developed, and strengthened, by exercise. Each faculty must be employed, or it will be weak and feeble. Another law of our constitution is, that the mental powers must have rest, as well as exercise, and they cannot be overtaxed with impunity. I take these only as specimens, or illustrations; and, I ask, who, or where is the man, that ever arrived at any considerable intellectual greatness, without obedience to these laws? And, I tell you that man does not, and never did exist. If Plato, and Socrates, and the sages of antiquity, were great in intellect, and if their names have come down to us as exalted in intellectual power, it is because they bowed submissively to the voice of God in nature, and rendered obedience to the laws of their intellectual constitution. Sloth,

and mental inactivity, would have thrown mist and confusion into the reasonings of Plato, and changed the wise teachings of Socrates, to the babblings of a child ; and, over exertion of these powers, in a great degree, would have made a maniac, or an idiot of either. True it is, then, that all intellectual greatness must proceed from obedience. If the present is an age of mental power—if light and knowledge are spreading far and wide—if this day has witnessed triumphs of mind over physical obstacles, such as the world has not seen before—if nations are linked with bands of iron, and the lightning is made a messenger for man—and if everywhere intellect is rearing its stupendous monuments of greatness, it is because this is an age of intellectual culture, where the laws that govern intellectual development, and progress, are understood and obeyed ; and the foundation of all this intellectual greatness, is to be found in obedience. But it ends not here. The same rule holds good in the moral world. There are moral laws, which have their foundation in the nature of man. These were taught in theory, and exemplified in practice, by him of Nazareth ; and, what I wish you to perceive, is the unalterable truth, that all real greatness is to be found in obedience to

these laws. I say real greatness, because moral greatness alone is substantial, and enduring. It, alone, can speak to the great heart of humanity, and unite the suffrages of a world in its favor.

The body may be strong, and perform its feats of strength and agility; but it will soon die, and be forgotten. An ignorant and sensual people may deify a Hercules, but if that mighty arm was employed in crushing the weak, and shedding the blood of the defenceless, the world may wonder at its power, but it will despise and condemn it from the heart. And so of intellectual greatness. The mind may soar high, radiant with light, bright with corruscations of genius, and sparkling with the gems of poetry. An age of intellectual idolaters may admire and wonder at the vast range of that mind's grasp, but if it presents no moral beauty, the world will ultimately pronounce its sentence of condemnation. Byron had a giant's mind, and his vast intellectual powers are admired, but he had no faith in God or humanity, no trust in the morally good and true; and hence the world will accord the highest praise to the humble lays of the shepherd of Israel, and turn from the gorgeous drapery and splendid ornament of the Poet to feast their eyes on the ever green and lovely moral

beauties of the Psalmist, and these will be remembered when those are forgotten. So, then, the might of the warrior's arm, though powerful as Hercules himself, is only great, when it is made bare in the cause of right and truth; and the efforts of intellect in its loftiest flights, are only truly great, when they are devoted to the defence and promulgation of the really good and true, in a moral sense.

Moral greatness, a name founded on the morally beautiful and sublime, is therefore, only desirable, and I have more than once said, that this must be obtained, if at all, by humility and obedience to the moral laws of God. Jesus himself derived his exaltation from the fact, that he humbled himself, and became obedient; and so it is, and ever has been, and ever must be, with all the truly great and good. The Apostles were great and good men, and have left a name behind them that will live while the world stands. But who does not see, that every instance of self-laudation, and every act of disobedience to the laws of the Master, (for disobedient they sometimes were,) is a blemish upon their character, and abates so much from the glory of their name. Look at the reformers, and whence their greatness? What is it that all admire in their char-

acters, whether friend or foe? Is it the towering intellect of Calvin, that dives into the depths of theological science, and plays with metaphysical subtleties as with toys? Is it the boldness and courage of Luther, which meets the dignitaries of the church, and with steady nerve faces conclave and synod, and stands unawed by the thunders of the Vatican, the clanking of chains, and the crackling of fires kindled to destroy? Nay, but it is the humility in which they bowed before God, and the unflinching resolution with which they determined to obey him. It is the boldness with which they adhered to their convictions of duty, and obeyed these at all hazards. So, then, their greatness is founded upon their obedience, and they are exalted, because they humbled themselves and obeyed God. So the pilgrim fathers were great, in their inflexible determination to obey God. But when from the condition of obedience, they assumed to command, and hung the Quakers, and whipped the Baptists, they fell, with a foul stain upon the purity of their fame.

The moral bearing and application of my subject is plain and simple. I need not enforce it at large, for the child has seen it at every step of our progress. Do you wish for greatness,

and pant for a name that shall live after you? Seek it not in the ensanguined field—it cannot be found there; seek it not in places of honor, so called, or in dominion over your fellow men—it lives not there. Think not that it will be found in pride, and self confidence, that lifts itself above the laws of the eternal God. But seek it where alone it can be found, in a just appreciation of your own powers, and the functions you came into the world to perform; which bows in lowly reverence before God, and obeys him. Aye, seek it, where Jesus found it, and where it has been found by the truly great and good, in every age, in obedience, for so sure as God reigneth, “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased.” Such is the eternal law, let us heed it and be wise.

## SERMON XII.

### AGUR'S PRAYER.

“ Give me neither poverty, nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Proverbs xxx : 8, 9.

MAN is, in a great measure, the creature of circumstances. He is possessed of passions, and beset with infirmities, which expose him to many and fearful dangers, so that there is good reason for casting the mantle of charity over his aberrations from the path of duty. We may talk as we please, of the “ freedom of the human will,” and of the self-regulating power of the mind of man ; we may say, if we choose, that good and evil are placed before us, and we are at perfect liberty to choose the one, and refuse the other ; and, we may say, when a fellow falls, it was all his own fault, and curse him with bitterness ; but, after all, the real truth is, there are ten thousand influences, from without, always at work, and, it may be doubted if, hitherto, moral teachers have made sufficient allowance for the influence of outward circumstances, in giving a



direction to the conduct, and tone to the moral character. I do not say, that man has no freedom of action, or that he has no power to regulate his own conduct; nor do I assert, that he is, in the full and entire sense of the term, "a child of circumstances," neither will I attempt to define the precise limits of man's self-regulating power. But, I do affirm, that there are circumstances, over which he has no control, that have a very considerable—nay, a powerful influence upon the character and conduct. Hence the propriety of the Savior's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation;" and hence, also, the propriety of Agur's prayer, in the text, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Let us look at some of the circumstances to which I have alluded, and see if their influence is not worth taking into the account, in forming an estimate of human character.

Man has no control over the question of the country where he is born, or the state of society where he is educated and brought up. So that, generally speaking, it may be said, in truth, that others decide for us, whether we shall be Mahom-

etans, Pagans, Jews, or Christians, religiously; or, politically, Republicans, Aristocrats, or Democrats. Had you, or I, been born at Rome, altogether likely we should have been Catholics, or, had we been reared at Constantinople, the probability is, we should have been Mahometans. And the same is true of various religious and political divisions. It is no great merit in us, that we are Christians in faith, for we were born in a land of Christians, and drank in its doctrines from childhood. Nor is it the fault of the Pagan, that he is a Pagan, or of the Mussulman, that he bows down at the shrine of the Arabian prophet; for, he was born under the shadow of the Crescent, and the creed of the prophet was rocked in his cradle with him. These are general influences exerted upon man, whether he will or not; and, I am free to confess, that I know of no agency of man, sufficiently free, and powerful, to withstand their effects. If, from these, we come down to particulars, we shall find, that each, and every condition of man, has its own peculiar dangers, and temptations, always exerting their influences upon the character, and determining, in a great measure, the line of conduct pursued. Our text mentions two conditions of outward life, and prays to be

delivered from each ; and, the main object of my discourse is, to show that this prayer was dictated by the spirit of true wisdom. The influence of riches, and poverty, then, is our theme.

### I. OF RICHES.

Need I allude to the fact, that man, in all ages, has been eager to increase his possessions? Nay, for we know full well, that in the wide world, there is no altar at which man bows with such supreme devotion, as at the shrine of mammon. For gold, we toil with weary days, and long sleepless nights, of schemings and ambition. For this, we cross the wide ocean, traverse deserts of sand, breathe the air of pestilence and death, encircle the earth, and dig to its centre. For this, we forsake our friends and kindred, home, and all its endearments—become wanderers, in strange and distant lands—meet the dangers of the sea, the fatigue of labor, and the fever and excitement of trade and commerce. And yet, when we come to sit down, soberly, and count the cost, our own judgment will tell us, that even when our end is attained, we reap but a poor reward for our pains. Who was ever satisfied, and made happy with wealth? Who does not know, that as riches increase, cares and perplexities, re-

sponsibilities and anxieties—feverish and fearful anxieties, multiply and increase also?

Thus much for the ability of wealth, to impart happiness to its possessor. Its peculiar influence upon the character, is set forth in the text. "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?"

Pride and infidelity, are the besetting sins of those who are in the possession of great wealth. The man who is surrounded by an abundance of the good things of the world, is in imminent danger of indulging in a haughty and overbearing pride. Such is the homage of the world paid to wealth, that with little regard to real merit, there is a profound deference paid to the rich. The multitude gaze, as the splendid retinue passes, and bow obsequiously, to the man of gold, until he really begins to think, that he is of a superior order of being, and looks down, with disdain, upon his fellow men. He can no longer associate with the poor, but, in the excess of his pride, counts it great condescension, to allow a brother to approach his presence. I do not say, that men of wealth are always of this description, for I know there are honorable exceptions. But I do say, that this is the tendency of great wealth, and constituted as the human heart is,

the temptations to an indulgence of a haughty pride, are strong in the case of the rich. Neither would I harshly condemn, on this account, for it is the result of circumstances, whose influence few are able to withstand. "How hardly" said the Savior, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven." Who can say, that he is able to resist the intoxicating influence of wealth? Or, who need wonder at the truth, for truth it is, that real meekness of spirit, and genuine christian humility, are not often to be found amongst those who are in possession of great wealth? The tendency of wealth is, directly and powerfully to foster pride; and it was on account of this tendency, that Agur prayed to be delivered from riches.

Again, wealth is calculated to beget forgetfulness of God. The rich man looks upon the abundance of his possessions, knowing that he can command all that the world calls good and great. He sees, that his stores are abundant, and imagines, that he is independent of his fellow men, and even forgets, that he is not so of God. He surveys his houses and lands, and, like one of old, a spirit rises up in his soul, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" and knows not, that God is in heaven, and the hand writing

of destruction, even then upon the wall. Such is the tendency of wealth, and, as might be expected, so is the fact. The loftiest faith in God, the most feeling sense of dependence upon him, will be found in the humbler walks of life; and not often will you find a man of great wealth who bows down in habitual lowliness of spirit before God, and cherishes, in his heart, an honest and abiding sense of his entire dependence upon him, and his binding duty to obey his laws. More often, by far, the laws of God are set aside, and the "code of honor" substituted for the precepts of Jesus, as the rule of action; and the rich are more anxious to be esteemed as gentlemen, than to be Christians, in spirit and practice. Nay, they are more anxious to sit in the high places of earth, than to be numbered among those, who are approved of God, and associated with the truly good. You will perceive then, that there is propriety and wisdom in the prayer of the text, which seeks deliverance from the temptations and contaminating influences of wealth. Better, by far, to be content with a small competency of this world's goods, and enjoy the blessedness of the meek, and the poor in spirit, than roll in affluence, and be cursed with that pride, which lifts the hand in menacing de-

fiance, and says, "Who is the Lord?" I pass, to consider the influence

## II. OF POVERTY.

There are few who do not dread poverty as an evil of great magnitude, and hence all strive to avoid it. It is presumed, however, that the general dread of poverty, arises rather from a view of its physical sufferings, than from a proper appreciation of its moral influences. It will be granted, that the pains of hunger, the fears of famine and absolute want, the cold and nakedness, the sickness and suffering, that are attendant upon a state of abject poverty, are sore and dreadful evils. But, great as they are, and much as they are dreaded, still the moral influences are far more detrimental to human happiness. And this, it was, that made Agur pray to be delivered from poverty. Save me from poverty, "Lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." I greatly fear that the moral influences of poverty, are not sufficiently understood, or appreciated, by those who seek to govern and improve the morals of the world. The rich move in affluence, and those in moderate circumstances, sit at ease in their houses; and, when a poor mortal is brought up for the

crime of petit larceny, they wonder that man should steal. So the teacher of religion reads the records of theft and depredation upon the property of others, and, as the amount of crime rises in all its aggravation and excess before his vision, he curses with all bitterness, and declaims, long and loud, upon the awful depravity, that can lead to all this guilt. But did the one, and the other know, that there is a mighty influence at work in outward circumstances, and that many sinners are, as it were, made what they are, by their destitution of physical comfort, they would pity, and forgive, where they now most harshly censure and condemn. Let us take a case, that shall illustrate the idea in hand. Here is a man, who, by misfortune, and the dishonesty of others, has been reduced to abject poverty. We must look at him now, as a ruined man, and ruined, too, by his fellow-men. He is ready to adopt the sentiment, that there is no faith in man, but all are his enemies. He goes out to seek for labor, by which to procure bread for himself and family. He pleads for the poor privilege of toiling for another. But he pleads in vain. He stands idle in the market place, for none will hire him. Meanwhile, visions of suffering are floating before him. He returns to his wretch-



ed home, and meets the dear ones, in whom all his affections are centred; and dark shadows cross his brow, and fearful thoughts grow up in his bosom, as he sees in prospect, rags and poverty; and starvation itself. Again, he goes out to find the means of satisfying the cravings of hungry children, and again he fails. He appeals to friends—former friends—for aid; but they are friends no longer. He sees the mansions of the rich decked in gold, and their garner full to overflowing, and yet he is turned empty from the door. He dare not return, and meet the cries of his children, asking, in vain, for bread. His confidence in the Divine protection, and care, fails him. He curses his fate, and blasphemes the name of that God who made him. He becomes desperate, and swears that there is enough for all on this earth, and he will not suffer, and starve. Then he puts forth his hand, and steals. Then come the officers of the law, and take him to the court, and the prison. And when after a period of suffering, he emerges from that place of confinement, he finds his children scattered, and his friends gone. No kind hand is extended to afford him relief, no voice whispers a word of encouragement or hope. But men shun him as a loathsome, lep-

rous thing, and pass him by, as one of another race. What shall he do? What can he do? Poverty is upon him, and lank famine stares him in the face. One only refuge appears left. He will seek the society of the vicious, and the profligate, and pander to their iniquity; for, with shame be it said, they will give him what all the charities of a professedly Christian people fail to supply—bread. Here, sick of the world, and mad with all his race, he becomes an apt pupil in the school of vice. He goes on from one crime to another, until, at last, he is bold in sin, and the end is infamy, and death. Now, do we not see, that poverty, sinking, abject poverty, is the cause of the first step in this downward course? He was poor, and stole; and want pressed upon want, and strand after strand, that bound to truth, and duty, was broken, until all was lost.

Do not tell me that this picture is overwrought. The sun of every day shines upon its likeness. I do not say that every instance of theft originates in poverty; but, for the honor of human nature, I would hope, and I do hope, that the instances where men steal, without some pressing want, or necessity, are few. And, if the views I have represented are correct, you will, at once,

see the propriety of the prayer of the text, which seeks deliverance from poverty, lest it cause to steal, and take God's name in vain.

Attend now to some lessons of instruction that seem to flow legitimately from our subject.

I. It should teach us, to look with an eye of charity upon the errors and failings of our fellow men.

See you the rich "clothed in purple and fine linen," proud and haughty, exalting themselves above all that is called God upon the earth, and practically denying their dependence upon him? Be not hasty to condemn. Say not, that the man's heart is naturally corrupt more than others. Such is the natural influence of great wealth, and harshly as you condemn that man, it is not unlikely that you would be like him, perhaps worse, were you precisely in his condition. Nothing is more common, than to hear men point to the wealthy, and say how much they would do if they possessed this wealth. Let me tell you, that you know not what you would do. Had you this wealth, with your present feelings and disposition, no doubt you would accomplish much. But ah! there is the difficulty. You know not the intoxicating influence of wealth; nor can any man say, what

a mighty revolution of feeling would be wrought, by the possession of great riches. The great probability is, that with the increase of wealth, in your case, as in most others, pride, vanity, hardness of heart, and forgetfulness of God and duty, would grow upon you, and you would be even as others.

But look you at the great mass of those that are guilty of crimes, and are immured in our prisons and penitentiaries. We condemn and curse them as the vilest of the vile, and a disgrace to our race. But might we not as well pause and reflect, if our words of condemnation had not better be mingled with tears of pity and commiseration? Do we remember, and make due allowance for the force of circumstances in their case? May it not be said, in truth, in a great majority of cases, "They were poor, and stole?" And may not this crime be traced, full often, directly to the powerful influence of poverty? Have we felt, ourselves, the crushing of spirit, the blasting of hope, the sickness of heart, the desolation of soul, that come over the man who sees nought in prospect but rags and poverty, and famine and starvation before him? Can any of us say, how well, or how long, we could withstand all this, and retain our integrity? Nay,

we know not our strength, until we have been tried. And the course of true charity is to look with pitying eyes upon our fallen and crushed brethren, and drop a tear over their woes; and while we thank God for the means of comfort that surround us, let us pray in the spirit of the text, "Lord, save us from poverty, lest we be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain."

II. There is a conclusion, growing out of our subject, of vast importance to those who labor for the moral well-being of the world; and yet it is one, that seems to be entirely overlooked, or unknown. It is, that the outward and physical condition of the degraded and profligate masses of mankind, must be meliorated before there can be the least hope of their moral improvement. Look for a moment at the means that are in operation, for reforming the vicious.

We have our laws, framed with the nicest regard to every form and grade of crime, and measuring out punishment as by the strictest weight and measure. We build our prisons and houses of correction, and send out our officers to arrest and punish the offender; and thus seek to punish, rather than prevent crime. But mark the result. Such is the omnipotence of wealth, that the rich usually manage to escape the penalty of

their crimes; and, as for the poor, they are cast into prison, and having served their time, come out again to the light of day. But how do they come? Why, they come out with the same sinking poverty around them—with characters blasted—reputation gone—all hope of decent and respectable livelihood gone—and however good may be their resolutions, all outward circumstances are against them; and they feel, that all hope is cut off. In short, they are poor, and must steal or starve. What now is the power of all your laws? What is your “act of Assembly,” and your “acts to amend an act?” What are your prisons, and fines, and officers of the law, in the way of a hungry man, with starving children around him? The truth is, nature’s law, the imperious and irresistible law of necessity, is above all other laws, and it will defy them all. The whole vast machinery of government cannot penetrate below the skin, in an attempt to probe this great ulcer of sin. It festers in poverty and abject want, and you must remove the cause, ere the effect will cease to flow.

Again, we have our churches, and there the ministers of religion exhort and instruct, and warn, and entreat, from week to week; and from year to year. But do these influences reach the

poor and distressed? Nay, for the pride of wealth has made these churches show houses, for the display of dress, and made, also, wealth necessary to admittance there; so that the poor sinner, in rags, his soul famishing for the bread of life, be he never so penitent, feels that the church is no place for him. Take this city, or any other, as an example; and what influence do our churches, and all our preaching, have upon the poor and destitute? In what way do we reach the case of those, who most of all, need our influence for good—to wit: those who are borne down with sinking, dying poverty? Or, what avails it to exhort and warn the sufferer, and point even to hell itself, as the doom of those who hear? What avails it to declaim of the danger of the soul, if we leave the body to starve? Or, what use to talk of duty, to one who is bound hand and foot, and hemmed in on every side, by absolute want?

Do you ask, where shall we go for the remedy? God only knows, if a full and ample remedy can be found. Surely I know not. One thing is certain; from the days of Agur to the present moment, the danger has been, that the rich will be proud, and the poor steal; and he will be the greatest benefactor of our race, who labors most successfully to produce a more equal distribu-

tion of the wealth of the world. On the one hand, to prevent the concentration of riches in the hands of the few; and on the other, to elevate the masses of humanity, to a condition of physical comfort, as the necessary prerequisite to moral improvement. Until that time arrives, if in the good providence of God, it shall ever arrive, let us moderate our own desire for great wealth, and let Christian charity learn to care for the bodies, as well as the souls of the poor; and let our prayer be that of the text, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."



## SERMON XIII.

### UNCERTAINTY OF BUSINESS.

“Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or Tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.”

James iv: 13, 14.

THERE is perhaps nothing more frequently or severely reprov'd, in the Scriptures, than that eagerness for gain—that entire devotion to the acquisition of wealth which has ever been a characteristic of humanity. But frequent and solemn as are the admonitions upon this subject, yet I judge, the Scriptures are not unreasonable in their requirements. Their warnings are not directed against that prudent foresight, which seeks to provide a competency, against the day of sickness or old age, but they are aimed at that grasping avarice, which makes gold a god, to be worshipp'd with most supreme devotion, and strives to heap up wealth in huge masses, at the sacrifice of ease, comfort, and even principle, and conscience itself. This is the spirit which for-

gets that there is a God who governs all human affairs, ceases to remember that man has a duty to perform; and in its feverish and restless anxiety to grasp riches, knows not that it is better to be something in our own souls, than to possess an outward world. Various reasons are urged, for abstinence from this excessive and exciting devotion to riches, and the commerce and traffic of the world. Among them, the one presented in the text, is not the least important. It is the uncertainty of business pursuits, and particularly those of a mercantile character. In a city of trade and commerce, whose inhabitants are gathered from all parts of the world, who come to buy, and sell, and make gain, I have thought it might not be inappropriate, or useless, to cite your attention to the spirit of the text, which calls to us to-day, as it did to those of the Apostolic age, "Go to now, ye that say, to-day or tomorrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."

I wish to observe in the outset, that in all I have to say upon this subject, I intend to en-

force no other lesson than that taught in the subsequent verse; that men in all their pursuits should remember their dependence upon God, and always say, as the Apostle directs, "If the Lord will, we will do this or that." In speaking particularly of those who buy and sell, I wish not to be understood as instituting any invidious or unfavorable comparison between one class of citizens and another. Organized as society now is, the merchantmen perform a full share in contributing to the general prosperity of communities and nations. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it is evident, that until there is a radical change in the organization of society, so that each community shall, by its own industry, produce within itself all the necessaries and comforts of life, the functions of the merchant will be indispensable. Whether such a time will ever arrive, God only knows; surely it will not come in your day or mine.

All I wish to say, specially of mercantile life is, that its prospects are obscured by clouds of uncertainty of more than ordinary density, and that those engaged in it, are exposed to peculiar temptations and trials. To some of these I desire to call your attention. Some of my remarks may be peculiarly applicable to the state

of affairs in this country, but the general principles will apply to all nations.

1. Under the best imaginable circumstances the prospects of mercantile life are extremely uncertain; because, success depends more upon human wisdom and skill, than upon the uniform and unalterable laws of nature.

Take, for instance, the husbandman; and you will perceive, that his dependence is mainly upon the laws of nature and nature's God. Not, that knowledge and skill are not necessary in his vocation, for they doubtless are. But you will see, at a glance, that he has to do with the fixed and immutable laws of nature, and his main dependence is upon that God who has promised, that "while the earth remains, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not fail." With a proper knowledge of his calling, he casts his seed into the ground; and watered by the dews and rains, and warmed by the sun, it vegetates. The small blade, the tender herb, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, are all developed in due season; and all this, by the operation of uniform and undeviating laws, that never change. But it is not so with those, that buy and sell. The laws of supply and demand, in this city or that, are extremely fluctuating, so that we may

almost say, they change with every wind. They depend upon no well known, clearly defined, and immutable principles, which can be trusted, at all times, without danger. To-day the store-houses may be empty, and the buyers seek in vain for a supply; tomorrow, they may be full to overflowing, and the vender look in vain for a customer. Hence, the man who buys to-day, has no law of nature, no permanent and immutable principle to assure him that he can sell tomorrow. Hence he must trust his skill, and judgment, in calculating chances and weighing probabilities for success, rather than any of the laws of nature, and after all there must be uncertainty.

Then, again, there are the dangers of the great deep to be encountered. A tornado upon the land, may injure a crop for a season; but a tempest at sea, may sink all the treasures of a merchant in the bottom of the deep. A fire may consume the house of a husbandman; but it may not only destroy the house, but all the wealth of the merchant, in an hour. These are uncertainties, that necessarily attach themselves to all mercantile pursuits, and, under the best circumstances, they are absolutely unavoidable. The best that can be done, is to draw upon the re-

sources of human wisdom, to mitigate the evils of their effects, for the things themselves cannot be removed. They are diseases that must be endured, for they cannot be cured.

Again, there are other causes that render success in mercantile pursuits still more uncertain. Hitherto, I have put the most favorable construction on the case. I have supposed that all was fair and honest—every man disposed to do right, and no conflicting interests among the mercantile community itself. But, we know right well, that this is far, very far, from the true state of the case. The whole commercial world is a complete system of antagonism. The interest of one is to raise up, and of another, to beat down; and in the rush for the loaves and the fishes, each cares for himself alone, and takes no thought who loses, so that he gains. Hence come bargainings, and intrigues, such as policy dictates, rather than such as right approves. So perfectly antagonist are the interests of different individuals, that they come to regard each other as competitors in a race, and to care not who loses, so that self wins. Commercial probity, and honor are, indeed, claimed, and, no doubt, possessed by many; but these have little connection with the spirit of Christ's benevolence. It

is not understood that commercial honor, or honesty, will prevent a man from making a thousand dollars, even if it cost the next door neighbor the loss of that sum. Because, it is understood that the interests of the two are not one, but strictly antagonist to each other. This is not so much the fault of the men, as the system that is adopted. Whether a better system of operation can be invented, and put in practice, I will not pretend to say. All I assert, is, that the present system of commercial intercourse is, from the beginning to the end, a system of antagonism of interest between man and man; and, for this reason, the world is full of rivalries, competitions, and bargainings, in which man meets man in the sharp conflict for gain—the strife for success and increase of wealth; and, by this means, there is a far greater uncertainty thrown over the prospects of mercantile life. In this battle for gain, where experienced heads, and shrewd calculating intellects are all around, and all contesting with you the prize, it is not the mere novice, or the imbecile, that may hope to succeed, unless it be by the merest chance. Let us add another fact, not yet taken into the account. The merchant must, necessarily, trust not a little to the fidelity and honesty of his

fellow-men. An unfaithful agent, a treacherous navigator, or a dishonest debtor, may often derange all the plans of the merchant, and entail upon him certain and inevitable ruin.

Last of all, man's life itself is, by no means, certain. If all our plans succeed, and we prosper to the full amount of all our most sanguine calculations, the shaft of death may meet us when we least expect it, and leave us not even a being, to enjoy all our possessions. With a view of all these things, is it any wonder, that the Apostle should say, as in the text, "Go to now, ye that say, to-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain? Whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Who, indeed, can tell what may be on the morrow? We know not what a day may bring forth. In some departments of life, the calculations may, indeed, be more definite than in others; but in all they are uncertain. The husbandman has something to do with the more stable and enduring laws which God has impressed upon nature. He sows his seed, and depends on these laws to return the harvest. But storm, and tempest, and



frost, and snow, and blight, and mildew, may come, and his hopes be cut off. So that he needs reliance upon God, and cannot know what will be on the morrow. But in the mercantile world, with those who buy and sell, to make gain, the uncertainty of the future is far greater, and more apparent.

Go you and look upon the sea. The white sails of commerce are spread to every breeze, and the multitude of ships laden with the products of every clime, are passing with the speed of the arrow, and each is striving with the other for the prize. To-day, the sun shines bright, and the breezes blow gentle, and fair. To-morrow, dark clouds obscure the face of the skies, the winds are high, and the waves boisterous, and destruction seems inevitable. In the midst of all these conflicting interests, and these accumulating dangers, who can calculate, with certainty, on the morrow? Or who can predict the result in a single instance?

Go now into the thronged streets of the busy city, and listen to the din and roar of the marts of business. See how anxious faces hurry on, and jostle each other in the way; each, intent on securing his ends, and anxious to outstrip the other in the race. Behold, with what zeal they strive, to secure

each from the other, the business on which they live and thrive. See how, when one falls, and a family is left poor and dependent, the others run, with hot haste, to the ledger, to see how the account stands, of profit or loss, by that fall. Behold how smooth and smiling the face, and how plausible the lie of the buyer, who wishes to buy that, for which he intends not to pay; or, the seller, who wishes to sell for more than its worth. Look at all this strife and antagonism, this carping and clutching for gold, that the sun shines upon every day, in the traffic of the world; and who can foretell the result, for a single day? Need we be surprised to learn, as we have learned, upon authority that cannot be doubted, that in the great commercial emporium of our country, there is a fearful uncertainty resting upon all commercial enterprises? Need we wonder, that in that great city, where you see so much of the wealth of the world, of all the hosts, that have bought and sold, for the last forty years, ninety-eight of every one hundred have failed? Or, need we the assurance, that it is so, in most, if not all our commercial cities? And, with all this before our eyes, can we fail to see propriety in the text, which speaks emphatically to the merchantman, saying, "Go to now, ye that say, to-day or

to-morrow, we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow."

You cannot avoid seeing the direction in which our subject points. It should teach the man of business, not to be over-confident of success, and should admonish him of the folly of a too ardent self devotion to the pursuit of gain. I speak not against reasonable hopes, for these alone can cheer and sustain in the arduous toil of business. But, there are golden dreams, visions of great wealth, pouring in like a flood, that dance before the imagination, and lead men on to desperate efforts. They intoxicate the brain, and often beget habits of luxury and extravagance, destructive of all permanent prosperity and healthful success; and, in the event of failure, crush and sear the spirit, with deep and severe disappointment. Better see the subject in its true light, in the outset. Better know from the beginning, that not one in ten thousand of all those golden dreams shall ever be realized. And of all the active, busy men, that now bustle in your marts of trade, not one in five hundred shall arrive at great wealth. Many, very many, shall fail, and live in comparative obscurity; many

shall fall in hopeless poverty; and, at the very best, in thirty years, the great mass shall be dead and forgotten. Then, why these anxious watchings and toilings—these feverish anxieties, that wear the very life out of men, and make them old even in youth. Why rush into the whirlpool, as if the only object of man on earth, was to gather together a heap of gold, to be scattered abroad, or made a bone of contention for those who come after him? Far better would it be for men to make up their minds, to feel the sentiment of the poet,

“Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long.”

Far better, to be satisfied with reasonable success; and for that, to cultivate habits of constant and firm reliance upon God. Remembering always, that all real and permanent success is of him, and without his blessing, no enterprise can prosper. Better remember, that there are aims higher than wealth, riches more imperishable than mines of gold. The truth is, the real life—the true enjoyment of man, consists not in the abundance of his possessions. Nay, the things that a man possesses have not the least possible necessary connection with his happiness. I grant, that outward possessions may be the oc-

caſion of enjoyment. But the queſtion, whether they make happy or miſerable, is to be decided by the internal, not the external ſtate of man. Our happineſs depends upon what we are, not upon what we poſſeſs.

I have ſpoke of the uncertainties, that attend the path of thoſe who engage in mercantile purſuits, and I intimated, that I would ſay ſome-thing of the peculiar temptations to which they are expoſed.

I. There are ſtrong temptations to an indulgence of overreaching, and grasping avarice.

There are inſtances where men, by theſe purſuits, acquire vaſt fortunes in a ſhort ſpace of time, and from theſe inſtances the ſtandard is raiſed high. The aim, in a vaſt variety of caſes, is not merely to procure a reaſonable competence, but to amasſ great wealth. It is not to come up to a medium ſtate, but to vie with thoſe who count their wealth by millions. Let me illuſtrate. Take an agricultural diſtrict at the north. There, a man is ſurrounded with a population, who have each their little farm, which ſupplies them with all the comforts and conveniences of life. The aim of the man who devotes himſelf to agriculture is, to come up to an equality, in point of poſſeſſions, with his neigh-

bors, and having secured his hundred acres of land, and the appurtenances, he feels tolerably satisfied, and passes in his district as a man of fair property.

But, when from the pursuits of agriculture, a man steps out into the mercantile world, the case is widely different. The peaceful cot, and rural shade, are not the objects of his ambition, but the princely merchant, with his hundreds of thousands—the city, with its pomp and show—the splendid mansion, and the gilded coach—the companionship of those whose coffers are full—these are the visions that dance before the mind, and fire the soul with ambition. Hence it is, that a grasping and all devouring desire for immense wealth, is often manifested; and the instances are comparatively few, where the merchant, having acquired enough to meet all his wants for life, is satisfied to retire, and rest contented with that. The habit of making money becomes so fixed, that he is unhappy, unless he is accumulating more. And, very often, it occurs, that the merchant, who is absolutely rich, still reaches out for more, and, in an attempt to grasp vast wealth, which he has not, loses all that he has.

The counsel of the spirit of my text, to those

that buy, and sell, is, to avoid too eager a desire for great gain. And, when I consider the uncertainties that must, of necessity, attend all mercantile pursuits, the feverish anxieties, and perplexities, to which those engaged in them are subjected, my counsel to my best friends, who have fortunately secured a competency, would be to stop there, and be satisfied.

2. Another danger to which the merchant is subject, is that forgetfulness of God, and undue dependence upon self, against which the text cautions us.

I have said, that the agriculturist has to do more directly with nature's fixed and unvarying laws, and his dependence is mainly upon the God of nature. Not so the mercantile man. He is engaged in a sharp conflict with his fellow men, and his dependence must be upon his own skill, and wisdom, and upon chances regulated by no known and unvarying law.

Now, there is no doubt, that the self-reliance thus engendered, gives energy to enterprise, and infuses life and activity through the channels of business. And, there is just as little doubt, that it still more generally degenerates into an inordinate self-dependence, which forgets God and his laws; and, in the excess of its confidence,

rushes on to certain and inevitable destruction. It says, without a doubt, "I will go to such a city, and remain there a year, and buy, and sell, and make gain." But, oh! it forgets that darkness broods over the future, so that no living man can know what may be on the morrow. It remembers not, that there is a God on whom all depend— that there are many uncertainties over all human calculations, and that even life, itself, "is a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and fleeth away."

I have now named the evil, and some of its effects, and what shall I say for the remedy? Alas! many of these uncertainties are, doubtless, unavoidable. They are inherent in the nature of business. Some of them grow out of the organization and forms of social life, and, I fear, can never be remedied by any thing short of a thorough re-organization of society, which shall shut out the principle of antagonism, and recognize a unity of interest between man and his fellow man. But even this is questionable, and, for a long time to come, probably impracticable. The most and best you can do, is to meet the world as it is, and labor to mitigate, if you cannot cure the ill entirely. I cannot help thinking, that a constant sense of dependence



upon God, a remembrance of the uncertainty of the future, and the positive shortness of human life, would do much to induce a more sober estimate of the true value of wealth, and introduce something of permanency into the business of the world. Go out, then, brethren, and do your duty, in the marts of business. Take along with you integrity, and unyielding honesty; and remember, that whatever of uncertainty may brood over the future, one thing is certain, the sun of to-morrow will be no more bright, nor its skies more serene for neglect of the duties of to-day. But the duties of to-day, will shed sunlight on the morrow, and thus the path of the just shall shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

## SERMON XIV.

### JOY IN HEAVEN.

“Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.”

Luke xv: 10.

CHRISTIANITY is not the mere utterance of a beautiful idea, conceived in the imagination of an enthusiast. But there is in it, a deep and true philosophy, to which, comparatively, few of the human race have, as yet, attained. Imprisoned in these tabernacles of clay—encompassed with the passions and infirmities of the flesh, mistaking, often, the fever of passion for the mild influences of God's spirit; beset with sectarian prejudices and bigotry—toiling for self and a few favorites, our fettered spirits know not, feel not, their own divinity; nor, as yet, have the best of us begun to comprehend the high and holy philosophy of Jesus, which begins in God, as one and indivisible, whose nature is love; and then goes out, and proclaims all spiritual intelligences one also—members of the same body—partakers of the same life—and a nerve of sympathy run-

ning from the highest to the lowest; so that when that nerve is touched in the remotest limit, it thrills through the whole system, and angels and archangels rejoice when man is happy.

Without further prefatory remarks, let us endeavor to look into this matter, and see if there is not reason, as well as broad and tender love, in the doctrine of the text.

I. Angels and good men rejoice when one sinner repents, because it is, in itself, an event of great importance.

Think not, that the event is of little consequence, because the text contemplates but one individual as repenting. The world is made up of individuals, and all human progress and improvement must be effected by a series of individual acts, each small and apparently inconsiderable in itself. The chain may be long, but it is made of links; and though but one link is broken, it breaks the chain. The return of a single sinner is so much for God, and for humanity. It is one step gained; one, in that long series of acts—individual acts, by which human redemption and regeneration, must be obtained and consummated.

But, reflect for a moment, on what man is, his vast powers of progress, improvement and enjoy-

ment, and you will see, that the repentance of one sinner is a matter of sufficient importance to justify rejoicing, even in heaven. We look at the fallen and degraded votaries of vice, and condemn them, as vile and depraved. We see an individual, lost to all shame and self respect, brutalized and degraded, and rashly conclude, that he is of no consequence, being sunk even below our sympathy. But it is not so. That poor sinner is our brother. He was made by the same God that made us. That God has stamped his own image upon him; and though it may be marred and smeared with filth, and scarred with a thousand wounds of sin, and well nigh obliterated; yet its traces are left, and may be revived. Low and vile as that wretch may appear, yet it is true, that our own blood runs in his veins, and there are yet left in him capabilities, that may be of incalculable good to man. Who shall say, that even that lowly one, may not yet live to shine like a Paul or Cephias in the church, or a Washington or Franklin in the state? Who can affirm, that he may not yet rank among the benefactors of our race? And that he may not ultimately progress, and shine bright among the angels of God, in heaven? The thing is possible, and well may men and angels rejoice, when he re-

turns from sin, and commences his onward and upward course. But I look at the subject in another light. The return of the sinner is a matter of rejoicing,

II. Because it is a subject to inspire hope.

Much has been said of the awful depravity of human nature, and the utter inability of man, to relieve himself from the shackles of vice, and persevere in the path of virtue. And when we remember, how wide and ruinous is the dominion of sin; when we look abroad, and behold how far the great mass of mankind have departed from the way of wisdom, and how obstinately they persist in the love and practice of vice, it must be confessed, that there is a cloud over the prospect for the future, and a weak faith is ready to conclude, that human nature is too bad to be redeemed. Hence, there are many who mourn over the multitude of the great family of man, as hopelessly and irretrievably lost. They believe, and teach, that not all the power that God, himself, will see proper to exert, will ever save them from the reigning power and dominion of sin. In this light, there is hopefulness, in the repentance of one sinner; because, it is a practical and tangible demonstration, that there is in man, after all, a power, that is an overmatch for the

adversary—that the tendency of humanity is still upward.

In a time of drouth, when the earth is parched with heat, and the green fields are withered and burned by the sun, and all the fountains of water are dried up, despair may settle down upon man. His heart may be faint, and die within him—his confidence in the regularity and uniformity of nature's laws, may be disturbed or shaken, and his hope be cut off. But when the cloud rises, dark and fearful, and the large drops begin to patter upon the ground, how soon is he reassured? And how quickly does his eye become radiant with hope! They are, indeed, but a few scattering drops that have fallen. But they demonstrate, that the laws of nature are yet in operation—Heaven's great laboratory is at work, and these few drops are but the harbinger of a mighty shower that is to follow. In this light, then, let us look upon the repentant sinner's return. God has made known his purpose to "finish sin, and make an end of transgression." From age to age, he has been engaged in this work. At times, the prospect may be dark to the eye of human wisdom, and faith may droop, and hope may die, and man may despair of the world. But, when even one sinner repenteth,

there is a world of hopefulness to be gathered from that. It may be, indeed, but one; but it proves that God's work is still going on—that the elements of man's moral and spiritual redemption are still left, and all their laws in operation. It was but one! True, but there was a drop before the shower. And what was that one? It was no isolated fragment, cut off from the body to which it belonged. But it was a brother of thine. It was a man as thou art, with like infirmities, weaknesses, and temptations. It was a member of the same body as thyself; and if one member is free, there is hope for the whole body. And he, that lost and forsaken one, who had gone down into the depths of iniquity, and put on the strongest of its iron chains, he is redeemed, and is at liberty. Do you not see here, that there is a dignity in human nature, and a power in Gospel grace, and truth, able to give the hope of deliverance to the vilest of the vile, and adequate to fulfill all that the Gospel promises. The first sheaves may be few, but there is hope even in them; for they prove that the harvest is ripe, and ready for the sickle of the reaper.

Again, the cause of truth and virtue, is strengthened, by the return of every sinner that repent-

eth. This world is a great battle field, where virtue is to be tried, and trained, for future labor. In that battle, God, and truth, and goodness, and virtue, are on the one side; and evil, and error, and vice, on the other. Long and fearful has been the conflict, and, with many, the issue is doubtful. See we not, then, that every victory of good over evil, is so much gained? Every sinner that repenteth, is another added to the army of those that do battle for God and humanity. And whether this party, or that, is the immediate gainer, is of little or no moment, so that the strength of virtue's cause is augmented, and the prospect of victory brightened.

Is it reasonable to suppose, that the inhabitants of the upper and better world are interested in this conflict? There are the Patriarchs, and the good of all ages, and climes. There are the spirits of the just made perfect. They have had their share in this conflict. They waded through trials, and persecutions, not a few, and fought valiantly in virtue's cause. And now, they rest from their labors. Does it require a great stretch of the imagination, or a large share of the license of the poet to suppose, that they still have an interest in this conflict? Shall it be deemed an extravagant fiction to say, that



bound to us, by the ties of common nature, with sympathies refined by their exaltation, they look down from their abode on high, upon this great contest, and rejoice at every instance of success, to the Redeemer's kingdom, manifested in the fact, that even one sinner has repented; and thus another soldier has enlisted in the army of virtue! Well did the Savior say, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

With this attempt to justify any thing that might appear high wrought, or extravagant in the text, I return, again, to the great principle which it unfolds, and to which I alluded in the commencement, "Universal unity, and common sympathy between man, and all spiritual intelligences." Most unquestionably, the text teaches that there is a chain of sympathy, that reaches from earth to heaven, and that the inhabitants of the spiritual world have an interest in the weal or wo of men upon the earth. Thus, then, it is manifest, that a common bond of union runs, not only through the human family on earth, but also through all God's moral intelligences, so that they have all some interests, at least in common, and must, of necessity, in a measure, rejoice or suffer together. How great that com-

mon interest, how deep that common sympathy, and how intimate that union, may be inferred from the assertion of the text, that a circumstance so slight as the repentance of one sinner, sends a thrill of joy up from earth, among the angels of God. It is a sense of this union of man with himself, and all spiritual beings, that raises man to the true dignity of his own nature, breaks down his selfishness, and makes him act the part of the true Christian, in loving all his race, and feeling a kindly sympathy for all that live.

And now, what I wish to say, is this: It is a dark feature in the popular religion of our day, that it knows little, and apparently cares less, for this great truth. It sunders entirely this bond of union, and in its stern, iron hearted selfishness, destroys this sympathy entirely. It makes religion a matter of selfish policy, an expedient to secure heaven and keep out of hell. It cries unceasingly to man to save himself; but it knows not, that he who would save himself must save his race; for that each man is bound to his brother by ties so strong, that one cannot be happy while the other is miserable. It seizes the great body of humanity, and flays it alive, scattering its bleeding fragments far and wide. It

builds its dismal, burning hell of endless torment, and there in wo unutterable, and immortal, it immures a vast portion of the human race, and cuts off all sympathy for, or with them, on the part of the remainder. It will not let the angels weep over them, nor allow a particle of sympathy from the glorified spirits in heaven. The Lord knoweth, to me many of the dogmas of modern orthodoxy are sufficiently revolting. But I could endure them. Her spiritual riddles and speculative absurdities might be endured, would she but leave man his love for his kindred race, and refrain from robbing heaven itself of its sympathies with mortals. But, alas! here she fails. She lays a rash hand upon the key stone of that beautiful arch that spans the earth, and encircles heaven, and breaks it in fragments. Her first and last, her constant and fatal mistake is, that each man is an isolated fragment, interested only in his own salvation—with no common bond of union to make the interests and happiness of his fellows his own; no sympathies to prevent one from being perfectly blessed, while another is perfectly unblessed. Hence she rives the world asunder at the first onset. She divides the body of humanity into two parts, or classes, “righteous and wicked,” and vainly

imagines that their interests clash by a necessary and eternal law. Thus it cuts the chain of sympathy between man and his fellow man. And narrowing down the number of the saints to the communicants of its own little church, all others are but "publicans and sinners," with whom it were unlawful to feel common sympathy. And then it cuts the communication between earth and heaven. The angels must not sympathize with human suffering; but, through eternity, saints and angels must lift their voices in new and rapturous hosannas, as the wailings of despair come from the myriads of the damned. And thus it dreams of securing bliss on earth, by confining its love to self and the saints; and then dreams again, of a heaven for some, and a hell for others. I say dreams, for it is a dream. If the angels of God are endued with such sympathies, that the return of one sinner, causes them to rejoice, then the loss, itself, of one sinner, would clothe heaven in mourning; and as for man, his weal, or wo, is identified with that of his fellows; and humanity must be redeemed before man can be happy. Bound together by a thousand ties that entwine themselves around every fibre of our hearts, the pang another feels will reach us, and together we must live and re-

joice, or together suffer and die. Such is the law of our being, and that law cannot be abrogated.

There is a great practical lesson of truth and duty taught in our subject, which I hope we shall all remember and practice. The lesson is, "We cannot promote the happiness of a fellow being without securing our own happiness, on the one hand; and, on the other, we cannot injure a hair upon the head of one, even the least of our brethren, without injuring ourselves." The reason is obvious. There is, according to the text, a chain of sympathy running through all moral intelligences, binding man to man, and extending from earth to heaven, and giving, even to the angels, an interest in the happiness of men on the earth. He that turns one sinner to the way of happiness, shall partake with him, in the new born joys of a regenerated spirit; and the nerve thus touched shall vibrate through the body, of which we are all members, and send a thrill of pleasure upward, until it reaches the angels that stand before the throne of the Eternal in heaven. So, on the other hand, he that smiteth his brother shall feel himself the pain; and the evil thus done, shall affect the vast body to which he belongs, and shall abate from the joys of heaven itself.

The text supposes, that the joy of heaven is not yet perfect; else it could not be increased by the repentance of a single sinner. Hence the conclusion is irresistible, that the joy of the upper world shall not, and cannot be complete, so long as there is one sinner who has not repented. See you not then, that the idea of there being perfect joy in heaven, at the same time that one half the human race is unsaved and unblessed, is utterly and for ever impossible? The chain of sympathetic interest must be complete—no link broken or lost, ere the blessedness of any part can be perfect; and that day of days must surely come. The spirit of redeeming grace must go onward, and still onward, until it has reached the case of the most desperate of the human race—the last wanderer from the path of virtue must be brought home. Then shall there be heard a new song in heaven; then and not till then, shall there be fullness of joy, in the presence of the angels of God, and the harmony of grace and love shall reign undisturbed, through all the vast extent of the domain of God.

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