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Goodwin

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SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. EZRA SHAW GOODWIN,

PASTOR OF THE

FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN

SANDWICH, MASS.

WITH A MEMOIR.



BOSTON: — BENJAMIN H. GREENE.

1834.

1834

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT has been thought by the friends of the late Mr Goodwin of Sandwich, that a small collection of his writings would be favorably received by the public, both as a tribute to his memory, and as means of doing good. They were desirous of having some expression of his thoughts and feelings to which they might recur, and commune again with his pure spirit, and through which, those who were accustomed to hear him, might feel that though dead he was yet speaking. Aware however of the difficulty always attendant on a posthumous publication of writings not intended for the press, they have endeavored to select with a sparing hand, and the following discourses are believed to give a true impression of his mind and heart. Still, it should be remarked, in justice to the deceased, that during the last years of his life, it was his practice to speak in some measure extemporaneously, having before him only a few

notes of the heads of his discourses. In consequence of this, many of his later Sermons, and those which excited most attention in the delivery, are retained only in the imperfect recollection of those who heard them. Though they have gone from us, with the mind in which they originated, they have left an impression not easily effaced, on the hearts and lives of his people.

The brief Memoir accompanying this volume, has been entrusted to a professional brother—who was closely allied to him by the ties of kindred and friendship, and who is happy in being able to present this token of grateful affection to the memory of his relative and friend.

He would acknowledge his obligations to Rev. Mr FRANCIS of Watertown, for his assistance in making this selection, and to the friends who corrected the proof sheets.

CONCORD, MAY 1, 1834.

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[Preached at Kingston on the last Sabbath of the Author's public ministrations.]

M E M O I R .

EZRA SHAW GOODWIN, the author of the following Sermons, was born in Plymouth, Mass. September 11, 1787. He was the youngest son of Gen. Nathaniel Goodwin of Plymouth, who died in 1819 at the age of seventy, and whose name is held in respectful remembrance by the inhabitants of the Old Colony. His mother, the second wife of Gen. Goodwin, was the daughter of Rev. John Shaw of Bridgewater. She deceased at Plymouth in the year 1825, in the seventy-ninth year of her age, having seen her father, four brothers, a son and nephew actively engaged in the duties of the christian ministry.*

There are no memorials of the early childhood of Mr Goodwin which are sufficiently indicative of future character to require a mention in this brief notice. His education commenced at the common schools in his native town, and the studies preparatory for admission to college, he pursued under the care of Rev.

* The four brothers of Mrs Goodwin, above alluded to, were Oakes Shaw of Barnstable, Bezaleel of Nantucket, William of Marshfield, and John of Haverhill. Another brother, Samuel, was a physician in Bridgewater. Rev. Philander Shaw, now of Eastham, is the son of William, of Marshfield.

David Gurney of Middleborough. He was entered at the University in Cambridge, in the year 1803, and while there, maintained a respectable standing as a scholar. The temptations incident to that situation had no other effect upon his virtuous principles, than to add to their strength, and all who became acquainted with him in that period of his life, respected and loved him.

After leaving the university in 1807, he continued at Cambridge for some months as a resident graduate, where he entered upon the study of Theology, to which he had early purposed to devote his life. He afterwards pursued it by himself at home with some general superintendence and direction from Rev. Mr Kendall of Plymouth. In September, 1809, he received the approbation of the Plymouth Association of clergymen, and immediately commenced the work of a minister of the gospel. In a diary begun during his professional studies, and continued till after his settlement in 1813, there are abundant indications of the purity of purpose with which he entered on the duties of the pastoral office. But motives of delicacy and a sacred regard to his well known views on the subject, forbid our giving to the world these private expressions of personal religious feeling. It is enough to say, that his simplicity — his humility — his benevolence and piety, accompanied with a deep sense of personal responsibility, are no less manifest in his private journal at this period, than they were in his social relations and public exercises in after life.

From the time of his approbation to the following July, he continued in Plymouth, and its neighborhood,

still pursuing his favorite studies, and preaching wherever his services were desired. In the summer of 1810, he was invited to supply the pulpit in Topsham, Maine, where, with the exception of a few Sabbaths spent at Augusta, he continued for more than a year. From September, 1811, and through a greater part of 1812, he officiated at Sandwich in the county of Barnstable, in which place he was invited to settle as minister of the First Parish, and was ordained March 17, 1813. On this occasion the introductory prayer was offered by Mr Gurney of Middleborough; the Sermon by Mr Shaw of Marshfield; the ordaining prayer by Mr Kendall of Plymouth; the charge by Dr Sanger of Bridgewater; the right hand of fellowship by Mr Fish of Marshpee, and the concluding prayer by Mr Simkins of Brewster.

The situation of the people at Sandwich at this time was peculiar; calling for the exercise of peculiar firmness and discretion by those who took the lead in their ecclesiastical affairs. Their former pastor, Rev. Jonathan Burr, who had been settled with them about twenty years, had just been dismissed by vote of the society, on account of difficulties arising out of difference in theological views. The minority seceded; a second society was formed, and Mr Burr was subsequently installed as its pastor. In reference to this state of affairs, we find the following record in the private journal of Mr Goodwin, dated March 17, 1813, illustrating at once his decision and his charity.

“After the invitation was given by the parish to me, and my answer to them in the affirmative, Mr Burr’s adherents formed themselves into a separate parish.

The communicants in this new parish claim the name of the First Church in Sandwich, and retain the church records. *But they have no right to either.* The new parish is called the Calvinistic Congregational Society in Sandwich. *May the Lord bless them with his grace and the power of his gospel."*

In a little more than a year from the time of his settlement, Mr Goodwin was married to Miss Ellen Watson Davis, the eldest daughter of Hon. John Davis, of Boston ; a lady who still lives to mourn the loss of this her most valued friend, and we are therefore only permitted to say, that the connexion was one which contributed much to their mutual improvement and happiness.

In 1822 he was elected a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and in 1830 a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The time for which Mr Goodwin was originally settled was limited to ten years, at the expiration of which he was engaged for an indefinite period. In the earlier part of his ministry especially, he devoted himself entirely to the peculiar duties of his situation, and was little known except to the churches in his immediate neighborhood. But in this faithful discharge of the quiet duties of a clergyman, in a retired parish, he was preparing himself for a more enlarged sphere of usefulness, and was laying up treasures of thought and knowledge to be improved in after years. He felt that no man could be faithful to the high trust which such a situation imposes, who did not advance himself in at least as great a proportion as he contributed to the advancement of others, and that if a

christian minister were a stationary being, there was reason to fear he neglected a large portion of the gift within him. We accordingly find that he neglected no opportunity to acquire information, or impart it to others, in any of the branches of useful or entertaining knowledge. No one could pass an hour in his society and not discover his fondness for philosophical inquiry, and his extensive knowledge on subjects of general interest. He was a most ardent admirer of nature, and an accurate observer of its order and its laws. As has been well expressed by another, "his mind was always vigorous and inquisitive; his heart was always kind. He was not, as many solitary students are, ignorant of all subjects, and indifferent to all but those within their own confined sphere. His eyes were open to surrounding objects and passing events, and he could speak pleasantly on most of the topics of general interest. Natural history received much of his attention, for he loved to study the works as well as the word of God. But all his knowledge was consecrated to the high uses of piety. From the fields and the woods, from the rivers and the sea, he brought their first fruits and their rare and beautiful things and laid them as an offering upon the altar."*

To this observation of nature and a deep insight into men and things around him, was added a diligent study of books. His memory was both quick and retentive to a remarkable degree. Many passages of his favorite authors, though read or heard by him but once, never escaped him. Of poetry he was particu-

* Christian Examiner, Vol. XIV.

larly fond — and to his intimate friends his mind seemed to contain a volume of the richest and most beautiful extracts from the best English poets of ancient and modern times. But the study to which he was most strongly attached and to which he devoted his chief attention, by night as well as by day, was the study of the scriptures in the original languages, and of the various books which serve to illustrate them. In this, as in all his other investigations, he manifested his supreme regard for truth — his enthusiastic love of it. He loved it for its own sake. He cherished it simply because it was truth. In his efforts to find it and then to propagate it, he was equally free, fearless and sincere. It was this uncompromising integrity in presenting truth to others, and this perfect freedom in searching for it himself that appeared to many, not intimately connected with him, to border on imprudence — but in proportion as men understood his peculiarities, they respected him for his honesty and admired him for his simplicity and frankness.

With these qualities of independence and freedom from dissimulation, humility and charity were harmoniously blended. These last virtues were, in fact, the natural fruits of the former. His supreme reverence for truth, which was with him but one form of reverence for that Being who is the foundation of truth, was most naturally productive of an expansive benevolence and that charity which vaunteth not itself. In this respect he illustrated the following remark of Coleridge, of which his character has often reminded us. “He who fancies that he must be perpetually stooping down to the prejudices of his fellow creatures, is perpetually

reminding and reassuring himself of his own vast superiority to them. But no real greatness can long coexist with deceit. The whole faculties of man must be exerted in order to noble energies; and he who is not earnestly sincere, lives in but half his being — self-mutilated — self-paralyzed.” He respected human nature because it was created in the image of God and an object of God’s mercy and parental care.

Such are some of the most striking features in the intellectual and moral character of Mr Goodwin. As a writer and preacher he was distinguished for clearness of conception and for frankness, approaching in some cases to boldness, in his methods of stating and illustrating truth. As a pastor he won the esteem, affection and confidence of his flock — taking a deep interest in all their affairs, and shewing himself their counsellor and friend in prosperity as well as in adversity. As a friend he was strong in his attachments, and his friends were no less strongly attached to him. It is the language of one who knew him from his childhood, and was most intimate with him in his preparatory studies and during his college life, “He was free from all envy, jealousy and presumption, and was always, and to all, unaffectedly kind and sincere. His friendship was not liable to the chill of pride or the consumings of anger.”*

If it be now asked what were some of the most prominent of his views on the great subject of Theology — we refer the reader to the sermons contained in this volume. The most practical truths of religion were decidedly the most prominent in his

* Obituary notice in the Old Colony Memorial.

mind, and even his favorite and peculiar speculations all had an immediate practical bearing. But the word practical, to him had a higher meaning than that which is commonly attached to it. The great mass of mankind speak of the useful as something outward and gross. They confine it to the questions — What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? This he regarded as the lowest and most narrow meaning of the term. It was not that merely which led men immediately to do something — but whatever tended to enlighten and purify the intellect, or enlarge and elevate the affections; whatever induced the mind, directly or indirectly, to act for itself, and thus enabled it to work out its own salvation from idleness, indifference, error or sin — that, to him, was useful — that was pre-eminently practical.

In his ordinary preaching he was not accustomed to dwell much on points in controversy among Christians, judging that the pulpit and the Sabbath were consecrated to higher and nobler purposes. He was not sectarian in any sense of that word, but yet he did not hesitate to avow distinctly that his opinions corresponded in the main with those of the great body of Unitarian Christians. In all his views of truth and duty, he was most remarkably spiritual. The spirituality and freedom of the human mind, he often insisted on. The doctrines of Materialism and Necessity, he had examined and rejected, as being contradicted directly by the evidence of his own consciousness. He was fond of speaking of Christianity as a religion purely spiritual. The kingdom of God did not at all come with observation. It was *within* the soul in all

its operations, in its revelations, its influences, its rewards and its punishments. The heaven and hell and judgment of Christianity, were in his mind not objects of sense, but things of consciousness. They had none of the limitations of time and place, which the popular faith had affixed to them. He looked upon death as only a change of state — a passing from the material into the spiritual world, and as one of the most interesting and glorious circumstances in our existence. Death and the resurrection were to him the same thing; the one being synonymous with the other; the crumbling of the body being the deliverance of the soul.

The entire surrender of the mind and heart to God through the experience of an interest in Jesus Christ, was often on his lips as being most expressive of what he understood by christian regeneration.

Again, the humanity of the Saviour was with him a prominent and practical point. The *man* Christ Jesus — the child of sorrow — the tempted in all points as we are, was one of his most favorite themes. This peculiar view he regarded as in some degree overlooked by almost all Christians. That the poor, the despised, the crucified man of Nazareth should be God's anointed — the bright and glorious manifestation and express image of the Father was still, as it was of old, a stone of stumbling to the Jew, and folly to the Greek. For this reason, he thought it had been neglected in most of the hypotheses concerning the Son of God, and for himself, he said, he was ready at all times to take his stand by the cross of the Nazarene, and proclaim it to the world.

But the views through which the public has become most acquainted with Mr Goodwin, have appeared in various numbers of the Christian Examiner, and have reference to the meaning of those Greek and Hebrew words which in the received version of our Scriptures are invested with the sense of eternal duration. On the result of that investigation, it must be left for the learned to decide ; but that it indicated great originality and independence, patience of research and a true christian charity, there can be but one opinion.*

* The first of these articles appeared in 1828, in the form of an essay on the meaning of the expressions " everlasting punishment" and " life eternal," in Matthew xxv. 46. The novelty of the opinion expressed in this essay, excited some attention, and elicited some remarks in " The Spirit of the Pilgrims," from the pen of Professor Stuart of Andover. These remarks were soon followed by a letter from Mr Goodwin in the Examiner for Sept. 1830. This letter received the comments of Professor Stuart in an Appendix to his " Exegetical Essays on several Words relating to Future Punishment." The proposition of Mr Goodwin which was contested by the Professor was, that *αιων* and *αιωνιος*, sustained among other meanings in the more ancient Greek a sense of *spirituality*. Mr Goodwin, in two letters in Vols. X. and XII. of the Examiner, went into a thorough investigation of the meaning of these words, from their etymology, the earlier lexicographers, and particularly from their use by the classic writers. On the last point, all the passages in which either of these words is found in Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Pindar, (except the fragments) Sophocles, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and his treatises *de Mundo*, *de Spiritu*, *de Moribus*, *de Cælo*, Euripides and Plato, were brought forward, translated and left to speak for themselves. He then proceeded to inves-

Having thus noticed some of the incidents in the life of Mr Goodwin, and endeavored to delineate some of the more prominent features in his intellectual and moral character, and his religious views, there only remains to us the painful duty of recording his sudden and lamented death. In January, 1833, he visited Boston for the last time. On his return, and but a few days before his decease, he preached at Kingston from the text, "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*" He suffered during that day a severe pain in his head, which continued without abatement through the two following days that he spent at Plymouth. After arriving at Sandwich, his disorder, which proved an abscess on the brain, rapidly assumed more alarming indications, and soon destroyed all hopes of his recovery. He died on Tuesday, February fifth, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and in the twentieth of his ministry.

His funeral was attended on the following Thursday, and though the day was stormy and intensely cold, a very numerous assembly of friends and acquaintances was convened to manifest their sense of the greatness of the loss they had experienced. The devotional exercises were performed by Rev. Mr Hersey of Barnstable, and Mr Cole of Kingston, and a most affectionate and consoling discourse was delivered by Dr Kendall of Plymouth, from the words, "*I leave the world and*

tigate in a similar manner the meaning of the Hebrew word corresponding to *αιων* and *αιωνιος*, in the Septuagint. This investigation is published in a third and fourth letter, in Vols. XIII. and XIV. of the Examiner. The last was not issued till after the decease of the writer.

go to the Father." The Society have since repeated their testimony of respect for his memory by erecting over his grave a beautiful monument with the following inscription :

On one side,

In memory
of
R E V . E Z R A S H A W G O O D W I N ,
Pastor
of the First Congregational Church
and
Society, in Sandwich,
who died
February 5th, A. D. 1833,
in the
46th year of his age,
and
in the twentieth year of his ministry.

On the other side,

This memorial
of
their beloved Pastor,
is
here placed by the bereaved flock,
with
grateful recollections
of
the services, virtues, and endowments
of their
pious instructor, their enlightened guide, their faithful
counsellor, their constant work fellow
in
the cause of Christian liberty,
their cherished associate, their generous
and
affectionate friend.

Absent in the flesh, yet with us in the spirit.

There were some striking traits in the character of Mr Goodwin, which have not been touched upon or but slightly alluded to in the above memoir, as they are so ably delineated in the notices that appeared soon after his decease, from the pens of those who were intimately acquainted with him. We subjoin the following extracts from the Christian Register of Feb. 16, and March 2, 1833.

“To the sick and afflicted he was indeed a friend, ever ready to bestow upon them the balm of sympathy, and to give them the supports and consolations of religion. Wherever there was sorrow in a household, there he was sure to be. His parish was a very extensive one, and many of his flock lived at a great distance from him, but neither the most intense cold, nor the most violent storm could keep him at home when the sick were to be comforted or the dying sustained. His people were always sensible of the value of his services, reciprocating the warmth of his attachment and looking up to him with deep and grateful respect. Even those who differed from him could not help loving and respecting him. His death was inexpressibly afflicting to his own people and threw the whole village into mourning. The expression of grief was universal, and all felt they had lost a friend whose place in their hearts they could hardly hope to have ever refilled.

“As a clergyman, Mr Goodwin applied himself to the discharge of the various duties of his profession, with an untiring zeal, and devoted the powers of his noble mind to the cause of his beloved master, with a zeal which Heaven only could have inspired, and with

a fidelity which ended only with death. He felt that he had entered the list as a champion of the everlasting truth ; that his cause was holy and just, and that the human soul could make no sacrifice proportionate to the crown of glory, its eternal splendor and unfading beauty. Never shall we forget a little incident which occurred some years since at a meeting of the Barnstable County Association, and which convened on the occasion at Sandwich. During the conversation which followed the transaction of the regular business of the meeting, the thoughts of the company were directed to the subject of religious truth and the importance of disseminating correct religious principles in opposition to such as cannot bear the scrutiny of reason and revelation. One of the clergymen present, of different sentiments from Mr Goodwin, (as were all the members of the association, we believe with a single exception) put this question to him, " What would you give, sir, to see your views of religion prevail over the world ?" As to the object of the interrogation — whether it were to call forth an expression of our friend's ardent zeal, or possibly to make a reflection on its fidelity, or for whatever other cause, we do not hazard a conjecture. Suffice it to say, the answer given did honor to the character of him from whom it came. With a glow of soul that we cannot describe, with a countenance beaming with benevolence and cheerfulness, yet an aspect of angelic serenity, which can never be effaced from our memory, mingled with a pathos which bespoke the heartfelt origin of the declaration, and made you feel as certain of its sincerity, as you were of the existence of the speaker, Mr G. replied, " What would

I give, sir? I would make a sacrifice of all that I possess on earth, and upon the pile I would cast my own body.

“In connexion with his public performances should be mentioned the more private and social, yet not less valuable meetings, which Mr Goodwin was accustomed to hold on Sabbath evening. The object of this meeting was to explain texts of Scripture, and discuss any question that might be offered on the general subject of religion. It was an occasion on which Mr Goodwin appeared in the most favorable light. His careful study and thorough examination of the sacred volume had made him mighty in illustrating its sublime pages. It was an hour of deep interest, for it gave the pastor an opportunity of combining the force of sympathy, arising from the social nature of the meeting with the influence of a more direct and intimate communion with his own soul. The moments thus spent are treasured in memory, as among the happiest of our life; and never can we cease to be grateful for having been permitted during a series of years to listen to the instructions of such a mind.

“As a scholar, the character of Mr Goodwin is too well known to need any encomium that our pen could offer. To an eager love of knowledge was joined a most untiring industry of pursuit, — patience of investigation, which fainted not, till it had traced the stream to its source, or was compelled to leave its origin to fable or conjecture. Mr G. at the time of his decease, ranked high as a biblical critic; and had his life been prolonged, his habits of research and his fine classical taste would have led him to still higher emi-

nence. He had, as it were, but begun to bring forth to the world the fruits of his labors; and we believe, much as he was esteemed for his sound scholarship, the community can form but an imperfect estimate of his literary and scientific worth.

“Neither was his attention confined to the studies which are peculiarly connected with his profession. He was as successful in the acquisition of general knowledge as ardent and unwearied in exploring the pages of sacred truth; he was ever alive to the wonders and beauties of nature and art, and frequently commented upon them with a force and elegance, that inspired the hearer with delight, and increased his admiration of the world in which he was placed.

“We forbear to unveil the scenes consecrated to private happiness and domestic love, — where the virtues of our deceased friend shone with a lustre so pure and bright. To a stranger we could not portray them with fidelity; and none other needs to be reminded of them. Suffice it to say, that in the most endeared of earthly relations, the altar of affection seemed ever lighted with a holy flame; while the offering of friendship was made with a hand as warm as the heart that inspired it was sincere. No one, who enjoyed the happiness of private and social intercourse with Mr Goodwin, will forget the elevated tone of his conversation, or the extreme delicacy and tenderness with which he almost uniformly led your thoughts to some spiritual and ennobling contemplation. Neither will any one, who was called to participate in the comforts of his hospitable dwelling and cheerful hearth, cease to cherish a happy and grateful recollection of the virtues of the

generous heart which extended a welcome ; or hesitate to apply to him, as a man of feeling and benevolence the noble sentiment of Terence, “ that nothing which pertained to humanity could be to him a subject of indifference.”

A few brief extracts which we are permitted to make from his later correspondence, will illustrate some of the traits of character and the peculiar modes of thinking and feeling that have now been alluded to.

The first is from a letter to a near friend after the loss of a much beloved and promising son.

SANDWICH, AUGUST 5, 1827.

MY DEAR SIR — I feel wrong in allowing the mail to depart without writing you, and yet my heart is so deeply disquieted that I scarce know how to set a thought on paper. If I look after something consolatory which I may say to you, I suddenly find myself so backward to receive the consolation I would administer to you, that I shrink from prescribing to another what I do not cordially partake myself. Still, however, as I write, some thoughts occur which do approach the soul with an anointing influence, and these I will set forth. God has recalled the spirit which he *lent* us for a time, and we will not be ungrateful for what we have received from our Maker through him, now that he is no longer able to impart his consolations to our hearts. Compared with the customary length of human life, his years were few, and yet they were sufficiently many to leave us much to be thankful for ; much to recall with soothing remembrance, and much to treasure up as part of our

hope in a better world. I cannot imagine that the excellent qualities of the soul developed so largely in him at so early an age, have now perished out of being, merely because the material tenement in which they resided has been made unfit for their longer abode. God has use for them in other portions of his vast dominions, and if we can so far control our human feelings as to deliver him over in a surrendering spirit, to the great and good Being who "inhabiteth eternity," it may perhaps still be granted to our faith to see this active, intelligent, powerful and excellent spirit joyfully occupied in knowing and doing his Maker's will in happier states of being, beyond the reach of temptation, trial and death. This resurrection of the beloved dead, is, I confess, already beginning to take some effect in my heart, and notwithstanding the deep and gloomy darkness which the tidings of this event with its afflictive circumstances cast over the soul, still I can begin to perceive one more object of attachment in the spiritual world; a new "treasure in the heavens," a new hope now securely established in "everlasting life." To expect, however, that the same state of mind takes place in yourselves already, would be unwarrantably estimating the feelings of parents by my own. I therefore only set forth these thoughts because I can see a consolation in them, though it be yet afar off, and without presuming to lead your minds in my own modes of thinking and feeling, will trust the God of all consolation to visit your hearts with strength and peace in such ways as his wisdom sees best in your present trying and afflicted condition. The plans of God are laid for

eternity, and eternity will surely develope even to our minds, the causes of events which in our present limited state are "past finding out."

* * * * *

From a letter to his father-in-law, Judge Davis.

SANDWICH, JULY 19, 1829.

* * * * * We met at ———, Miss ———, whom neither of us had been acquainted with before. I was glad of an opportunity to converse with her, and more so to find in her a sympathy of sentiment in religion as great as I have ever found in any one. I believe that changes of any kind in religious views tend greatly to enlarge the heart, and induce a spirit of much forbearance; I hope not a spirit of indifference, though it must sometimes needs be so. Miss ——— has experienced so great a change of views that she has a large share of the charity which endureth all things, and the good will which forms a bright jewel in the Christian's crown.

On Monday evening, we received intelligence of the death of your brother,* a sudden and touching instance of the "vanishing away" of one whom we loved and honored. It was as unexpected as if he had died in the fulness of health and strength. I believe however it was the kind of death he would have chosen, had the choice been submitted to him. I believe it is Dr Johnson, who remarks that most people are not so much afraid of being dead as they are of dying. It was so with him, and if he [Mr D.] had any fears upon this

* Samuel Davis, Esq. of Plymouth.

subject, they must have been of this kind. A merciful Providence relieved him of them all, and took him to himself through the medium of quiet sleep.

It must be painful to yourself to be called so often to your birth-place on occasions of death, and the scenes you witnessed on this last visit must have been peculiarly trying. Plymouth has long been even to *me* a lonesome place. It must be much more so to you, and now more so than ever. Still I love it, and so I doubt not do you. There is, and ever will be an interest in places which have been consecrated by the presence and labors of our relatives and friends during their lives, and to my mind there is a special interest in the spot where their ashes repose. It seems to me much like a threshold of the spiritual world, to which we can approach, and gain some community of feeling with those who have passed over to the other side — that so the dead themselves become as links of the chain, which by our hope attaches us to things “eternal in the heavens.” It “entereth into that which is within the veil.” You will forgive the fanaticism which may seem to be in this for the sake of the sincerity with which I believe it.

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To a near relative and brother in the ministry, after a severe affliction.

SANDWICH, Nov. 21, 1831.

* * * * * Shall I speak to you words of consolation? You doubtless know them all; for you cannot have discharged the office of a “son of consolation” so frequently as you must have done, without

having treasured up much that will come to your own help in this hour of darkness. Yet I will say, that *that* which makes your loss the greater, does of itself contain a secret source of consolation. I mean the virtues, graces, established principles, and general spirited character appertaining to her who has left us. It was this which rendered her so extensively esteemed and beloved, and made her earthly existence so valuable. And that which makes earthly existence of great worth, must be of equal, not to say far greater worth, in that realm of new light and power which our religion reveals. We ought to retain it as that which she acquired in human life, and has left for our consolation when her personal presence here is no longer allowed. Nay, we may confidently believe, that all this preparation for the work and allotment of God, is not suffered to lie in a useless and joyless inaction, because it no longer is exerting itself in this present world. There are scenes of duty and realms of joy, besides this earth which we now inhabit, and among those "many mansions," we are taught that Jesus finds a place for his disciples. I believe this with all fulness of faith. In this faith, I can never relinquish my hold upon christian friends when they die. They are mine still; and hope will often anticipate the state where our powers may again unite in our Maker's service, and our works and our attainments may be offered with submissive reverence at the throne of "God and the Lamb." They become means of union between our hearts and a better world, and help us in our efforts to "set our affections on things above." * * * *

How deeply ought we to value the knowledge of

eternity, revealed in the christian religion. This present life with all its favors is so full of losses, frustrated hopes and wrecked enjoyments, that it offers no *rest* to the soul. The heart often sickens at what it gives, in the thought of that which it takes away. We will bless our kind God, that he has brought life and immortality to light, and when our souls are weary of this world, will seek repose in the promise of that which is to come.

* * * * *

To Judge Davis.

SANDWICH, MAY 20, 1832.

* * * * * "The *revival* of religion," so called, in this place, has made a great show, and I doubt not there is some substance among it. Out of thirty or forty apparent converts, there must be some true ones. In regard to *parish* effect, it has deprived me of some people whom I valued and would not willingly have parted with. By way of recompense it has brought some into our parish who were not previously with us, and *brought out* some minds who had been *hidden*, to take a decided stand as to the doctrine of the divine Unity. It has likewise stirred up a spirit of inquiry, and has brought some who believe with me into a new experience of the religious spirit. Upon the whole, I do not think the state of religion has suffered in consequence of this movement. I have had but little opportunity to talk with those who think they have been subjects of the revival influences. I am willing to leave the matter for the present till time, thought, prayer and inquiry shall have induced

some soberness of mind in them. * * * * From what has been in time past, compared with what now is, I think the ultimate result of this movement will be to establish our doctrine and society more firmly and in more life than it has been.

* * * * *

Another to the same.

SANDWICH, JUNE 21, 1832.

* * * * * We had a meeting in our meeting-house on Tuesday evening, to organize our Sandwich Unitarian Association. There was quite a gathering of people, and as good a show of interest in the matter exhibited, as could be expected from a beginning. I remember when in ———, a fast was held about ten years ago, for a *revival of religion*. It was derided by many, inwardly esteemed lightly by more, and no effects were anticipated from it, excepting by a few. Yet by means of occasional repetition and perseverance from the believing, the result in time was a great attention to religion and a great increase of the church. I know not what may result from these Unitarian gatherings. But I have good faith, 1. That they will induce a confidence that the Unitarian is the *true* form of Christianity; and then, 2. They will move attention of people to *religion* itself under this form. *Faith* is able to remove mountains; and what is most needed now to the energy of our system, is a prevailing belief that it is *true*. These associations properly conducted will be instrumental in bringing about that belief in the common and public mind, and we may yet live to see a coming of the Messiah in this simple form that shall gladden many hearts.

The following is a list of Mr Goodwin's published works.

Notices of the Great Storm, Sept. 23, 1815. Mass. Historical Collections, Vol. X. Second Series.

Meaning of the words translated Eternity and Eternal, in the Scriptures. Christian Examiner, Vols. V., IX., X., XII., XIII., XIV.

A Sermon on the Secrecy of the Soul in Communion with God. Liberal Preacher, Vol. III., No. 9.

An Address before the Barnstable Peace Society, Dec. 25, 1830.

Ancient and Modern Orthodoxy. Unitarian Advocate, for December, 1831.

Alice Bradford, or a Birth-day Present.

Some Scriptural Readings compared with some Unscriptural Sayings. Tracts of the American Unitarian Association, No. 66, 1st series.

The Shipwrecked Coaster. Token for 1833.

S E R M O N I.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN THE SETTLEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND.

ISAIAH lx. 22.

A LITTLE ONE SHALL BECOME A THOUSAND, AND A SMALL ONE A STRONG NATION, AND THE LORD WILL HASTEN IT IN HIS TIME.

THE return of the day in which the landing of the Fathers is celebrated, awakes in the soul a train of solemn and religious reflection. The years that are past, seem dwindled to a point in our account of time. The mind hurries back over the events which have since occurred, and fixing its eye on what was then doing, beholds as in perfect vision, this land as it then was, an uncultivated wilderness, clad in the chill dreariness of its winter array — this shore, as it then appeared, opening its bleak, inhospitable coasts, and tendering but a freezing welcome to the weary pilgrims: it beholds the solitary ship, wherein they had traversed the waste of waters, and watches

their frail shallop, almost imperceptible amid the waves, conveying their forlorn hope, to the rock destined to proclaim their names, their virtues, their trials and their achievements. The causes of their emigration, the objects of their removal hither, and the consequences resulting from their enterprise, then crowd upon the thoughts; and the whole course of events manifests such an express design of God to prepare a safe place of abode for his people, where they might worship him in peace, that we deem it a proper course of meditation on this day, to trace some of the principal evidences of this counsel of God, in the order of events which led to the settlement of our country. In this course, we observe, *First*, that the very discovery of this western continent at the time, when it actually took place, is evidence, that the Most High, foreseeing the evil that was soon to come upon his people, was providing them a refuge beforehand. Until within a short time previous to the discovery of America, darkness had, for many centuries, covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Literally speaking, knowledge had vanished away! The literary world was in a state of chaos, without form and void, and profound ignorance sat brooding on the face of the deep. Under this ignorance, the christian church suffered to the last possible degree. The scriptures were locked up in an un-

known tongue, that the people could know nothing they contained, but what their priests might teach, — and the priests themselves, could do but little more, than “stammer” out a few phrases of “barbarous Latin,” or address the Most High in language which they did not understand themselves. Such was in fact the gross ignorance of the church, that some of its highest dignitaries were not ashamed to confess, that they knew not how to *subscribe their names* to an instrument. This was indeed darkness that might be felt, — and it *was* felt in every part of the christian community. The life-blood of Christianity stagnated at the heart, corrupted in all its channels, to the very extremities, and the whole body broke out in loathsome pollution. Christians neither knew, nor regarded their rights, their privileges, nor their powers, and seemed contented with the corruptions of the system. During that order of things, the existence of this western continent was unknown. It would seem, the Almighty had no special religious use for it; and he left it of course, to the wandering savage and the prowling beast. But he was preparing his materials for the resurrection of his church from her deadly disease, — her restoration to that grace and liberty, wherewith Christ at the beginning had made her free. Well, however, did he know, that his truth would no sooner be proclaimed, than its

advocates would be persecuted, as his prophets and apostles had been ; and he resolved to provide them “ an hiding place from the wind, and a shelter from the storm.” He inspired the enterprising mariner with hopes of lands unknown, and worlds beyond the deep. His providence directed his course across the untried seas, gave him to enjoy the object of his eager desires, and carry back to the nations, the tidings of another world. Scarce had this great discovery been made, when, the light of the Reformation rose upon mankind : Christians were taught the nature, the purity and the holiness of the christian church, and then, if that church were persecuted in the city, the way was prepared by which she might “ flee into the wilderness.” Then if the professors of the truth could find no peace at home, still a

“ World was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide.”

Secondly. We discern this order of providence, in the state of affairs in Europe, from the time of the commencement of the Reformation, to that of the emigration of our fathers. When the first preaching of the reformers diffused a knowledge of christian truth, the light shined, indeed, but it shined in darkness, — and, in more uses of the word than one, “ the darkness comprehended it not.” The shadows of night still obscured the

horizon, and thick clouds of superstition still floated in the atmosphere. The light of truth, would, therefore, only dart its rays upon the world at intervals, and then, they were so refracted and reflected, by the medium through which they passed, that they shed but a doubtful lustre on objects of the mental vision. In such a state of things, there were some who could not, and others who would not, discern and follow the truth. In some places of course, a partial restoration to christian purity was attempted, — in others, none at all; and in others, the church became still more corrupt, perverting this glimmering of knowledge, to guide them to deeper pollution. In Great Britain, the scriptures were soon given to the people in their mother tongue; the veil was withdrawn from before God's word, and his children were permitted to look into that Holy of Holies, and see, each for himself, the glory of the Lord, as it shone from his own mercy seat. But still, in that country, the "foundations were all out of course." Changes were every day introduced in worship or discipline, and every new sovereign, when he came to the throne, set up some new order of things in the church. They were uniform in nothing, but in attempting to enforce their different systems as the rule of Christ. This perpetual change wearied the minds of men, till it actually compelled them to inquire for themselves

at the word of God ; — for they saw there was no trust to be placed in the word of man, however exalted in dignity or power. This spirit of inquiry once produced, was kept alive by the same causes which excited it at first, till the reign of Elizabeth ; when, thinking perchance that they had reached the summit of knowledge, the celebrated thirtynine articles of faith and practice were adopted, and the Episcopal form of church discipline was established. Subscription to these articles was speedily required, and it appeared to be the determination of the government, that the people should receive as doctrines these commandments of men. But the spirit of religious inquiry was not to be allayed by the result of a convocation of clergymen, by a decree of parliament, nor even by the mandate of the sovereign. It was soon perceived that many points of christian purity were not attempted, and that many corruptions were preserved in this new ecclesiastical constitution. The conscientious pastors, therefore, refused their assent to the human imposition, and though in consequence of their refusal, driven from their stations in the church, yet like the faithful confessor, they lifted in their hands the volume of inspiration, and exclaimed “to this, and to this only will we subscribe.” As yet, however, the non-conformity existed chiefly among the clergymen, for although many of the people

groaned bitterly beneath their bondage, yet we read of but few attempts to establish separate churches for many years, and those which were attempted were falling to speedy dissolution. The shepherds were first smitten, and the sheep were either scattered abroad, or confined within the fold of the hireling. Until the fathers of New England rose in the strength of the Lord and in the power of his might, and with their pious pastors, whom the voice of the magistrate had forbidden to preach, they “as the Lord’s free people, joined themselves by covenant, into a church state, to walk in his ways made known, or to be made known to them according to their best endeavors, whatever it cost them.” Thus, the train of events for many years had been such as to cause the christian system to be better understood, and to prepare the minds of men to witness a good profession in faith and hope. For one of old time, hath written thus: “the more the puritans suffer, the more the people search the scriptures, to which appeals are made in these religious matters, — the more they grow acquainted with this inspired rule of worship, the more they discover of the popish superstitions, — the more they abhor them, the more prefer the divine institutions, the more pure they desire the worship of the church to be.” But until then, there had been formed no solid nucleus round

which the scattered particles of Christianity might collect, and notwithstanding God had provided a place of refuge for his people, yet none had been found willing to go forth as the advanced guard, and take possession for themselves, and their fellow disciples. We therefore remark, as the *third* topic of discussion, the uncommon circumstance, of gathering into one church, so many men of the character of the Pilgrims, whom we this day delight to honor. Their church was in fact, a constellation of christian virtue, talent, faith, and wisdom. They were not men, who like the conquerors of the southern portion of our continent, were led hither by the hope of rapine, the lust of power, or the cankering desire of gold. Nor men, who like the colonists of many of the islands, were rejected from society for their crimes, whose piracies still live in memory, a terrifying tale. Nor yet were they men, who, loathing the bond of social and civil obligation, fled hither that they might live without law. They were rather ardently attached to their native land. It was a land endeared to them, "by all remembrances of childhood, and by all joys of manhood." There they possessed houses and farms, a fair standing in society, and a competent share of "this world's good." They had been fed with the most "delicate milk of their mother country," and nothing but imperious duty could constrain them to endure

the painful process by which they were weaned. Such was their attachment to their country that they would not leave it, so long there existed the least possible hope of an end to their troubles, however distant. They of course remained, notwithstanding the persecutions they were suffering, hoping perhaps that the new sovereign, who was about to reign, would afford them some relief. But scarcely was he established on the throne, before he made known his resolution in these memorable words, — “ I will have one doctrine, and one discipline ; one religion, in substance and ceremony. I shall make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or do worse.” Then a voice was heard, crying “ Arise and depart, for this is not your rest,” — a voice which they dared not disobey ; but still the prospect of the better country, even the heavenly, was all that could make them unmindful of that country from which they came out. They were well acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus. In pursuit of this they had exposed themselves to all the wrath of man, and searching the scriptures daily, they became mighty therein. There was scarcely the *layman* among them, but was able on occasion to rise and address an audience, in the unpremeditated language of christian truth. And as to the standing of their *divines* in the literary and theological world, — Robinson and Brewster were educated

at the principal seminaries of the age, and the selection of the former by strangers in Holland to maintain repeatedly the public disputation against such a champion as Episcopius, affords sufficient evidence of the station he held in the ranks of learning and of talent. The theological encounter, wherein he once and again met his opponents, and came off with honor, is surely as worthy of praise as the bloody conflict of Smith, the principal founder of the "Ancient Dominion," who serving as an officer in the Austrian army before his voyages to America, accepted the challenge of two Lords of the Turks in succession, bore away their heads in triumph, and then sent his message to the enemy, saying they were welcome to *his* head, provided their *third* champion could take it. But though Robinson and Brewster did not engage in such bloody encounters, yet they were by no means afraid of the face of man, for when their church, persecuted at home, and yet forbidden to flee, at last effected their purpose, and left their country through much peril and tribulation, these two remained among the last upon the land, as their rearward to receive and stay the progress of the battle from behind, while the timid and the weak might in the meantime flee to a place of safety. The fathers of New England were also knitted together in bonds of warmest affection. The new commandment, "that ye love one an-

other," was engraven upon every heart. Such was the operation of this principle, that although their church was at one time widely dispersed, yet their elective affinities soon brought them together again, and gathered every scattered particle to its place in the common substance — and, when afterwards, necessity compelled them to separate once more, the separation was attended with so many sighs and sobs, so many prayers did sound among them, and tears did so gush from every eye, and expressions did so pierce each other's hearts, that even the uninterested spectators, who beheld the scene, could not refrain from tears. Their parting was like that of the apostle from his Ephesian brethren, when after much christian conversation, " he kneeled down upon the shore, and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." With all their enthusiastic attachment to their own church, they had yet none of that fanatic spirit, which believing its own infallibility and perfection, utters the haughty word, " Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." Their communion table was open to all believers " holding communion with the reformed churches, in Scotland, France and the Netherlands," and not excepting the pious members of that very church, from which they had felt it their duty to secede. How different from those in these modern days, who discovering,

as they imagine, something new in the gospel, raise it as a standard of rigid separation, that we may almost hear them exclaim, "Depart, ye cursed." They were men of firm faith. They verily believed that God was with them; and thus believing, the temptation of affluence and ease at home lost all its power, when combined with subscription to a creed which they did not believe, or a formula of worship, which, in their view, God had not approved. They rather chose imprisonment, scourge and banishment, with "a conscience void of offence." But their faith was exposed to a different trial in the land to which they first removed. There they were protected, encouraged, and respected, and there they might have passed their lives in peace. But they quickly perceived that that was not the land for perfecting the liberty of the children of God. They saw their children seduced by "the licentiousness of the youth, and temptations of the place — many of them leaving their parents, some becoming soldiers, others taking to foreign voyages, and some to courses tending to dissoluteness and the danger of their souls." And the prospect of ease to themselves, weighed as nothing in the balance against "the danger that their posterity should degenerate and religion die among them." To pious minds these things created a necessity for another removal. But at this time they were inspired with a higher motive

also. They saw that by reason of the discouragements in Europe, the faith of many was in danger of failing, because there was no place made ready, where that faith might be safely exercised, and made perfect in works. They knew there were many hidden in darkness, who dared not "shew themselves" because they saw no city of refuge, already built and inhabited and ready prepared for their reception. These things stirred up in their hearts "an inward zeal for laying some foundation, and making a way for propagating the kingdom of Christ, to the remote ends of the earth, though they should be only stepping stones to others." With these views, their minds were turned towards this hitherto untried portion of the world. Full well were they aware that it was not a land where they should find houses which they builded not, olive-yards, gardens, or corn-fields which they planted not, that it was not a land flowing with milk and honey. Full well did they know that hard labor should be their lot; coarse and scanty their fare, with all the deprivations, labors, and hardships, attendant on subduing the black forest, and converting the uncultivated wilderness to a fruitful field. But it was not with them, "as with other men, whom small things could discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish themselves at home again." They knew that the same Almighty Being through whom they

had resisted the tyranny of power, could make for them "a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters," — yea, that he could cause "the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad" at their coming, and "the desert to rejoice and blossom like the rose." Perceiving this part of the world to be in very deed the chosen asylum for the afflicted and the "tossed with tempests," they felt themselves to be the chosen band, to go over before their brethren and take possession of it in the name of the Lord, that Christians might everywhere be encouraged to proclaim the grace and glory of the gospel, secure of a hiding place from man, where they might worship the Father in spirit and in truth, with none to molest nor make them afraid.

Such were the men, and such the motives, wherewith the settlement of your country was begun. However that country may have reason to blush at the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her riper years, yet she may rejoice in her birth, for it was undefiled. An enterprise commenced with such views, and conducted by such men, might justly expect, and did actually receive the manifest blessing of Heaven. The very treachery which diverted them from their intended course, saved them from the terrors of a savage foe, strong as the sons of Anak, in whose sight the pilgrims should have been "as grasshop-

pers," and brought them to a spot, whither the Almighty had sent his angel before them, to drive out the heathen, and prepare them a place of safe habitation. And the same providence which had been watching all their ways, provided them an unexpected, and a steadfast friend, where they had every reason to look for an inveterate enemy, in the person of the native chief, whose "like was never seen among the Indians." The trials of their first winter, it is true, were severe; but we find no one among them "wishing himself at home again." Twice already had they removed, and for their next removal they were looking to their Saviour's mansion of eternal rest. Such, however, was the favor of God towards them, that within a few years after their arrival at the age at which other colonies had cried in despair, "Our palaces are forsaken, our forts and towers are for dens to the wild beasts, and our fields for their pasture," the testimony of truth proclaimed these pilgrims to be a people, "healthful, wealthy, politic and religious." A few years more, and they were called to extend the right hand of fellowship to numbers of sister churches, and saw them springing up on every side, "like willows by the water courses, breaking forth like streams in the desert." Doubtless the vision of futurity then glanced before the eye of the fathers, and the first effort of the mind images them forth, as address-

ing the church they had established, the nation they had founded, and saying, "enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation — spare not to strengthen thy stakes, and lengthen thy cords, — for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left. Nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls and their kings shall minister unto thee. Thy sun shall no more go down, nor thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." My auditors, the prophecy is accomplished. "The little one" has "become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation." The Lord hath hastened it, for his time was come. So rapid was the growth, and so short the adolescence of the nation, that, had our fathers but planted an acorn in the year of their arrival, the oak it produced would scarcely have reached its maturity in time for their sons to have celebrated their national independence beneath its shade. Such also was the effect of the morals they inculcated, and of the institutions they framed, that when the period arrived for this people to assume their rank among the nations, then there were found among us, men of native growth and educa-

tion, already thoroughly furnished for every great work, necessary for the perfecting of an empire, — statesmen and counsellors, civilians and warriors. That the nation “born in a day,” could be at once complete in its members and powers. Ah, how unlike the countries of the south, settled with other views, and subject to other laws, both in religion and in morals — where the struggle for independence, delayed too long, commenced at last too late, and where, even after the experience of years, they still seek in vain for men great in the council or mighty in the field. It is our joy that we are descended from ancestors whose names are connected with every christian, civil and social virtue. Name but the name of Carver, and the revered form of patriarchal simplicity passes before the eye. Of Bradford, and the mild majesty of paternal government appears in all its benignant lustre ; cool, cautious, upright and courtly policy distinguishes the character of Winslow ; brave, fearless and conquering fortitude is ever combined with the image of Standish, and the mere mention of Robinson and Brewster utters the sure promise of another and a better world. As our fathers verily believed that God was with them on earth, so verily do we believe that they are now with their God in Heaven. Minds like theirs were made of too pure substance to stop short of the source of perfection, and in our

Creator's time, must we, their descendants, meet them at the throne above, to receive, alas, not according to their deeds, but according to our own. It is not for them to raise us to the "joy of their Lord;" it is sufficient that they have left us enough to guide us on our way, and to assist us by the grace of God, in making our "calling and election sure." Use their example then, — use their instructions, — use their institutions — and use their goodly heritage — so, that when we see them at the judgment seat, they may not be ashamed to acknowledge their posterity — but may rejoice in eternal joy — they and the children whom God has given them. And as a regard to the character of our fathers affords an animating stimulus to us in the ways and works of godliness, so let a regard to posterity, also be equally powerful in inducing us to maintain the same character for them to profit by, as well as for our own sakes and the glory of the Father. We of this present generation, the connecting link in the chain between ancient and future time, let us take as our motto, the watchword of the chieftain of old, who, when his country was invaded, led his soldiers to battle, with the soul-animating cry, "Our fathers and and our posterity!"

SERMON II.

THE DUTIES AND DANGERS OF YOUNG MEN.

1 JOHN, ii. 13.

I WRITE UNTO YOU, YOUNG MEN.

AND what is it that we write unto you ? Mainly this exhortation, that ye acquaint yourselves with God in the days of your youth ; that ye commune and maintain communion with your Maker in daily prayer ; that ye acquaint yourselves with the truths, precepts, and promises of his word, by daily search and inquiry at the scriptures ; that ye embrace his Messiah, and acknowledge and follow him, as your own Prince, Saviour and Lord ; that in heart ye surrender yourselves to the living God, and make it your endeavor to seek his favor and friendship, by the inward discipline of your hearts, and by the outward practice of your lives and conversations. In short, we write unto you an exhortation, that ye make religion, even the religion of God by Christ, the great

object, by which to govern your affections, restrain your desires, order your plans of life, and rule of duty, through this world, in all the various stages of it, through which your lives may be lengthened out. In the beginning of life, embrace religion, and put her upon the throne of the soul, to enlighten the mind, regulate the feelings, govern the life from day to day, and give repose and hope eternal to the soul.

And when we write unto you this exhortation, the question doubtless occurs to some minds, wherefore do ye thus write? We reply, for many reasons; some of which we propose now to set forth in order. In doing which we remark,

In the *First place* — We write this exhortation unto you, young men, because at your age, the present world exhibits a most delusive aspect, and yet a pleasing and seducing one. It sets before you a fair and brilliant prospect, shewing pleasant conditions of things to come, enduring friendships, sympathising loves, riches, stations, honors, pleasures, and various attractive relations of life. It promises, all these will I give, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. You have not yet had sufficient experience to doubt, and are much in danger of believing in the reality of all these expectations of earth. The hopes of the world are too delightful to be mistrusted, and the vision of hope is apt to bear as much weight in the youthful mind as the promise of truth. The present life itself

seems a term so long as to appear endless ; you look through its different stages, and death seems to be so far beyond the most distant of them, that the youthful mind can seldom reach unto it, and earth naturally becomes the scene of our thoughts and feelings, plans, purposes and expectations ; all circling round within the borders of the present state, and centering in the life that now is.

Now we know that the promises of the world are delusive ; the hopes of man are often disappointed, and human anticipations of earthly satisfaction are brought to nought, in ways and modes without number. We know further, that a confident reliance upon earthly expectation leads the youthful mind to those false points of rest, those wrong modes of thinking and feeling, and those wrong ways of acting, which lay a foundation for much future sorrow, and accumulate food for much future repentance. For this cause it is, that we exhort you to seek acquaintance with religion *now*, and embrace that wisdom of God which alone can guide you safe through the perilous portion of life on which you are embarked. Religion is the friend, and not the enemy of man ; embrace her counsels, and she will shew you how short, at longest, is the present portion of our existence ; how little dependance can be placed upon its prospects, and with what sobered feelings and calm consideration, your plans should be formed, and your endeavors urged. Embrace her coun-

sels, and she will point out, and shew you how to avoid the dangers of virtue, the perils of the soul, which are lying in wait to corrupt your moral principle, and blind the eye of the mind, and lead you captive into the snares of sin. Embrace her counsels, and she will teach you of eternity, bringing to light that everlasting state, the superior lustre of which shall eclipse the false glories of the present world, and enable you to overcome its temptations, and unveil its delusions. Entering as you are, upon a world so tempting, so delusive, and of so short a continuance, we exhort you to embrace religion as a wise and trustworthy guide, and let her solid assurances, well ordered principles, and sure foundations of repose — her spirit of eternal life, restrain your desires, anoint your purposes, and save you from the sorrow, the remorse, the corroding disquietude of mind, which would result from the unregulated exercise of our powers, amid the seductive illusions of an obtrusive and seducing world.

Secondly. We write this exhortation unto you, young men, because the consequences of your present choice will follow you long. The rules which you now adopt to yourselves will lead into habits ; and these habits will exert their influence upon you to a greater or less degree to the end of life. If at your age, you allow yourselves in the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure, you will see pleasure springing up in so many different forms,

that your modes of pursuing it will branch out in a thousand ways, and wind so many bonds about the soul, that you will find it almost impossible to walk in any straight path, or change the course of your contemplations or practices. If you allow your minds to run chiefly on riches, honors, stations or splendors of the world, you will see these things starting up so suddenly in so many quarters, and with such difference of aspect, that they will captivate the soul unawares, and lead the undisciplined mind away to sins and modes of wickedness, that shall ever afterwards be subjects of regret, shame and remorse; biting like the serpent, and stinging like the adder, and yet retaining you in an almost irredeemable bondage. And if now you allow yourselves in the neglect of duty, such neglect will soon resolve itself into a habit — a habit which will lay open a great gulf between your souls and all duty — a gulf which all the years, the sufferings, the admonitions of human life may never suffice to fill, so that you can pass over it to duty, however much you may hereafter desire it. But embrace religion in confidence, upon her wise counsels and friendly aid, and she will lead you to those habits of prayer, in which ye shall find increasing and joyful confidence in God; those habits of inward affection, which inspire the heart with a love of what is good, and a hatred of what is evil; those habits of virtuous

action, and conscientious discharge of duty, which render the service of God a satisfaction to the mind, and make the yoke of Christ easy and his burden light. Now will you choose a way of life, which deceives while it allures; a way of life disquieting with the conscience of guilt, and void of energy to repent and effect the works which we feel condemned for neglecting; a way of life on which the troubled soul can experience no rest, and shall always be fearfully anticipating the judgment to come? Or, contrariwise, will you choose a way of blessedness and a path of peace, a way of life in which habits of communion with God, cheerful obedience and prompt submission to his will, shall anoint the conscience with a sense of remission, a sense of acceptance, and a heartfelt reliance on the living God; an inward quiet which as the world cannot give, so neither can it take away? Then embrace as your choice, religion as it is embodied in Jesus Christ, and in this choice, take possession of the true peace of God, which passeth all understanding; you will find it a growing, an extending power, coming to guide and sustain the heart, habituated to trust its counsels, and follow its advice. Even to your old age it will bless you, and in hoary hairs it will carry and sustain you.

Thirdly. We write our exhortation unto you, young men, because you have a world before you

in which afflictions abound, such as it is in the power of nothing earthly to console. Passing by those afflictions which result from the malignant disposition at times manifested in human nature, in the face of which, it is often impossible to make the best cause stand good, and under which the only resource of the conscientious is God, and passing many other sources of grief to the human heart, in which man's only refuge is his Maker, we would call your attention to some of those afflictions which seem to be our inevitable lot, and in their measure are assigned to every individual. There is, for instance, the disappointment of hope, even the reasonable hope which springs up from a well ordered and justifiable plan and purpose, blasted perhaps by a slight, unthought of occurrence, or overwhelmed by stupendous, irresistible change. There is the dissolution of subsistence and comfort, a dissolution taking place by the continual changings of events, and state of things. There is the alteration of the countenance of friends; the strange breath of those who are now trusted acquaintances. There are accidents blinding the eye, deafening the ear, shattering the limb, or disordering the intellect. There is sickness, palsyng the energies, disfiguring the countenance, and making the strong man to bow himself; and then there are the sufferings and the loss by death of those we love, an affliction

which scarce a year passes by, without bringing upon us in a greater or a less degree. Name if you can, the human being who has measured out any considerable portion of life, who has not already wept at the grave of a relative or friend, and experienced the disruption of near affection, the darkness which descends upon the mind, when one of the lights of this world is extinguished. Then look round upon the several present members of our families; upon the more extensive circle of our kindred; the yet wider sphere of our friends and acquaintances, and say, of the lives of which of these can we be certain for an hour? How often are we called to witness in them those sufferings, which neither skill nor love can alleviate; listen to expressions of distress, which no wisdom can mitigate; and witness the passing away of the soul beyond the reach of all farther communion, beyond all farther reciprocation of thought or feeling. These are afflictions to which every one is exposed, and of which every one must receive his portion. And is there any power of mere earth, which is able to console the sorrows of the heart under such afflictions? Is there any mere earthly light, that can cheer the soul when these shadows of death envelope it in darkness? Look round the world, and see how its comforts to the sorrowing heart, are as cold as the cold moonbeam on a plain of snow; as weak and

powerless, “as the shadow of a withered branch cast by the waning moon upon the waters.”—Earth has no charm to restore the dead to the heart; to retain affection for the departed spirit, nor to supply the void in the soul, caused by their vanishing away. This is the peculiar province of religion. Religion scorns the narrow bounds of space and time; she extends her search to the eternal world, to the throne of God, and him that sitteth thereon; she draws her consolations from those truths and counsels of our Maker, which compel things temporary to give place to things eternal, and things earthly to exchange themselves for things in the heavens. It is her peculiar province to enable the mind of man to see God in all things, and all things in God, and so empower the heart to endure earth’s afflictions, in patient and reconciled looking for what is yet to be revealed. Seeing that you have a world to go through, so mingled with afflictions, we repeat our exhortation to you, who are young; that ye embrace in the beginning, the only power which has ability to uphold the heart in its hour of dissolution. Embrace religion in the person of him who was himself, a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; treasure up its various topics of consolation, its many supports for the human heart; walk by its precepts, that ye may not be timorously afraid of its God, and recur daily and hourly to its

points of rest, that having learned the holy scriptures from your youth up, and having the rich provisions of Christianity in order, and at hand, then when you experience the fulfilment of the Master's word, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," you may also know what this meaneth, "Fear not, for I have overcome the world;" and in the darkest period of earth, may be consoled by the light which never goeth down, which shines eternally from that kingdom of God where there is no more death.

Fourthly. We write our exhortation to you, young men, because, sooner or later, you must die yourselves. This word perhaps sounds harsh, and falls on the ear as an ungrateful sound, an assertion hard to be embraced. Nevertheless it is true; and however unwelcome, still, being true, it matters not how soon you take it to the heart. Young as you are, still in the common course of providence, some of you have already lived out more than half your days, and all have advanced far towards the end of our human existence, however that existence may seem to have but just begun. And in the years already past, how many of you have seen equal aged companions of your journey fail as they were walking by your sides, and sink to untimely graves. God alone knows which shall perish next, and we only know that a few years at most, shall finish our circle of time

with every one now present, and we must pass to other and unknown worlds. The event is none the less certain for our unbelief, but shall be more terrific, the longer we refuse to lay it to heart. And for this event so sure unto all, what can prepare the soul, but religion? You know that nothing else has power over the grave; for nothing else contains the quickening spirit of the resurrection, and eternal life; and nowhere else are found resources for the soul when it stands before God. Death is by no means the end of our existence; it is our transition to a state of being in which the soul shall always discern God, and receive satisfaction, or endure disquiet, in proportion to its reconciliation, or unreconciliation to the Divine character and government. Religion comes to make us acquainted with this great God, in whose presence we have a whole eternity to pass; to teach us how to do his will on earth, that we may be ready to do it in a better world; to persuade us to rest with confidence upon his wisdom, power and goodness, to lead us; trust his mercy to forgive us our sins, and his grace to create us anew in the spirit of our minds, that we may realize satisfaction in his presence. She comes to make us acquainted with Jesus the Messiah of the living God, and through faith in his name abolishes death, and brings life and immortality to light. And she comes with glad

tidings from the spiritual world, saying to the christian heart that it should not be troubled, neither be afraid. But religion, in order to be enjoyed, must be a familiar acquaintance of the mind. She was intended to be the support and comforter of man through all his pilgrimage below, and by the very support and comfort she gives him on earth enable him to meet the dread event of exchanging worlds, and prepare him for the service and the enjoyments of God in every state of being which eternity shall develop. Embrace religion, then, in the days of your youth, that receiving and following her friendly counsels, and resting on her powers from day to day, when that last summons sounds which calls the soul away, ye may experience no shrinkings of the spirit, no painful reluctance, no distracting fear. But looking into that world where the forerunner has gone, may count it a release to depart and be with Christ.

Finally. We write our exhortation unto you, young men, because in all these things ye are not alone. No man either liveth to himself or dieth to himself. Connected as we are by kindred, sympathy, affection and unity of mind, nothing can take place in regard to one without exerting an influence on many, and producing joy or sorrow in other souls besides the one to whom the circumstances more immediately relate. This

principle, by which we take an interest in the state and welfare of our relatives and friends, is to my mind one of the best attributes of human nature, and did we regard it as we ought, it would be one of our best preservatives from folly and sin. Regard it, we entreat you, who are young, and let it have its weight in influencing your choice for God. Reject the invitations of the Messiah, restrain prayer, turn away from God, follow sin, and plunge in folly or wickedness, and lo, your parents, your brothers, your chosen companions, and all who have watched you with interest, are made ashamed in your disgrace — feel themselves tainted with your unwholesome destiny, and shrink at the very sound of your name. Let sickness come upon you, and with what agonized feelings must they surround your bed, almost willing that the world should be relieved of your presence, and yet shuddering at the thought of your lot in the spiritual world. Die in this condition, and they lay you in the ground with bitter reflections on your impenitent state, and scarce daring to follow your parting spirit to the judgment seat of God, make haste rather to bury their dead out of their sight, and seek a refuge from your memory in deep and dark oblivion. But remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Embrace his religion in Jesus the Messiah; discipline your hearts by his spirit; offer your daily prayers in

his name; walk in his ordinances and precepts with steady endeavors to be holy, harmless and undefiled. Let the inward principle of religion be seen in your hearts through conversation, conduct and service of God in Christ, and then, as you advance along to higher summits of moral virtue, and extend your feelings and works to higher portions of the kingdom of God; as you grow in the confidence of good men, and become more and more manifest, then your parents and brethren, your chosen companions, your associates and friends, rise in your glory, and shine in your brightness — experience a healing in your spirit, and your name is a praise and consolation. Let sickness visit you, and their prayers for your welfare ascend from their closets, their families, their sanctuary, and around your bed, with a sacred confidence in God; a hope which maketh not ashamed, whether you live or die. They stand, ministering to your necessities with heartfelt sympathy, bringing to remembrance the things that make for your peace, and though seeking your recovery, still trusting the event, with unwavering hearts, and uniting with you in one spirit, attend you on your journey, till faith perceives you pass to a holier state, where themselves are not fearing to go, but hoping to meet you again. Die in this state, and they lay your body in its kindred dust to perish; but your spirit is embalmed in

their hearts, and visits them in their walks, talks with them in the house and by the way, and anoints them still with heavenward affections, with present and persevering influence, and hopes that live beyond the grave. Be persuaded, then, to make your choice of God for an everlasting portion, and be established before him in Christ Jesus. So shall you be saved from sins and follies, with their heart corroding consequences, in this earthly state. So shall you be sustained under its afflictions, and guided through its doubtful circumstances. So shall you be prepared for your own transition to the eternal world; and when you pass from earth, shall leave the savor of a holy name, and distil the influence of an anointing spirit, to be doing the work of God, consoling and soothing to those you love, in the cheering expectation of a happier state; restraining, comforting and blessing souls, while yourselves shall be reaping joy in the Redeemer's mansion of the Father's house.

SERMON III.

PETER WALKING ON THE SEA.

MATTHEW xiv. 29.

AND WHEN PETER WAS COME DOWN OUT OF THE SHIP, HE WALKED ON THE WATER TO GO TO JESUS.

IT is often a useful thing to contemplate scripture characters in particular situations, since in all these things an example is set before us, either for us to imitate, or avoid, or learn something by. The disciple Peter, walking on the sea at his Master's command, affords an interesting object for the mind, and one from which, if we are so disposed, we may gather something for our own instruction and profit. The circumstances connected with this subject are so well known that I trust they need not now be repeated, especially as this part of scripture history has been read during our present meeting. It may therefore be a better method, to state, in order, the reflections which occur, in connexion with the particulars of the history. In this course we remark in the *first*

place, that when the mind is suddenly released from extreme apprehensions in spiritual things, we are apt to wish, and also feel able to do things which we never before thought possible. Peter in common with the other disciples had passed the night in extreme anxiety. They were alone, in a frail bark, in the midst of a tempestuous sea, and toiling with oars against a violent contrary wind; they had passed hour after hour of the darkest portion of the night in this perilous manner, — all things tending to deepen their gloom and accumulate their terrors, — till in the fourth or last watch of the night, they unexpectedly beheld a human form walking in silent majesty upon the sea, treading the broken waves as though they had been pavements of solid rock, and approaching them nearer and nearer every moment. Their minds, already subdued by the terrifying apprehensions of this anxious night, imagined that they saw a spirit of the dead moving on the waters, and coming perchance to announce to them the shipwreck and death they had been so gloomily foreboding; when their ears were suddenly assailed by the well known voice of their saving Lord, uttering glad tidings of great joy, and saying, “Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.” The transition from gloom and extreme terror, to an ecstasy of joy, was immediate and excessive. In Peter it was more exceedingly so; he was a man more ardent and quick in his feel-

ings than either of the other disciples ; much given to be led by sudden impulses, and to speak and act according to any present strong movement of the mind. On this occasion his sudden change from extreme terror to ecstasy of joy was so great, that he wanted to witness and work a miracle ; and, though perhaps almost unconscious of what he was asking, he exclaimed, “ Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water ;” and he said, “ Come.” This disposition to go forth and do some prominent work or works in the name of Christ, is a common result of passing from a state of extreme spiritual gloom and apprehension, to a state of great spiritual consolation, and joy in a new and unexpected hope. It seems that Peter was so overwhelmed at the unlooked for appearance of his Lord, that he could scarcely credit his own senses, and asked leave to do in the Divine power, what a little while before he would have deemed as impossible as for him to have raised the dead — that hereby his own satisfaction might be fully confirmed, and he might the sooner embrace the master in whom he so ardently believed. So in regard to our spiritual concerns ; when amidst any of the dark scenes of our mental gloom, terrific apprehensions, and fearful thoughts on death and eternity, whether they be first experiences of religion or any of our states of temptation, doubt or anxiety of mind — when in any

such seasons Christ the Saviour is seen in some new point of view in our spiritual realm, manifesting the grace, glory, love and power which we need in our particular condition, and with which God has so richly anointed him, the newness of the power of divine revelation with its consequent hope of salvation is often so great and so overwhelming, that the heart, conscious as of a new existence and a new creation, experiences an instant desire to go forth and effect some new, and great work in the Redeemer's name; something that we never did, that shall confirm our establishment, and satisfy our desiring minds; and at such seasons too the soul is conscious of a new ability to do, what in a season of distress of mind, appeared like removing a mountain, or walking on the sea in the midst of its tempestuous workings. "Lord, bid me, that I come unto thee, on the water." And under this head we observe further, that such dispositions are very often in perfect accordance with the divine will; they are what God is entirely willing to grant; and the works which rise before the mind of a Christian in any new experience of religion, are frequently those which God not merely allows, but also commands man to perform. The soul, conscious of a new light and new power, looks for the mandate of Heaven and receives it. It sees in some particular respect a plain way of christian obedience. There are

things which it feels not only that it has a right to do — but that it ought to do — for its own sake — for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and it feels able to effect them. The desire of Peter was a good one, and expressive of great affection for Christ ; it evinced a strong wish to be as soon as possible in his Master's arms. It shewed likewise a consciousness of power to do this new work, if his Lord would only command it ; and it appears to have been by no means unacceptable to Christ, for no sooner did Peter say, Lord, bid me come unto thee on the water — than Jesus answered, Come. Even so it often is with the Christian, when having suffered much in a dark night of mental glooms, and endured great terrors of mind, he perceives some new rising of the sun of righteousness, and is conscious of a new spiritual presence. We remark, *Secondly* — That all necessary power is always bestowed to enable man to effect those things, which God by Christ Jesus, commands, or allows him to perform. More power in cases where more is required, and less where less is requisite, but always sufficient for the purpose. God never sets any work before man, and moves or allows him to discharge it, without giving him strength equal to his day. At the word of Christ, Peter came down out of the ship, and walked on the sea, to go to Jesus. Observe, he actually did walk — not merely wished it, but did it. Here a

miraculous interference of omnipotence was requisite to enable this disciple to do what he so earnestly desired, and what his master called him to — without such miraculous interference, he must have sunk like lead in the midst of the waters — and as it happens in many rash, uncommanded and unallowed enterprises, must have perished in his purpose. But the same almighty power which formed the expanse of waters so liquid and so yielding, hardened it for the present allowed purpose, and made the way of the apostle firm as the street of Jerusalem. A little while before, and this man beheld the sea working with tempestuous violence, and his last hopes rested on keeping a few frail planks between himself and the waves — he now beheld the same raging sea, affording a safe passage to his feet, and found himself treading upon its surface in majesty and power. And so it falls, at times, with the human mind; in periods of gloom and darkness, we see works which we are conscious our Saviour requires us to do, we read his word commanding them, and we look upon his written directions, that we walk straight onward in this or that marked out course of christian service — but we perceive dangers round us. We experience terrors within. We hear the noise of the roaring world, look with dismay on the violence of its motions, startle at the froth and foam worked up upon its surface; we perceive

that the wind is both violent and contrary — and though through fear of destruction we toil and tug at the oar, we still make no progress, and still wander in darkness and anguish of mind, weak, vacillating and untrusting, and leave undone those works of Christ which we know we ought to do. But when in our inward views we can have clear perceptions of our great Master, — experience in him a confidence of assistance from God and illumination of hope, and can hear his plain command, which speaks according to our own desires, and bids us do that which we wish to do, as when he said to his disciple, Come, — then the believing heart finds within itself a power of obedience, an inwrought energy from above, wherein we can face with a fearless conscience, the things which once made us afraid ; and in our way after our Lord can tread upon the very objects which once appeared so frightful. It is one of the best evidences of the divine origin of the human soul, and of the divine spirit in man, that when the mind is clear in its views, and the heart is fixed in its purpose, then those oppositions, threats, and frightful appearances of things, which palsy the energies, and forbid the exertions of the timorous and unbelieving, serve rather to confirm the true believing soul, and become, like the consolidated waves of the sea to the apostle, points of support to the heart in its march towards

the Lord. Man trusting in God grows stronger the more he has to contend with, and his energies increase in proportion to the duration and extent of his conflict. But we remark, *Thirdly*, that this inward power of obedient discipleship, this mental strength to do the works of God in Christ, inasmuch as under the grace of God, it originally springs from true and cordial faith, so its continuance depends upon the continuance of the same faith. Let faith be strong, and then power continues so likewise—let faith grow weak and power diminishes in exact proportion to the diminution of faith, and let faith expire, and the soul is dead. Peter it seems had actually walked some portion of his way, with his eyes fixed on Christ, and then he began to pause and once more to look round about upon his new condition; he suffered his mind to take the measure and gauge of the perils that surrounded him, and he saw the wind boisterous, and the sea still working, and being tempestuous, his confidence faltered, his trust grew weak and he was afraid; at the fainting of his faith, the power that upheld him ceased to act, and he instantly began, according to the laws of nature, to sink. The supernatural agency that upheld him ceased its sustaining energy, when he ceased from his faith. And how often does it happen to us after a similar manner, that when, with hearts strong in the Lord, we have made

some steps towards christian obedience, have gone forward towards any special work, and feel our souls approaching near and nearer to the Son of Man, in mighty unity of love and service, we then begin to look round about, upon the oppositions we are encountering — the perils, the threats, the uproar, and the fearful things, through which and over which we are making our way to God in his Messiah; and then new terrors descend and faith fails, and the mind turns away from God in Christ, loses its power and begins to sink down to death — so true it is, that the only victory which can effectually overcome, is by the will of God, lodged in our faith. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith — and without this vital, quickening, uniting principle, our strength is weakness, our wisdom folly, and our efforts nought.

And here we remark, *Fourthly*, that when the disciple perceived his failure, and felt his danger, he turned immediately to that power divine which he knew was in his Master, and exclaimed, “Lord, save me,” — and Jesus immediately stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said to him no more than this, “Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” The power of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, is an unfailing refuge to the heart affectionately attached to Christ, and by such a heart it is never sought in vain. Indeed

the real Christian, when under the influence of any causes he feels his spiritual energies impaired, and finds himself sinking beneath the trials or burdens of any present state of things, turns heavenward, and gazes till he has a new discernment of his risen Lord; till he sees some new testimonies of the divine presence, power, and saving energy in him; till exerting a new act of faith in Christ, he reaches to the divinity dwelling in him; in such exercises he experiences a saving, redeeming, and renewing efficacy. By grace ye are saved, through faith; and every new act of faith in Christ, sets open a new door in the heart for God to enter with new acts of sustaining and renewing grace, that inspire the soul to new works, new duties, new sense of safety and deliverance from evil. God is always at hand to uphold and empower the souls of his servants, — and in times of peril, brings them off conquerors, and more than conquerors through him who loved them and gave himself for them.

In thus spiritualizing this subject, I trust I have not gone beyond what the scriptures warrant, nor yet beyond what I think will be attested by the experience of many. And therefore, brethren, allow me now by way of application to say, — If there be any here in darkness, anxiety, or distress of mind, on account of their present spiritual state and prospects, we entreat them, that they suffer

no terrors, no frightful appearances, no trials of the world, nay, no darkness, though it be as deep as the shadow of death, to overwhelm their minds or make shipwreck of what christian faith they possess. In the darkest watch of the night, when all things seemed concurring to dismay and exhaust the disciples of old, there was, unknown to them, a power and a love approaching to deliver and save. It was the power and love of God residing in, shewing itself through, and acting by Jesus his Messiah, and drawing near with human sympathy to preserve them in their need. Take heed then, Christians, to your watch; in patience possess your souls, and order your religious endeavors and religious doings by the unerring rules of the word of God, till the day shall dawn and the day star arise in your hearts. If there be any here, who in some new experience of the christian religion, in a newness of the Christian's life, are hearing the voice of their Master, commanding them to special christian works which they also desire to effect, conscious that they are works of Christ, move on to that to which thou art called; so long as faith in Christ abides, power shall never be wanting to give to that faith her perfect work. God upholds the cause of Christ too sincerely, too constantly, to allow the weakness of man to make vain any faithful effort to do his will in Christ, and every step you take in the christian way, every

work ye effect in the Messiah's name shall advance you nearer and nearer to him in whom God comes down to dwell with mortal man to bless and save his creatures. But be sure of this, that we maintain the fixedness of the heart on God in Christ, and suffer no unbelief to dissolve it. In our present state we often have to march on ways as fearful and perilous as that of the apostle on the midnight seas, and in the midst of things as terrifying as the dangers that surrounded him, and if faith fails, we sink. Amidst all these things then, let our mind's eye be fixed on him who is invisible; let us live as seeing him, and let the heart receive the empowering speech of the Messiah, "Fear not, only believe."

If there be any here, who are now experiencing the failure of their faith; who, having made some advancements in christian obedience, have allowed new terrors to affright, and new trials to subdue their faith and dim their hopes, — we entreat them remember that the power of God in Christ is ever the same, unfailing in its fulness and its energy, at all times and all sufficient to save the soul. Dwell not too much then, on opposing trials, or surrounding perils, or present distress; but think on that power divine which can be perfected in our weakness — the love divine which waters cannot quench nor floods drown — the grace that is sufficient for the soul in every need.

Trust that in the trials of every day, an all-sufficiency shall be granted for its evils. Inquire of yourselves what this meaneth, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you"?

S E R M O N I V .

SECRET PRAYER.

MATTHEW vi. 6.

BUT THOU, WHEN THOU PRAYEST, ENTER INTO THY CLOSET, AND WHEN THOU HAST SHUT THY DOOR PRAY TO THY FATHER WHICH IS IN SECRET.

SECRET PRAYER is the subject of my discourse at this time. And in the *First* place, I shall offer some remarks upon what we are to understand by secret prayer. It were an easy matter to withdraw one's-self to the retired apartment, there close the door about us, repeat the form of good words, and pass the allotted measure of time in uttering the solemn sounds in which addresses to the Deity are made, all which might be done, and still the service might not be prayer. The solemn sound might pass across the thoughtless tongue, conveying no feeling from the uncollected heart. One part of the soul might be extending itself to catch the fleeting shadows of the world, while the other was employed in framing the hal-

lowed sound, and in neither of them should be contained holiness to the Lord. Again, man may enter into his closet, but the world may follow him there. It is not in doors or walls alone to close up the entrance to the mind. There is the secret sympathy of feeling which brings absent objects to the presence chamber of the soul, and introduces them to the heart in as distinct forms, as when they stand forth to the bodily eye. This sympathy is strong between the human heart, and the objects of its attachment on earth. The images of these things will therefore often intrude upon the soul's retirement, and take up its thoughts and feelings, when they ought to be employed on God and Christ and everlasting life. It therefore may happen, that man shall overshadow his natural eye by thick darkness and close up the avenue of every sense in the secret closet, and yet the mind shall retain its secret tie to things without, and carry them along with it when he goes in to pray — and sure we ought not to say of such an one that he has withdrawn himself from the world, and is alone with his God. He is rather in the midst of society, with earthly objects flitting before him, and is holding his conversation with these, instead of his Father in heaven. To enter into the closet in the strict sense and spirit of the term, is to retire from beyond the reach of those objects which move the senses and lead the imagination to wan-

der. In the literal sense it is to go into the secret chamber, and close the door about us, that nothing new may come in upon the mind to distract the attention or discompose the feelings. And it is at the same time, to tear away from the soul those pleasures, pursuits and plans of the world, which are always following close upon the mind, and are endeavoring to obtrude themselves to steal away the thoughts. When our Lord Jesus had concerns of great importance to conduct between the Father and himself, and would go to lay his feelings before his God, he forbid even his dearest friends to go with him. "Tarry ye here, and watch, while I go yonder and pray," was the command he gave those disciples who were with him on all other occasions, and to whom he was so strongly attached, that he always wished to have them with him, saving in this one point alone; his secret prayer was between God and himself, and into this secrecy even the beloved of his heart were not allowed to enter. And what is there in this world so near to our souls, as the disciples were to their Lord. Surely then, if they were not permitted to go with him to his secret devotions, there is nothing here which ought to go with us to ours. Acquire then a command over the things which are most apt to intrude upon the mind — the familiar ideas which are ever ready to enter the chambers of the soul; use these things so that

they shall be our friends, but not our masters — keep them under such control, that they shall go or come at our bidding. And when we enter into our closets to pray, let our command to the thoughts, the feelings, the pursuits, the pleasures and the plans of the world be, “Stand ye here and watch, while we go yonder and pray,” be as positive, and as powerful too as the same command of our Saviour was to his disciples. Then let the soul retire within its hidden residence, into the inner temple of its wall of flesh, released from the presence of all disturbing things, that in the silence of solitude the spirit may converse with God who made it. We would have the heart as much abstracted from material things, as the prophet Elijah appears, when on the solitary mountain, far exalted above the world, and with his face wrapped in his mantle, he stood waiting for God.

But again, when man is thus withdrawn, and alone with his God, what shall he then do? — I reply, pour out his heart like water. Man is prone to be distrusting, and seldom or never does he so freely communicate his thoughts and feelings to his best friends, as to have nothing kept back from them. There will in almost every case be some little reservation, some peculiar thought or feeling, which he keeps concealed. The bitterness perhaps which the heart alone knoweth. Or the joy with which it is not for man to intermeddle. And

this distrusting disposition is apt to go with the human being even to the presence of his Maker. When this happens, we withhold some portion of the soul, and our prayer is not free ; perhaps this is the reason, why our prayers are often of so little avail — they are not effectual, not inwrought in the soul, not fervent enough to reach the throne of God, and all because we do not lay the heart wide open, and shew to the Almighty all that lies in its secret recess. This keeping back a portion of our souls from God in prayer, destroys the free sincerity of the service, and man then feels as if the whole were unavailing ; offending in one part, he feels guilty of all. Against these secret reservations of the soul, let us be always on our watch ; and when we enter into our closets, let us offer the free, sincere and open hearted sacrifice, which ought to flow from souls melting in repentance, and yet hoping in mercy — the prayer which ought to flow from souls conscious of impurity and yet trusting in the Father's grace — from souls feeling their imperfections, and yet holding to the great mediator, in whom God waits, and loves and bears with those who call upon him in spirit and in truth.

Secondly. We venture a few remarks upon the manner in which this service may be profitably conducted. It is not for me to prescribe to my hearers modes or forms of worship, nor in what

manner they are to conduct their religious services. Nevertheless, it may be well to offer for consideration such things as have occurred; and especially on a duty so important as secret prayer. I therefore observe, that an allotted time in every day ought to be devoted to this duty. Observe, my brethren, with how much regularity many persons divide the hours of the day: so many and such specified hours to labor in one part of their employment; so many and such hours to spend in another part of their employment; so many and such hours for their recreation, and so many and such hours for their sleep and meals; and where something of this kind is not done, there all is confusion, — hour crowds upon hour, — plan is mingled with plan, and duty mixed with duty, in such a tumultuous and hurried manner, that little or nothing is brought to pass, and whatever is done is not done as it ought to be. But let there be the time for every purpose, and the purpose will be likely to be accomplished. Then let there be a time for prayer; divide the day, so that we shall know what moments of time we may entirely devote to communion with God. If we leave ourselves to find a convenient time in the course of the day, if we trust ourselves to catch a convenient hour for this service, and have no one specified time for our private devotions, we shall very often leave this work undone — we shall defer it from

this hour to that, and from that to the next following, till the day shall be consumed, and the soul will have had no intercourse with God. Another day perhaps, and we may find the convenient season for our private prayers. But looking for the time in this manner requires a continual effort of the mind. It supposes the soul to be always on the watch to grasp its opportunities ; but a thing sought for in this way is often lost : the mind becomes weary of watching for it, — our seasons of secret prayer will of course grow wider and wider apart, until we shall forget the duty and cease from it altogether. And what shall be the state of that soul which never draws near to God in secret solitude ? How near is such an one to departing away from the living God, and how near to sin, corruption and death ? To maintain this service, then, let every day have its appointed time, and let that time be as a Sabbath to the Lord — devoted sacredly to him ; a time over which the world shall have no control. Then the habit of prayer shall be joined to the allotted season, and the soul shall be prepared at its customary moment to go in and pour itself out before the Father. Perhaps in saying this, I may be exposed to the reproach of upholding a mode and form, as essential to the religion of the heart. But, my brethren, we are creatures of habit ; everything, therefore, which habituates the mind to bring the heart before God

at special times, is of great importance ; and experience proves that our souls must be disciplined in some such way, or they will cease to look towards God. There must be the time and the place for the service of religion, and the mind must habituate itself so to seek its God. I say the time and the *place*. Are not our feelings solemnized by entering into the sanctuary ? Did not the apostles turn to the places where prayer was wont to be made ? Had not our Lord Jesus his places for prayer, in the desert and on the mountain ? Had not Daniel his time and his place of prayer, in his chamber, with those windows opened which looked towards Jerusalem, three times in the day ? And did not David make haste to the place where he was used to offer his prayers, when he had any communications to make unto God, lifting his hands seven times in the day ? And think you not that these good men found their souls affected, and their hearts exalted by their customary time and place of prayer ? And shall it not be so with us ? Yes, brethren, let us apportion our time for special intercourse with God, and have the appointed place in our houses, whither we will turn aside to pray, and feelings of awe, devotion and solemnity shall therewith become associated in our hearts. It shall be unto us as the house of God and the gate of heaven, as if God were there, as when of old he revealed his presence from between the Cherubim.

Again, in regard to the mode of the service.— There are those who think they cannot pray excepting in the stated form of words — and there surely can be no harm in their having and using the written or the printed form. If our Lord Jesus prescribed the words in which his disciples might express their feelings, and so taught them how to pray, he therein gave his sanction to this manner of performing the service. Yet would we speak a word of caution to one who uses such a form. Let him be well acquainted with the words he utters, and see if they express the sincere thought and feeling of his mind and heart. If they express more than this, let him retrench the words to which he has no correspondent feeling. If they do not express so much, let him make himself known to some one who can add to his expressions words in which his feelings may flow free. We would say still further, in the Psalms of David, in the words and in the prayers of good men of old, in those more especially of our blessed Saviour, and in those of his apostles, are terms dictated by the very spirit of God. Let these be studied, and I am bold to affirm, there can scarcely be named the thought or feeling in the human soul but may be expressed in some portion of the words which holy men have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Let these be used, if we cannot frame acceptable terms for ourselves. And

when we have thoughts or feelings to lay before God, which we know not how to clothe in language, then bring out the heart itself; the naked soul to its Maker's sight, and in fervor of spirit, feel the very presence of the Deity, searching all its secrets, and dividing between its thoughts and intents. Indeed to this point, all true prayer must come at last. To strip man of every false covering, to draw him out of all the subterfuges and secret reservations of the heart, to bring to light the hidden purpose and the concealed desire, and to lead man to feel himself all exposed to the all seeing eye, and if it so be that this takes place, it matters not whether the prayer be enveloped in language, or whether it be merely the inward exercise of soul — so that it be sincere. The form is of little consequence with him who seeth in secret and searcheth the heart of man.

Thirdly. We offer some remarks, upon the usefulness of secret prayer. Every duty of man and especially every service to God hath its own appropriate sphere; it is therefore well to consider what advantages each hath, that we may reap the benefit of them all. Thus in regard to the different modes of prayer. We bless God, that he brings us together in the sanctuary, and we praise his name for the consolations and the improvements we derive from this social service. And yet when here, we can offer no more than general

prayers ; they must be so comprehensive, that all if they choose may join in them ; and how often they fail of expressing the peculiar feelings of individual souls, ye well know. "It did not reach my case," is the frequent remark of the disappointed heart, which testifies that all the purposes of prayer have not been answered. In the assembly of the people, there are souls in whom repentance is just beginning, there are souls who are just rising from darkness of spirit to lay their claim to the mercy of God in Christ ; there are souls in darkness and souls in light ; souls in rending trials, and souls walking in joy ; there are souls in suffering and at rest. In the public congregation, there are all the modes in which human beings desire and abhor, hope or fear, doubt or confide, sorrow or rejoice. In addition to these there is the learned Christian, who discerns the presence and the agency of God, in states, acts and ways, in which the unlearned Christian has no perception of him — and there are all the diversities of operations of the same spirit that is in man. It is impossible that the public prayer of the temple should meet all these things. And how is this in family devotions ? This service brings us one step nearer to our own selves. There we may make mention of friends who are not mentioned in the sanctuary. There too knowing each other's peculiar states, we may lay their

cases before God with more freedom. There addresses on domestic and more familiar concerns may be made to the common parent, and favors may be sought, such as we should not call on the assembled multitude to join in imploring for us. And yet even in this service how much is left behind. Even here the heart hath its own joys and its own griefs. Is it too much to ask whether one half the soul has ever been fully drawn out in the public or the family devotion? But in secret prayer, what is there to hinder the free thought and free feeling from flowing out in sincere and open hearted prayer. There, there is no fear of man to bring a snare; sins may be confessed which the world knows not, neither ought to know — favors of providence and favors of grace may be acknowledged, which must otherwise remain without thanks — blessings may be implored, whatsoever the heart desireth, and friends, brethren and children, each by each, may be named, with prayers for them according as we know they need. The mind enlarged with knowledge and enlightened in wisdom may then take comprehensive views of the Creator, and rise with holy joy to contemplate the God whose works are so great and manifold and who in wisdom hath made them all — while the unlettered Christian may learn to feel his God, the repository of all his heart, the object of his confidence and the source of his joy. In the

vast multitude of soul concerns how many there are which must remain forever lurking in the heart, embittering its comforts and destroying its peace, were it not for the secret prayer, in which we may lay them before our Maker, and experience the blessing that cometh from free confession — the elevation of the soul, the union of the heart with Christ, the constant sense of the Creator's presence, which descends upon the heart, that maintains itself open to his inspection and to the influence of his grace.

Again, secret prayer, freely and sincerely offered, keeps the mind alive to see and to know the testimonies of God's will. The soul that sincerely prays to be conformed to the moral image of the Lord Jesus Christ, shall stand ready to receive every revelation of his person, character and spirit. But these revelations God is always making by his word and by his spirit, and he who waits for them cannot but receive them from time to time, and so he shall be daily enlightened by new portions of the wisdom which, coming from above, is profitable to direct.

Again, secret prayer is useful to form us to a proper spirit, and to lead us to perform our duties one towards another. We suppose the secret prayer to be sincere; but in sincere prayer, the Christian experiences a certain sense of the divine audience, a consciousness that his prayer is heard

and answered, and unless this sense of the answer to prayer, this access to the Deity be experienced, the greater part of the consolation expected from the service is lost. Suppose then, the Christian who has been offended with his brother or neighbor, and has treasured up the offence, and contemplate such an one in his secret retirement engaged in prayer : his own sins rise on his mind and he prays for pardon ; but the words of Christ shine on his mind and offer themselves to his use ; “ Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ; ” at once they bring before him those who have offended him, or done him wrong, and if he do not sincerely forgive them, his mind shall stop short in his course of prayer, however free, however sincere, however consoling his service was before, all shall now stop. The words of Christ, forgive as we forgive, shall lay like a stumbling block in the way of his soul. If he do not freely forgive, he cannot sincerely pray to be forgiven. If in this state he do actually compel himself to utter the Master’s words — still without forgiving from his heart, he shall find no sense of forgiveness himself. And the very words of Christ, “ Go thy way, thy sins be forgiven thee,” shall pass off powerlessly, and his heart shall sink in grief. But such a state of things cannot long abide with the real Christian. Devoid of consolation and peace of mind, he must and will forgive in his own soul, whether he express

his forgiveness or not. Take another case, — suppose in his imperfection the Christian has wronged any man in property, reputation, or comfort — or is laying a plan to wrong him. He afterwards goes to his secret prayers, and prepares to call upon God to guide him in the way of righteousness. His sin which he hath sinned, or is preparing to sin, is like a rock upon the door of his mind, forbidding his prayer to go out, and then his soul must be as one imprisoned in darkness till he willingly abjures his iniquity. Then, and not till then, can he freely pray, and enjoy his intercourse with heaven. But if he has been in the habit of sincere prayer and has received consolation from it, how long, think you, will he be willing to remain without it? The same may be said of any other mode of sin, or imperfection in which when known to be wrong, if man willingly continue, he shall find none of the deep and holy satisfactions of prayer, and withholding these consolations of believing, forbidding the access of the soul to God, is one of the principal means the Father uses, to purify his children's souls, and make them holy, harmless and undefiled. Whence the remark made by wiser men than we, “that man must either leave off sinning, or he must leave off praying sincerely.”

Finally, we remark, that secret prayer brings the soul home and keeps it near to God. The man who enters his appointed place at his ap-

pointed hours, to expose his heart freely before God, acquires the habit of feeling God to be continually present. The Lord is set constantly before him, and he lives in the very shadow of the Highest. Of course he enjoys the consolations of God; his heart verily finds the Father to be a being who heareth prayer, his confidence increases every day — he receives the quickening impulse of God's spirit, the instructing and the animating influence of his word. The power of godliness takes deeper hold upon his heart, and living above the world, he holds his citizenship in the city of the blessed God, and so his calling and election are made sure. Did ever a repenting soul find peace, till he could pour out his heart before the God against whom he had deeply revolted, and did ever man receive the renewing power of God, till he humbled his soul and sought it in prayer? Then, brethren, let us not neglect this mode of seeking God. The Lord Jesus hath commanded it with as much authority as he hath commanded us to repent. The Father hath required it, as one of the greatest means for purifying the heart and the life; and the salvation of our souls depends much under God, upon our cordial prayers. Neither should we undervalue any other mode of divine service. If we worship in the temple sincerely, we do well; if we worship sincerely in our families, we do well; but still we must say, "These

ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." Yea, do not our own hearts cry out for nearer intercourse with our Maker? Do we not wish to get nearer to our God than we ever do in the sanctuary or the family? Then let us measure off our time and assign our place for this enjoyment so highly useful. And above all things, let us be sincere in the service — keep nothing back from God; we only injure ourselves by so doing; but let the whole heart go free as water. And let us no longer neglect the positive injunction of our Lord; "Enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy doors about thee, pray unto thy Father which seest in secret," for either in our own joy, or in our own advancement in godliness or in the power of grace upon the heart, we shall find the fulfilment of the promise, "thy Father who seest in secret shall reward thee openly."

SERMON V.

MARY AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

LUKE x. 39.

SHE HAD A SISTER CALLED MARY, WHICH ALSO SAT AT JESUS' FEET AND HEARD HIS WORD.

MARY sitting at the feet of Jesus affords a pleasing and useful subject of contemplation. It appears that her state, at that time, was so highly acceptable in our Lord's estimation, that he blessed her with an open heart, and affirmed that she had chosen that good part which should not be taken away from her. A freewill blessing from the Son of Man is something of too much consequence to pass by unnoticed, and it may, perhaps, be of service to us to inquire into the reasons which called forth this voluntary commendation on her, and such of these as we can ascertain from the circumstances of the case, we propose now to state. In doing this, the first thing we notice is her humility. "She sat at his feet." In the common language of that age, the pupils of any particular teacher, were said

to be brought up at the feet of that teacher ; a proverb which probably arose from the arrangement of their schools, in which it was common for the teacher to sit upon an elevated seat, while the pupils were ranged on circular seats below, something after the manner of our modern lecture rooms. From this, it was customary to say of any one who was educated in the school of any particular master, that he was brought up at the feet of that master ; as St Paul, who had been educated in the school of Gamaliel, said that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. To say, therefore, that Mary sat at Jesus' feet, is the same as saying that she took the lowly place of a disciple, or pupil, meaning to surrender her faith to him, and desirous of receiving from him the true doctrine of eternal life. Now the voluntarily assuming the place of a disciple implies a deep humility of heart. It evinces an entire confidence in her great instructor, and but little confidence in herself, and shews that while she rendered up to him her implicit faith, she was earnest to hear, embrace and profit by his instructions ; and with this confidence and desire she seated herself at his feet, where she might receive his words of wisdom and power. This humility of mind is essentially requisite to all true and advancing discipleship. One who has all confidence in his own powers and attainments, will never go to the feet of another,

and there silent sit to gather wisdom, however well qualified the instructor may be. We must bring with us to our master, a humble, docile, and submissive spirit, if we expect to derive benefit from his words, for in any other spirit we are apt to cavil at his doctrines and pervert his sayings, but shall never treasure up his truths for present satisfaction or future profit. It is however a sad misfortune of the present age, that the humility essential to the disciple of Christ is often esteemed as a mark of weakness of mind. There are those, who are well pleased with the name of wise men, and speak approvingly of the duty and necessity of serving God in the abstract, according to such views of him, as by our own intellectual powers we may acquire, but affirm, that man possesses, every one in himself, powers of mind sufficient for his own guidance, and therefore he has no need of learning the truths from any master, not even of being the disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. But this mode of reasoning goes far towards reproaching the Supreme Being. If God had not seen how much we needed such a teacher, he would not have sent us one. And inasmuch as he has done this, it savors much of unjustifiable pride, for a worm of the dust to resist the invitation of God, and going about to frame his own religion, to reject the master whom God hath sent to teach that religion which is acceptable to him. This were saying that we, who are of yesterday, and are confined to a nar-

row portion of a narrow world, know better what we need than the God whose years are eternal, whose wisdom is unsearchable, and whose presence fills immensity. Such was not the reasoning of Mary when she placed herself at Jesus' feet, and such never ought to be the reasoning of any one who seeks the favor and friendship of the Most High. Be it rather our part to hear what God hath spoken concerning Jesus of Nazareth on the day of his baptism; "Lo, my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him," and trusting this voice from on high, accept the Messiah as our own personal Master and Teacher come from God, and seat ourselves at his feet, as his true and established disciples, with all humility of mind; meaning to submit our faith to his doctrines, our lives to his precepts, and our hopes to his promises. While it is a mark of weakness of mind to surrender our faith to a fallible instructor, who is as liable to err as we ourselves, it, contrariwise, evinces a greatness of mind to deny ourselves, and surrender our faith to an infallible Master, whom God himself has anointed with wisdom to enlighten and power to save. Achieve this victory over the selfish principle, and in greatness of mind surrender our faith to him unto whom our Creator commands us to go, and be like Mary sitting at his feet.

The second particular we notice in regard to her, is her attention; "She heard his word." It

was not sufficient for her that she had the Redeemer in the house—that she could take her station at his feet—that she could listen to the pleasant sounds of his voice, and experience the influence of his presence, to soothe, and cheer her heart; nor even was it sufficient that she could realize that sense of safety, which would result from her being so near to the holy one of God. These were great honors and favors, for which a humble and pious mind would be devoutly thankful, as she undoubtedly was. But then her desire extended much farther than this; she was hungering and thirsting after truth; the truth which could enlighten her mind in regard to God, duty, death and eternity. Truths relating to these and kindred matters she wanted to know, and having now at hand the instructor whom God had filled with wisdom and knowledge, she listened with all attention to his word, that she might receive and treasure up the truths he taught, able to make her wise unto eternal salvation. A good purpose was this, and wisely and faithfully pursued, but alas, we fear a very different object from that of many who in modern times think of going unto Christ, and profess to be his people. Behold one, for instance, grasping at Jesus, merely because he is believed to be a saviour from hell, trusting him for this object, and caring little or nothing whether the mind be filled with his truths or not. Be-

hold others approaching unto Jesus, because they think that in some mystical manner, he can render God complacent to their crimes, and more forgiving to their offences than he would otherwise be. But as to profiting by his truths, it forms no part of their religious policy. See some again, laying hold on Christ, because they believe that having actually paid their debts to the Supreme Being, he has bought them out of the hands of divine justice; and glad to be delivered from God, they have no great desires for the truth which could make them free from sin and death. Some even among the Jews would go and hear, that they might entangle him in his talk, even as some in modern times search into his religion to find food for a cavilling or querulous spirit. And some too would inquire as to his terms of salvation, and, hearing them, efface the remembrance as soon as possible, from hearts too much devoted to earth and self and sin, to relish such soul humbling and converting doctrines. There are many other dispositions with which, and many other objects for which, human beings come to the Son of Man, without a true desire to be instructed in the truth of God, or enlightened in the wisdom of heaven by him. With such dispositions, think you it is possible for man to receive in useful acceptance any part of the gracious message which Christ has brought to us from God? Instruction to such

minds is no better than a trace made upon the sea, effaced as soon as drawn; or like a seal impressed on an elastic substance, which re-assumes its original shape as soon as the signet is removed. And if our minds are vacant of true spiritual knowledge, or void of desire to obtain it, of what avail to our peace, power, or consolation is it, that we keep the outward place of disciples of Jesus, or that, from time to time, his word floats over our outward ear. He came to bear witness to the truth. To this end, he asserts, he was born, and for this cause came he into the world; and the truth, to which he bears witness, is of that momentous kind, which relates to the salvation and eternal welfare of the soul. But if we would have it benefit our souls, we must give it the attention it deserves, and must approach the Son of Man with such intensity of desire, that we may gain instruction out of his inmost mind, and replenish our souls with the truth as it is in Jesus. I am well aware that the avocations of men in this life are numerous; the claims of earth and its affairs upon the attention of every one are many and various; and some have gone so far as to assert that they have no time to devote to making acquaintance with the spiritual truths of Christ. Such an excuse, however, comes with an ill grace from one who acknowledges the one great truth of his own immortality; in this single confession, that he

shall live forever, he acknowledges that the soul alone is the man, and yet is pleading his regard for the meat that perisheth, as a reason for neglecting to make provision for that portion of his nature which endures forever and ever. The immortal soul ought not to be thus trifled with; seek and obtain what we may of this world's goods, and in a little while, it either takes to itself wings and flies away; or we, on wings of spirit, fly away from it, and may seek through eternity in vain, and never see it more. But receive and treasure up the truths of God by Christ in the heart, and these are as eternal as the soul itself. Truths which shall ever retain their power to enlighten the mind and console the heart, though everything external vanish away; and if immortal beings, in the present world, are so occupied in temporary affairs, that they want time to acquaint themselves with the truths of God by Christ, then let them obey the command of the Creator, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Labor, if need be, throughout the six days allotted to this necessary purpose, and God grant a sufficiency of the fruits of such labor for subsistence, comfort and enjoyment; but let the seventh be a true Sabbath, devoted to religion. On these days, cast the world away from the mind, and use these hours and Sabbath opportunities to acquaint ourselves with the words of eternal life. Let the Sabbath

day always speak to our souls, at its earliest dawn, and hail us as eternal beings, and, on these days, let us seek the knowledge of eternal truth. The opportunities of Mary were few; ours return on every seventh portion of our time, and if she, with her few opportunities, could yet choose the good part, we, with our weekly returning seasons of inquiry and prayers, may well hope that our choice may also be established in that which is good, if we will only have humility enough to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word.

Thirdly. We remark concerning Mary, as a particular of great importance, that she went to Jesus himself to be instructed; she sat at his feet. He was her chosen master, and while to no other teacher would she submit her faith, to him she surrendered her heart with implicit confidence. There were his elected disciples in the house, men who had long been walking with him, and receiving instruction from his mouth; it were quite as easy for her to have gone to them, and persuaded them to have taught her. But these, she was well aware, might err. The truth, in them, had passed one grade farther from its eternal source, and had become mingled in its way with too many of the corruptions of earth itself; whereas, in Jesus himself, the truth existed as it flowed from God, and she determined to draw living water out of the very well of salvation, which the Almighty had

opened. Here she knew there was no danger of error ; but every word he spoke she might treasure up as sacred truth. And much, very much, we think, is lost to the cause of truth and goodness by pursuing a different course of conduct.— Contemplate the christian world, as it is divided into numerous sects and parties ; and behold, how the very names, by which they are called, bear witness that these divisions result from receiving the truth at second hand, instead of going to the Master himself to learn it. This course of things commenced in the earliest ages of Christianity, when Paul, Cephas and Apollos were made leaders of sects, by such as chose them for their favorite instructors, instead of going in full to the Master alone. In modern days, look on which side you will, and you hear Christians calling themselves, one a disciple of Calvin, and another of Arminius — one proclaiming his creed as that of Athanasius, another that of Socinius, and another of Arius — one is the follower of Hopkins, another of Wesley, another of Whitefield, and another of Priestley ; besides a host of sects, which it were almost impossible to name. 'The time was when the different sects and parties in the christian church persecuted each other, with more intense animosity, than ever the heathen persecuted the whole body of Christians. And, in these latter days, though persecution in the same sense is

dead, still too much of the spirit remains.— My mind has sometimes indulged imaginations of what thoughts might pass the mind of a stranger spirit, if one from some far distant sphere should visit our earth, enter into the churches of the different sects, witness the spreading of their several communion tables, and notice the guards drawn round the several scenes of this holy service, to forbid the approach of those which one or the other had severally styled heretics.— He could scarcely conceive that these professed one common religion, and all called themselves Christians. Or, if he heard them call themselves so, he must believe that there had been many Christs, and that none of them had taught the whole to love one another. I cannot help thinking that much animosity might be done away, many errors effaced from the mind, much wrong feeling from the heart, and much wrong practice expunged from the life, were we all to follow the example of Mary, and, passing by every other teacher, go directly to the Master himself, seek truth out of his mind alone, and embrace nothing but what we perceive in him. In this pursuit, I would pass by even Paul and James and Peter and John, and press the inquiry home to him who came direct from God, and be never satisfied that anything relating to religion is eternal truth, till I could see it clear in my Master's own mind. It is

true, we cannot now set open our doors, invite the man Christ Jesus to come in, and teach us, while sitting by our firesides or at our tables; nor can we inquire of him in the streets; but then we have his words recorded for our use; we may carry the volume of his truth wherever we go; may have it lying on every seat and every shelf in our houses, and containing, as it does, the mind of Christ, we will go and inquire of him there and be satisfied at the spring of living water itself. We will use the writings of men to elucidate what time may have rendered obscure, and explain what may be difficult, but the mind of the Master is the main object, and we will not rest on anything short of it. There the great highway to heaven is as plain as the way of the sun in the firmament, and we will not forsake it to wander in by-paths of human invention.

Fourthly. There remains one other particular to be noticed concerning Mary at the feet of Jesus, and that is her choice — she chose the good part. She had placed herself at the feet of an infallible instructor in the fulness of confidence — she had listened with attention to his words as he explained the good and evil part, and having heard and learned to her satisfaction, she chose that which she knew to be good — a part, which her Master promised should never be taken away from her — a part which we verily believe she is now inheriting in

that eternal state, where imperfection never clouds the view, nor diminishes the full enjoyment of the soul. This is a particular of much importance. We often hear the words of our Lord; are entirely satisfied that this or that which he teaches is the truth, and then make no choice to embrace it as our truth, and it passes off from a mind that makes no effort to retain it. We hear a precept for practice, either in morality or religion; we believe it to be a command of our Master in spirit and in truth, and make no choice to obey it — the impression of duty may be powerful for a time, but it soon fades from the heart, which refuses to make it perfect by works, and the dismembered soul faints and sinks in the consciousness of disobedience. We read a threat, and believe that he uttered it, but make no choice to flee from the wretchedness it reveals — we read a promise and have no doubt of its truth; but make no choice to embrace it as our own. Hell, of course, loses its terrors to the mind; Heaven its brightness — moral virtue loses its beauty, and religion its mild anointing influence to hearts that make no choice. And this is one great reason why duty is so powerless in many minds, and has so little influence upon our hearts and lives, because we make no choice, and exert no decision of mind to embrace what we see to be true, and practise what our Master commands. Far different appears to have been the condition of

her whom Jesus commends. When he taught, she chose the truth — and when he revealed the duties of the Christian, she chose to acknowledge the master and practise his precepts. And this, notwithstanding her choice of Christ subjected her to many evils and exposed her to much tribulation and sorrow and persecution. She knew that the end was everlasting life, and earthly afflictions were nothing more than thorns strewn in the way that leads to eternal peace; and attached, in all completeness, to her anointed Lord, her heart was fixed to follow his fortunes, embrace his truths, and keep his precepts, as God should give her power. Her example is a good one, and we do well to follow it.

The same great Master at whose feet she sat, God hath exalted to be Lord, both of the dead and the living. Lord of human souls, in this and other worlds, him let us choose, or, having chosen, retain for our Lord, and, with a faith unwavering, a humility that seeks instruction, place and keep ourselves at his feet, conscious that we are in the school of one, whose mind is truth itself, and whose heart's desire it is that his disciples should embrace and relish it, and be made free by its power. — His word let us hear. It is the expression of the mind of one, who desires nothing better, than that we should tread in the path which leads to his father and our father, his God and our God. To

his own personal instructions let us resort to calm our doubts, satisfy our inquiries, and guide our hearts and lives. And be not of a wavering or a doubtful mind — neither ashamed of him nor of his cross, but while we are travelling on to the world, into which he has preceded us, let all our way be trod in his acknowledged footsteps, and we may trust the God who sent him, to maintain, eternally, the lot which we have chosen in time, with his beloved Son in whom his soul is well pleased.

SERMON VI.

THE DEATH OF ADAMS AND JEFFERSON.*

2 SAMUEL, iii. 38.

KNOW YE NOT THAT THERE IS A PRINCE AND A
GREAT MAN FALLEN THIS DAY IN ISRAEL ?

REMARKABLE events ought, at proper times, to form subjects of our Sabbath meditations ; and so remarkable an event as the death of two of the great leaders of our country taking place on the birth-day of our nation, is one that calls forth thoughts and feelings that well become the house of God and the Sabbath which was made for man. It is my purpose, therefore, at the present time to address you on this subject. And in doing this, we remark in the *First* place, that such an event carries the mind back to the age in which these men were born, — and recalls the kindred minds, which were associated with them, during the eventful scenes of their earthly course. It may be well perhaps, here, to set forth some dates, which if you can lay up in your memories may help to render

* Preached at Sandwich, July 17, 1826.

the rest of our address more plain. In recalling the public associates of these men, we find, that Washington was born in 1732, Samuel Adams in 1722, John Adams in 1736, Thomas Jefferson in 1743, John Hancock in 1737 — and, so far as I can ascertain, by much the greatest number of those who signed the Declaration of Independence and their associates in public life, were born between the years 1720 and 1745. Franklin and a few others were men of a rather earlier date, in birth, but yet did not shew forth as eminent men, till about the same period with the rest. The term of time, therefore, contained between the years 1720 and 1745, may be taken as the period which produced the prominent characters who ruled the destinies of our country during the tumultuous season in which our Independence was achieved. One hundred years ago then, and the fourth of a century then commencing, and the men whom our hearts have delighted to honor, the respected, beloved and trusted ones of our land, were just beginning their existence, or imbibing those exalted principles and feelings, which they afterwards manifested in the day of their country's need, and came with efficiency and power to her effectual aid against the mighty. It would almost seem as if providence had been keeping these souls unborn behind his throne, till he saw the hours when their earthly services would

be needed ; and sent them forth to human existence all within that one short period of time ; that, rising at once in the world, they might be found ready to associate together in the day of public peril, and bring their various powers to the common service, at a time when the public exigency required a collected host of uncommon men. The birth, during that period, of so many men of such extraordinary powers, is an event which perhaps is not sufficiently thought of ; but it ought to be regarded as the interposition of a wise and good providence, foreseeing the peril, and providing for the necessities of a favored land, men wise in council, stern in decision, and mighty in the field. Neither were they a few selected ones from among many millions. The population of our country at the period of their birth amounted to somewhere between one and two millions ; much nearer, we think, to one than two. These men therefore, comparatively speaking, were many, existing among a few, and we will not fail to bless the God of nations, who gave birth among our then small population to so many of those whom he had chosen from the foundation of the world, to bring to pass his magnificent plans for the welfare of man.

Secondly. The event we notice, carries our minds back to the period when these men, with their associates, assumed the high responsibility of proclaiming their country a free and independent

nation. We, of the present generation, are much in the habit of thinking that the separation of our country from Great Britain took place only in consequence of the tyrannical measures of that government during a few years preceding the Revolution. It ought to be considered, that the causes which produced this separation, had been in operation for more than a hundred years. A system of oppression was begun by that country in the passing of the Navigation Act in 1660; intended to render these colonies subservient to the power, aggrandizement, and wealth of the mother country. Under the Navigation Act, and others in addition to it, many vexatious restrictions were imposed upon the trade of the colonies, and many exclusive privileges granted to British ships and British merchants; all tending to keep the colonies in a state of depression, and make them in every respect dependent on the parent country. This system, with others of the same class, was pursued for a hundred years; and every year increased the irritation of the public mind, till our people were exasperated beyond longer endurance. The truth is, that our fathers were Englishmen; conscious of Englishmen's rights, and feeling themselves as standing upon equal ground with all other citizens of the British Empire. They claimed the right of equal privileges with all other Englishmen. They had no wish to be separated from Great Britain;

it was the land of their fathers ; the country from which they had derived their choicest institutions — their forms of government — their system of education — their principles of religion, all that was dear to them as men and Christians, they had brought from England ; and though the authorities there had at times oppressed and persecuted them, still the nation itself was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh ; and could they have had their choice they would have remained in the same family connexion forever. But they claimed, as they ought, equal rights in the house, and would not suffer themselves to be treated as servants, when they knew that their true relation was that of children. The public authorities there, however, considered the matter in a very different light. Their language to America seem much like this : Colonies you are, and colonies you shall be. We mean to extract from you, seamen for our navy, food for our support, salaries for our favorites, honors for our princes, and money for our treasury. But equal rights with ourselves we do not mean to grant you ; on the contrary, we maintain our right to bind and tax you in all cases whatever. This was the language of the administration ; but not of the nation. The war against the colonies we believe was always unpopular in Great Britain, and the wisdom of the best of the country foresaw and deprecated the issue, and pleaded for

conciliation in the powerful eloquence of Chatham, Burke, and their associates, but all in vain. The administration still pursued their harsh measures, and accumulated oppression on oppression, — till resistance broke out of itself. Then parliament proclaimed that a rebellion existed in Massachusetts; then a body of troops was sent to extinguish it — the mere existence of foreign soldiers among us exasperated people's minds, and made them ready to burst forth in new resistance to the measures of government; on every side was jealousy, suspicion, and readiness for collision. — The foreign soldiers, among an exasperated people, were like those chemical substances which when mingled together remain quiescent for a time, but are ready to explode with violence at the first agitating concussion. This concussion at last took place, and struck out the flames of Lexington, Concord and Bunker's Hill, — consuming the last bonds of attachment to the British government. A congress of deputies from the several colonies assembled, and after a year passed in fruitless efforts to effect a reconciliation upon the common ground of Englishmen's rights, they at last resolved to govern themselves in their own way, and put forth in solemn form, that splendid and powerful instrument, in which they declare all political connexion between this country and Great Britain, forever dissolved, and that these

colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.

Now it becomes us well to recall the circumstances in which this declaration was made. The Congress, at that day, was but little more than an advising body; their votes could bind nothing and loose nothing, any farther than the several states chose to carry those votes into effect. The population of between two and three millions only, was scattered over an immense territory, with one thousand miles of sea coast exposed to the attack and ravage of the military and naval forces of one of the mightiest powers on the earth. In the rear was a savage adversary, ready to be stirred up to all manner of malice, to every bloody and horrid deed. What was called the army was little better than a rude and hasty gathering of militia, poorly disciplined, miserably clad, and most inefficiently armed. The whole order of things, in the resistance of the enemy, was so little systematized, that even at this day it cannot be satisfactorily determined who commanded in the memorable battle of Bunker's Hill, and, at Lexington and Concord, it is only known that troop after troop appeared to join in the attack; as town after town sent forth its armed array — and that the enemy, in their retreat, beheld the hills by the side of their march bristling in succession with new musketry and flashing with unexpected fires, as a Brooks, or a now forgotten

name poured over them his hurried volunteers to execute the office of the avenger of blood. In short, the state of the country was so disorganized, so void of system, and so little true authority was lodged in any man or body of men, that Congress, when they proclaimed the country an independent nation, had nothing to rely upon to maintain them in the contest, under God and a good conscience, but the spirit of the people. With this spirit they were well acquainted; they believed that it was one which would not fail in the day of trial. The character of the country was their main dependence, and though the state of things would have made ordinary minds quail and tremble at the prospect; yet this Congress was composed of no ordinary men; Hancock was at its head — the Adamses, Jefferson and Franklin, with other kindred souls, were among its members, and they fearlessly exposed themselves to all the storms of Britain's wrath, and to all the dangers of a thousand causes through which the struggle might come to nought, assumed the ground which made us a nation, and published the daring act, which at once changed the whole character of the contest, and is the legitimate source of the success of the revolution and of our national prosperity to the present time. "The 4th of July, 1776," said John Adams, fifty years ago, in a letter written to a friend on the 5th of July, 1776, "the 4th of July,

1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward, forever. You will think me," he continues, "transported with enthusiasm; but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure, to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these states; yet through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory; I can see that the end is worth more than all the means, and that posterity will triumph, though you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not." This was fifty years ago, the prophecy of a mighty mind; a mind which desired to see our day, and saw it and was glad: the prophecy has been fulfilled in all its particulars, — the toil, the blood, the treasure, required to maintain the Declaration were devoted, and expended during the tumultuous periods of the revolutionary war. But never, in the darkest season of the nation's trial; never, amidst the reverses of our arms, the failure of negotiations, the invasions of our territory, the destruction of commerce, nor even amongst the accumulated evils which attended the

conflict, did Adams, Jefferson nor any of their associates rue the day, in which they set their hands to the Declaration of Independence. Its annual return was always hailed by them with gladness of heart, and to the last moment of their lives, it was "a great and a glorious day."

Thirdly. The event we notice, leads us to contemplate some of the subsequent events and courses of things which followed the Declaration of Independence, and in which these great men were associated. The country, all as one, was now called to meet the war, and the whole energies of the people were put in requisition to sustain the struggle, and they who had been foremost in asserting our national existence were of course expected to be foremost in maintaining it. But neither Adams nor Jefferson were warriors. The task of marshalling, disciplining and leading the army to victory was committed to one superior to them both, and these two sought not the high distinction of arms, — their talents were peculiar to the council, to negotiation, to the business of diplomacy, and in these walks to which they were conscious of their fitness, they readily devoted themselves. Of Mr Adams, it has been sometimes said that he was a man chiefly of brilliant imagination, and persuasive eloquence, but not of much sober calculation — had this been the case, we should have thought he would have been de-

puted to negotiate with the court of France, where brilliance, wit and fancy would have been like to prevail more than sober reasoning. But far otherwise; to Mr Adams was committed the chief management of the negotiation with Holland. It was not brilliancy, eloquence, or appeal to the feelings which moved the phlegmatic Dutchman to unlock his coffers and lend his money to the nation. It was mere force of argument, solid calculation, which proved beyond a doubt that the contest must issue in our national success; it was this which effected the Dutch loan at a season when imagination alone would have been only appalled at the prospect so gloomy in the then present hour. This circumstance alone is sufficient to demonstrate the powers of Mr Adams's mind. We scarcely think the man could be found who would have thought of, and brought together so many solid facts, and have deduced such certain consequences from them as he did in his negotiations with the minister of Holland, which compelled even the calculating Dutchman to see a certain prospect of gain in advancing funds to a nation apparently so poor, and in a cause at that period apparently so hopeless. It fell also to Mr Adams's lot to be one among the negotiators of the treaty of peace, which ratified the independence of the country, which he had proclaimed seven years before. The Declaration of Independence itself

was chiefly the work of Mr Jefferson; he carried the pen of a ready writer, and in association with Mr Adams and Roger Sherman, produced this instrument, which is now read with so much applause on the returning birth-day of our country. It must have been a proud day to both these men, when Great Britain herself acceded to the act which they had first subscribed; and when the work they had wrought under glooms and clouds and thick darkness, was now acknowledged, by their adversary herself, to be just, equitable and true, in the broad light of wisdom's glory, and the splendor of the sun of righteousness. In after years, you well know, it fell to the lot of each to stand in turn at the head of the nation — to guide the youth of the country at whose birth they had aided, and whose cradle they had rocked, and lead on towards manhood the nation whose adolescence they had guarded. You also are too well aware of the unhappy collisions which separated these men from each other, and in truth wrought wretched divisions in almost every household in the land. This subject is too painful to recall in special, and passing it by, we remark now,

Fourthly. That these men lived sufficiently long, to witness the death of the slanderous reports which had been circulated concerning them, and to witness the good effects of the wise and just public measures they had advocated and en-

forced. Seen through the vista of many years, how different do many of their measures appear from what they once did. Time has mellowed the colors of what once seemed like caricature, and dulled the edge of what once appeared like acrimony, and, at this distant period, we can look back, without enmity, on things which we once hated, and, without fondness, on things which we once loved. The malice once existing against Mr Adams for his increase of the navy and organization of the army, has long since dissolved; while the navy which was so much opposed, has in fact fought itself into public favor. The ridicule once levelled against Mr Jefferson for his gunboats and torpedoes seems now like a dream when man awaketh. I will here add a thought which has often been in my mind, and which I cannot help believing to be true. Mr Jefferson was so decidedly a man of peace that he abhorred everything which looked like war — still a war spirit existed in many parts of the nation, which he was unable to extinguish — a spirit which kept calling for new armies and new ships, and measures of a warlike character. This spirit, which he could not quench, he suffered to evaporate by means of the harmless and not very expensive recreation of the gunboat system, and in my own mind, I have often seen this philosophic man, smiling in the secret of his spirit, at the innocent

substitute, by which he had for a time beguiled the ferocity of the spirit of war, and restrained the wrath, which wanted to carry on a more dangerous and destructive game. And then again his purchase of Louisiana, which once was humorously called an immense land speculation, is every day proving itself a blessing to the country for which it was bought. They were both great men, but each was great in his own way; Mr Adams appears to have possessed more sternness of mind, more vigor of intellect, and a more decisive spirit of conquering. Mr Jefferson more versatility of talent, a more philosophizing disposition, and a spirit of peace. The first would rather engage in war, than negotiate for a right—the last would remonstrate against injustice, and negotiate with all wisdom and truth, but would rather suffer much than resort to the unprofitable contest of which could do the other most harm. Their public measures were, of course, marked by their individual peculiarities, and, while many projects of each are already forgotten, still many things proposed and enforced by each are now in successful operation, and they lived each to witness many of their doings blessed, which once were received with marks of pointed disapprobation, while themselves were doubtless willing to forget many which once their hearts clung to with the fondness of a parent to her sickly child.

It is also worthy of remark, that they lived to bury all personal enmity towards each other. Chiefs as they were of the rival parties which sprung up in the younger days of our country, it must needs be that feelings of rivalry and personal animosity must have existed, and probably with some bitterness between them; and yet in their old age we find them exchanging letters of affectionate kindness and true good will, helping each other to take leave of earth with its affairs, and drawing together, in union, for the service of God, in another and a better country, even a heavenly. In religion, they were both Unitarians; whether they were both Unitarian Christians, it is not for me to say. Mr Adams, however, if I am rightly informed, was a professor of the christian religion, and a well known supporter of the doctrine of one only God, and one Lord Jesus, the Christ whom he hath sent. Mr Jefferson was an equal supporter of the doctrine of one only God, but I have never seen anything of his that proves his belief in Jesus as the Christ. Nevertheless, his well known principles of peace, his pacific public policy, his mild domestic virtues, his general philanthropy, and his written attestations, demonstrate a deep attachment to the religion and the person of the prince of peace, who assures us that he who is not against us is for us, and beyond this we leave all things with God. Peace to the spirits

of them both. Their bodies are returned to the earth from which they were taken, their souls to the God that gave them ; and the country they so powerfully helped to save, will long retain the memory, while she enjoys the benefit of their wisdom and reflects the glory of their greatness.

It is not among the least, though it now falls among the last of our meditations, that after witnessing through fifty years the progressive development of the great principle established in the Declaration of Independence, after having stood tottering for years on the borders of another world, they should hand in hand take leave of earth and their country amidst the celebrations of their country's birth, and within an hour or two of the moment, when, half a century before, they had by a solemn act proclaimed that country free. It is a coincidence of events that ought never to be forgotten. Year after year, they had watched the annual approaches of this anniversary with feelings which we of a later generation know not how to estimate — had listened with remembrance, enjoyment and hope to the ringing of bells, and the firing of cannon, the shouts of joy, the songs of praise, the eloquent orator, and the voice of them that were bringing the sacrifices of thanksgiving to the house of the Lord, and memory and prophecy combined to bless them on each returning day, and now, that the half of a century was

passed, when both could witness the peace, the prosperity, the exalted glory and spreading happiness of the country, for whose very existence they then had pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, — now that one of them could see his own son, sitting the chosen chief among twelve millions of free and happy people : when the retrospect of days gone by presented only views of perils happily past, and trials overcome ; when the view round about discovered evidences of heaven's best blessings descending in rich abundance on the land, and the prospect of the future was bursting forth in new glories and new sources of prosperity ; when all events seemed rounded to an orb, and the circle of the years was full, their spirits seemed to have chosen this happy hour to bid farewell to earth, and carry their ripened powers, and expanded faculties to the service of their Creator in yet happier and better worlds. It was as if they were each exclaiming, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Yea, like the transition of Elijah in resplendent glory to the high kingdom of his God — and God grant that a double portion of their spirit may rest on those that come after them. Even on us, whether in private or in public life. These were comparatively young men, when they bore so conspicuous a part in achieving the liberties of our country — one

was no more than forty, and the other but thirtythree years old,—when standing before the world, they proclaimed as with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, the freedom of their land. How many of us have passed these periods of life, and how many more are near unto them — and what have we done for our country? I ask not whether we have sustained places in her councils, or marshalled her armies, or in any way presided over her destinies; but, each in his own sphere of life, have we assumed the stations, set the examples, and discharged the duties which true citizens of such a country should? Our years too are rolling on their course, and blessed as we are with predecessors whom we are not ashamed to praise, let us so fill up our period, and exert our powers that they shall never be ashamed of us — and when our earthly destiny is past, may we look onward, with hope, to a state where kindred spirits shall meet in unison, and serve God and their country with new powers and everlasting joys — through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VII.

ON UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURES.

MATTHEW xxiv. 15.

WHOSO READETH, LET HIM UNDERSTAND.

IN these words, a rule is laid down, which it concerns us deeply to follow. The scriptures, not understood, are of no more service to those that read them, than a manuscript in Arabic or Hebrew to the unlearned, on which indeed the eyes may be fixed and the written letters be traced, but which imparts nothing to the reader, either for instruction or consolation. Nevertheless it is a fact, too well known, and too generally acknowledged to be denied, that there are many cases in which the scripture is not understood; and many instances in which persons read, but understand not. There are doubtless causes for this unhappy course of things, and if, by the divine blessing, we can trace out some of these causes, we may thereby perhaps enable ourselves to apply a suitable remedy. We will therefore endeavor to point out some of those

reasons why when we read the scriptures, we understand them not.

The *First* cause is, that human beings often read the inspired volume, without any hearty desire to understand it. There are many things, which lead people to read the word of God, besides a real wish to gather up its instructions and use them for their own spiritual discipline or consolation. It is sometimes done as a mere task of duty, as something we must do, or else expose ourselves to the displeasure of God. And truly we may say that to search the scriptures, and make the reading a portion thereof a part of every day's work, is a duty and a most important one to every man, woman and child, for in this sacred record are contained the words of everlasting life, and these are they which testify of Christ. But there are cases in which duty degenerates to a dead letter — there are cases in which duty seems so meritorious that it hides a multitude of sins, and cases in which duty falls into a mere mechanical habit, whenever the soul is wholly unconcerned — and so sometimes the scriptures are mechanically read, like the passing words of a song which duty perhaps requires us to sing on certain fixed occasions, but which are never thought of as containing anything for our own personal use or profit. Sometimes also, this work is done because of the interesting histories contained in the bible — and some-

times with a species of willingness to gather wisdom, but no hungering and thirsting desire after it. The consequence of all which is, that the words of inspiration do not sink into the mind, they only fall upon its surface; are not meditated upon, distinguished or rightly divided in order to be understood — and they pass away and leave no trace behind. When one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

A *Second* reason why some who read do not understand, is the difficulty of viewing the whole tenor of scripture in one comprehensive glance, like what in common language, we call a bird's eye view. The scriptures were not written, like a human system of morals and religion, where all the different parts are methodically arranged, and where the different points of doctrine, precepts for practice, and grounds of rest have their places assigned them under distinct heads. But they were written at different times and by different persons, as holy men were moved and spake by the spirit of God. Part was revealed at one time and in one place, and part in another; and several thousands of years elapsed, from first to last, before the whole was finished and given to the world. God spake at sundry times and in divers manners, by the prophets, and after many years by his Son and the

apostles, as occasion required, and his own wisdom dictated, in the different states of the world. A volume, composed in this manner, must of course, be very much disconnected. The points of faith, the precepts for practice, the promises, the threats, the encouragements and consolations, which God reveals in this sacred volume, are often intermingled with the histories of individuals or nations, in parts widely separated from each other, and often connected with some peculiar state of things then existing, when this or that portion of the scripture was revealed. In order, therefore, to understand the word correctly, it is necessary to obtain a general view of it as a whole; to ascertain, as far as possible, what its great, leading objects and purposes are, and by this comprehensive rule to form a judgment concerning the particular parts and single expressions. Now to obtain this great view of the scriptures, requires a stupendous effort of the mind. It requires an expansion of the soul, which is a sore trial to our natural disposition to see but in part, and it often happens that men choose the easier method of treasuring up a few solitary texts, and wrapping up all their religion in them, rather than extend the mind over the whole, and compare spiritual things with spiritual, in order to come at the predominating voice of the whole word of God. This is a perilous hindrance to a right knowledge of

divine truth, inasmuch as it assigns an undue preponderance to some portions of revelation, while it strikes out of view others of equal weight ; and the harmony of the whole is destroyed by the discordant harshness to which we strain some individual parts.

A *Third* cause of misunderstanding the scriptures is prejudice. By prejudice, I mean a judgment formed without a proper examination, whether the judgment in itself be right or wrong. In this view, a person may be prejudiced in favor of a truth, as well as of a falsehood ; that is, he may believe a truth as well as a falsehood without examination ; and whatsoever is so believed is prejudice, whether the particular thing believed be true or false. Of all prejudices, it may justly be remarked, that they are of an extremely tenacious nature ; the mind does not so much hold them, as they hold the mind ; once admitted, they fix themselves upon the soul, and stay there by main force, “like weeds which grow upon a rock, that stick fast, though they have no root.” Prejudices in regard to religion are very numerous : we begin to imbibe them in very early youth ; indeed, almost all the religious opinions which we embrace in very early youth must be denominated prejudices, for they are commonly received on the authority of our parents and teachers, and very seldom result from our own thoughts or inquiries. We imbibe other preju-

dices, from the society into which we fall — some from the books we happen to read — some from some casual courses of outward things — some from the minds under whose influence we allow ourselves to be taken captive, and some from mysterious turnings of our own thoughts, for which we can assign no rational account. From whatever source they spring, prejudices, when once embraced, take powerful hold upon the heart, form a kind of religion for it, and acquire such an influence, that we are apt to reverence our prejudices more than we reverence the scriptures. When prejudice is fixed upon the mind, then any course of thinking, which makes us begin to imagine that our adopted opinions are wrong, seems to the mind like a kind of sacrilege ; and any new interpretation of a favorite portion of the bible strikes the soul with a horror, something like that of the sinner, when the true light first glares upon his inward spirit. We start back and recoil and shrink away to our accustomed darkness. To the prejudiced mind, therefore, a great part of the scripture never shows itself at all, and what is seen and embraced is so clogged with prejudice as to have lost the vigor and beauty wherewith Christ had made it free. There is a hindrance of the same nature, and which perhaps ought to be called by the same name, and surely ought not to be left unnoticed on the present occasion ; it consists in receiving a

system of religion from some man, or body of men, and then, when reading the scriptures, to interpret the word by that system, instead of subduing the system to the word of God. This is receiving the traditions of the elders, rather than the testimony of the Most High, and acknowledging as doctrines the commandments of men. To minds who do this, the word of God speaks only through the organs of the man or men on whom they lean ; and if, on any transient occasion, passages appear which look a very different way from the accepted system, they are thrust aside, or hidden out of sight, till such time as we can see how they can be made to accord with our pre-accepted views. Hence, parts are taken instead of the whole, and these parts, standing alone, exhibit a different appearance and wear a different guise from what belongs to them in their proper place in the whole revelation.

A *Fourth* hindrance to the true understanding of the scriptures, is the carnal mind ; by which I mean self-love, in some form or other. Pride hates to see itself abased ; wrath struggles against the restraints of Christianity ; malice abhors the mild lustre of christian love ; sensuality dreads the denunciations of Christ against the vices of the flesh ; and the passions of the sinful soul rise in rebellion against the christian law of mercy, truth and pure religion. When one under the influence

of this carnal mind, experiences a warning to flee from the wrath to come, and goes to the scriptures to inquire a way of escape, he is by no means fond of those portions, which unfold the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or the bright excellence of moral purity, with the consequences of one and the other. These portions of revelation he is willing to strike out; but his mind catches eagerly at any assertions of mercy, or prospects of deliverance from hell; and more so at those allowances which our Creator makes for the infirmities of his creatures; and in regard to a large portion of divine revelation, seeing he sees, and does not believe — hearing he hears, and does not understand, lest he should be really converted and healed.

The *Fifth* and last cause of misunderstanding, which I shall now mention, is enthusiasm. The human soul is so framed that it can become enthusiastic in anything. The world has experienced enthusiasts in arts and sciences, enthusiasts in patriotism, war, politics, poetry, merchandise, philosophy, and every object of human pursuit. It is when one special thought overpowers the mind, and man follows it, comparatively regardless of anything else. When such enthusiasm takes place, in regard to some special views of religion, it is too impetuous in its course to allow the man to pause and consider his ways, or ponder the paths of his feet. Enthusiasm takes no account

of consequences, and is too high wrought to balance and temper itself. Enthusiasm never stops long enough to doubt; and never distrusting the truth of his views, the enthusiast, when he opens his bible, never turns to look at anything but what goes freely along with him, or helps to bear him onward; everything else he passes over in such winged haste, that he scarcely touches it. He reads indeed, but his elevated feelings disdain the drudgery of thought, and though he readeth, he understandeth not.

With these remarks on the causes of misunderstanding the scriptures, it is but right, before closing, to say something of those things, which may, perhaps, help to a better understanding of them.

The *First* rule for this purpose is, that we compare scripture with scripture. The proverb of the ancients saith, that the word of God is its own best interpreter, and constant experience confirms the truth of this saying. We have already observed, at what sundry times and in what divers manners, the revelations in the bible were made; some things were written with a special view to the state and circumstances of the person writing; some things with a special view to the state and circumstances of the person or persons written to; some of the epistles of Paul were specially designed for a peculiar state of things then existing in the churches

to whom he addressed them ; some books in the Old Testament, for the peculiar use of the people in those days when this or that prophet lived ; and many things are set down, which refer only to something doing or existing at that time. To take these peculiar portions, and apply them to all ages and all persons indiscriminately, is grossly to pervert the inspiration of the Most High, making his word affirm as a general principle, what he only intended should apply to a particular case. Our duty is to compare part with part, and text with text, and chapter with chapter, yea, book with book, till we can see the great and leading thoughts of our Father in Heaven, connecting, tempering, explaining and binding together all the particular assertions of his word. Never should we allow ourselves to rest, exclusively, on any particular expressions alone, but make it our endeavor to obtain a free and liberal acquaintance with the scripture as a whole, and let our own large and connected view of the great designs of God, in revelation, be a steadfast rule, by which to explain particular insulated passages.

A *Second* rule is, to go as near to the fountain head as we can. The inspiration of God came to and in men of a different age and different tongue from our own ; its dictates were written in a different language, and most of us are obliged to receive the word of God, only in a translation ;

whereby we of necessity lose much of the spirit and power of the original, and every translation will be in some measure tinctured with the peculiarities of the translator. The divine treasure, in passing through an earthen vessel, cannot well avoid acquiring some taint, before we can gain possession of it. There are however many helps to be had from the written results of criticism and research, which, if we are seeking truth, we ought to be willing to receive, nay, anxious to look up, and apply them to use; and where any of us have it in our power to read the scriptures in that language, wherein they were first written, then, we count it a crime to neglect so doing.

A *Third* valuable rule is, to set apart to ourselves some definite portion of time, to study the sacred writings, and observe that time religiously, that so, when the volume of inspiration is taken up, it be done with a mind comparatively free from earthly anxieties, and we may have time to expatiate in liberty of soul. Follow this course from day to day, and in process of time, all the different parts of divine revelation will come before the mind, with opportunities to compare, distinguish and rightly divide the word of truth, and therein we shall discover, how the whole scripture really harmonizes with itself, notwithstanding the first apparent discrepancy of some of its parts, and may perceive the same uniform mind and will of God, appearing under all the different expressions of

different holy men, speaking in different ages and places by the one same living inspiration.

Fourthly. Keep free from the trammels of human exclusive systems — call no man father upon earth, and never suffer the mind to fall into such subjection to any human being, as to be swayed by his feelings or opinions, instead of divine revelation. We are required to be called not even by the name of Paul or Apollos, and surely not by that of any man of modern date. It will be no justification for our belief of error to say, that we fall under the influence of this or that human mind. Let God himself, in his word and spirit and his holy one, be our supreme teacher; and to make this teaching more effectual, let there be times when we lay aside our preconceived ideas, and bring our souls fresh and new to the feet of Jesus, and learn over again the truth as it is in him.

Also, keep a strict watch over those feelings of the heart, which tend towards enthusiasm. If we find ourselves becoming overweeningly fond of any special opinion, course of feeling, or mode of practice, let that very fondness be our warning. It is evidence of a commencing enthusiasm. Before we give it way, see first and be sure whether it is well supported. For when our reason is first convinced, when we are certain that we are grounded in that which can never fail, and that our way is surely approved of God, then and not till then may we become enthusiastic. It is always well to

be zealously affected in a good thing, and only let us first be certain that the thing is good, and then be as warmly enthusiastic as human nature will.

And yet again — keep a diligent watch over that carnal mind which is enmity against God. To allow the sinful propensities of our nature to warp our minds, so far as to seek in the scripture a justification for sin, is literally lighting the torch of hell at the heavenly flame, and nothing so effectually blinds the eye against the truth as a wicked unwillingness to obey its dictates. He that is willing to do the truth cometh to the light.

And *Finally*. If we desire rightly to understand the word of truth, remember that God himself is the great source of wisdom and power, and, therefore, seek understanding from him whose inspiration gives it unto man. Without God no inquiry prospers, and no satisfaction can be found; but “if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” And if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. If God by his own influence has caused the scriptures to be written, he will, by the same influence, enable us to understand it. Ask therefore, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, to enter into that fountain of eternal truth, which shall satisfy the desires of the mind and lead to everlasting life, by the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

ROMANS ix. 11.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION.

THE doctrine of election is the subject on which I propose to address you at the present time. It is a subject on which many different thoughts have been held by the great, the wise, and the good — a subject which, in one or another form, is embraced by almost every sect of Christians, and a subject which is often adverted to in the holy scriptures. In truth, the scriptures assert in plain terms, that God has a purpose according to election; that he always has had such a purpose, and we believe that he always will have. Our main object, then, must be to ascertain what this purpose is, and establish, if we can, something satisfactory in regard to it, as well as to explain how different classes of Christians believe it.

The doctrine of some is, that God, from all eternity, has marked out a certain number of souls

whom he means to save, with eternal happiness, do what they will; and on the other hand, has marked out a certain other number of souls, whom he means to condemn to eternal wretchedness, do what they can. The first are technically called the elect; the last, the reprobate or non-elect. This purpose they affirm to be so irrevocable, that the elect can never fall from the divine favor, and the reprobate can never obtain it through all eternal duration. And farther, that God, in choosing what souls he will make happy, and what souls he will make wretched, has no regard whatever to their character, state or deserts, but is altogether arbitrary, and elects or reprobates only according to his own abstract will.

Some however, seeing this doctrine, in its naked state, too revolting to be believed by an affectionate heart, have modified and believe it thus: That God, having first determined whom he will save and whom he will condemn, afterwards, by his own agency, produces in the elect a good state of mind, which makes them fit to be saved, and produces in the reprobate a wicked state of mind, which makes them fit to be damned — and having first wrought these opposite states of soul in them, then carries into effect his opposite eternal purposes in regard to them, and seals the one to the happiness and the other to the misery for which he has made them fit, and seals them so forever and ever.

Some, again, believe it on this wise : That after the fall of Adam, God condemned the whole race to everlasting misery ; but, being moved with compassion, resolved to save some ; and, having all future souls present to his mind, chose out of them those whom he would save, and passed by the rest, and left them to choose sin for themselves, and be forever wretched, in their chosen sin. That those whom he thus chose, or elected to save, he converts and makes good — and those whom he did not choose to save, he leaves to perpetual darkness, corruption and sin, and consequently to perpetual wretchedness.

Others, however, soften the doctrine so much as almost entirely to do it away, and believe it thus : That God, having all souls present to his mind, saw clearly who among them would be good, and who among them would be wicked — that he elected those, who he knew would be good, and reprobated those, who he knew would be wicked ; and was eternally determined to make the one set happy and the other wretched. This, in fact, is no election at all. It is an abuse of terms to call this an election or choice. It is nothing more nor less than the determination of God to make good men happy, and wicked ones miserable. We therefore set it aside, as having nothing to do with the purpose of God according to election. Election means positive choice, — a choosing a thing

by one's own will, as when two men equally qualified, are chosen to an office, and in this latter form of the doctrine, there is no choice at all. It is nothing but a name. Setting this therefore aside, we observe, in regard to all the other forms of the doctrine, that they may all be resolved into the one same thing; and when stripped of all disguises, they really mean that God from all eternity decreed what souls he would save to eternal happiness, and what souls he would condemn to eternal misery, at all events. That he made this choice or election without regard to the future character, or merits of the individuals chosen on the one hand or reprobated on the other; but merely because he would have it so, and that God made this choice so irrevocable, that no efforts of man can alter his eternal destiny; no repentance, no conversion, no prayers, and no tears, no obedience of the rejected can avail to save him from perpetual wretchedness on the one hand; and no neglect, no impenitence, no hardness of heart, no crimes, no sins of however deep a die, can avail to exclude the elect from heaven, for God has eternally resolved that the one shall ascend to heaven, and the other shall descend to hell, be they what they may, and conduct how they will. To this form the doctrine inevitably comes at last, though it may be disguised with words, and turned aside out of its straight course by minds which

shrink at its naked aspect, or dread its straight onward progress — still, to this point it comes in the end, and cannot stop, with any solidity, short of it. In regard to this class of interpretations of the scripture, I have no belief in any of them. It seems to me, that they need little more than to be stated so as to be plainly seen, in order to make manifest their inherent repugnance to fair and thorough views of the character of God and the great principles of equity in his government. Place them in what light you will, however they may appear to others, they seem to me to make the Almighty capricious, arbitrary, and tyrannical. They do violence to those parts of scripture, which exhort all men to repentance, and extend the promise of forgiveness to every penitent, without the least reservation whatever. They do violence to those assertions, which affirm that God is no respecter of persons — and to those, which affirm that Christ was given to be the Saviour of the world, and not for an elected portion of it. It is a contradiction to say, that Christ was given for those whom God had previously determined to make eternally wicked, or eternally miserable. And I am further confirmed in rejecting these interpretations, because their appears to me a satisfactory mode of contemplating the purpose of God according to election, a mode of regarding the subject, which is entirely consistent with fair views

of our Creator's character and the equity of his government; a mode of interpretation, which has long approved itself to my mind, and which, if I can clearly display it, I doubt not will approve itself to many of yours, if not to you all. I will endeavor to explain it.

Election is spoken of in the scriptures in two distinct and different points of view. In one case the elect means the same thing as the beloved, the accepted, or the trusted. Much in the same way as a parent, when speaking of a child whose tastes and feelings harmonize with his own, says of him, that he is a chosen child — meaning the same as a beloved child — one in whom he takes satisfaction, or, as we say of a friend, in whom we have confidence, that he is a chosen friend, and mean that he is a beloved, a trusted, an accepted friend, one in whose mind we experience an inward delight. In this sense the word is used concerning our Lord Jesus, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.”* In which, and similar passages, the word elect means the same as beloved or accepted, near to the heart. The thought is the same as when the Supreme Being called him his beloved son, in whom he was well pleased. “As many as are led by the spirit of God — they are the sons of God.” In this sense we understand all those places in which good men are called the elect; in so far as

* Isaiah xlii. 1.

they possess the spirit of their master and are similar to him in soul, so far they partake in his acceptance with God — so far they are with him elect and precious, — in other words, beloved, accepted, trusted, his chosen in whom he takes satisfaction. In this sense election implies that there is something acceptable to God in the souls of the elect, something which suits him, something in which he is well pleased — something which, humanly speaking, gratifies his soul. In this sense therefore, election does not imply, that God elected them first, and loved them afterwards — but contrariwise, that he saw in them that which he approved, and on this account, took pleasure in them, and called them his chosen or elect, or beloved, accepted ones. In this mode, we understand a very great proportion of the scriptures, in which the term election and the elect are used. But this kind of election is a very different thing from that which we contemplate as originating in the eternal purpose, the free will, the absolute choice of God. I therefore make these remarks only in order to shew the fair mode in which the term, the elect, ought to be understood in the greater part of the passages in which it is used. Leaving this part of the subject, we now turn to that election or choice which the scriptures speak of as originating in God's eternal purpose.

It is too plain to be denied, that the scripture

decidedly speaks of certain persons, certain families, and certain nations as being elected, on one hand, and rejected on the other, by the absolute will and arbitrary choice of God, without regard to their characters or deserts. Israel is frequently called the chosen of the Lord; Esau is named as having been rejected; and we are told, that God made this choice between the two before they were born, and, much more, before they had done anything to establish merit or demerit. "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth, it was then said, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." Here is election, expressed in the most arbitrary and positive manner. Jacob was chosen and Esau was rejected, without regard to individual merit or demerit, before they were born. Or, in more technical language, Jacob was elected, and Esau was reprobated. And yet, in their youthful days, Esau was clearly as good a man as Jacob, to say the least. But before their birth, God chose or elected one of them, by an act of his mere will. This single example may serve to shew in what manner we understand those places of the scripture where God is said to have chosen or elected these or those individuals

or nations. And as I wish to make myself as clear as possible, I remark, that as I understand the scriptures, God did elect certain individuals, and certain nations, and reject others, without any regard, whatever, to the merit or demerit of the persons or nations elected or rejected, and that he did this merely of his own will — he elected this and rejected that, not because one deserved favor and the other merited wrath ; but merely because he chose to. He conferred peculiar favors on those whom he chose to confer favors upon, and inflicted peculiar disadvantages on those whom he chose to deal with so.

I need not quote particular passages, in which this thought is asserted, they will probably present themselves, in a sufficient number, to your minds, to prove, that in regard to election God will shew kindness to whom he will, and whom he will, he hardeneth.

Here perhaps some will say, that I assert the same as those who affirm that God eternally and arbitrarily decreed who should be saved and who should be condemned, without regard to their characters. But before you think this, permit me to explain, and hear with patience what further may be said, and perchance some different thoughts may arise, which may be satisfactory to your minds.

For we propose to inquire, so far as the scriptures explain it, what were the objects, and what

were the purposes for which God elected these or those, chose them out of the mass of mankind, in this absolute manner. In my own view of the subject, he chose them, without the least view of carrying them to perpetual happiness, or sending them to perpetual wretchedness. He chose them for objects relating to this present life, and this present life entirely, saving only as they in this life used or abused what was granted them; and so accumulated means of happiness or unhappiness for eternity within themselves. Take the case of Abraham, — God elected him, by his own choice. Abraham was originally an idolator, like most of the rest of the world at that time. God chose him as a person to whom he would make known himself the only God; his mind and will, and his unity. He chose him to be the ancestor of his great Messiah; he chose him to be the father of a family, in which the worship of the one only God should be maintained, and his church supported, and he chose him to be the founder of a nation, among whom the prophets should proclaim the divine counsels, the law of God should be promulgated, and his outward service of worship sustained amidst an idolatrous world. These were special favors conferred upon Abraham by God's free choice. Abraham was a good man, and faithfully used the favors to which God had elected him; he advanced constantly in the knowledge,

love and service of God through a long life — and left a most powerful example of religion to his family and numerous posterity, and without dispute is now reaping the recompense of his faithfulness in the presence of God. But then, on the other hand, Balaam also was chosen of God, to be his prophet, — God elected him, to hear the words of God; to know the knowledge of the Most High, — to see the very vision of the Almighty, and have his eyes opened. God elected him to receive privileges, by a right use of which he might have done immense service to the cause of religion and to his own soul. He was as truly elected as Abraham, Isaiah or Jeremiah. But Balaam was a wicked minded man, notwithstanding his election; he perverted and abused the favors to which he was elected, and by his evil counsels and bad example multiplied sins upon the earth, and if saved in eternity at all, it must be so as by fire.

Afterwards we find the whole Israelitish nation frequently spoken of as the elect or chosen of God; they were so, a selected race, chosen of God to receive spiritual favors that were denied to the rest of the world. To them alone, of all the nations, was given the adoption; they were the sons of God; Israel is my son, my first born — to them was given the glory, or bright appearing of Deity between the Cherubims. To them was given the

covenants by which God was theirs and they were his. To them was given the law of the Highest. Among them his outward worship was established, and among them the great Messiah was born, while he, who was over all this privileged state, was God blessed forever. To these things they were elected, while the world was left in ignorance, folly, superstition and idolatry. But the chosen race were in general a wicked and perverse people, notwithstanding the election; "I give thee this land not for thy righteousness," saith the Lord, "for thou art a stiff necked people." They abused the favors to which they had been elected, and though, as touching the election, they were long beloved in this outward sense for the father's sake, yet when they came to die as individuals, and enter another world, every principle compels us to believe that they entered into happiness or unhappiness in the spiritual world, without the least regard to their election on earth, any further, than as by using their favors in this life aright, they had any of them arrived to greater attainments in godliness, or, by abusing them, had sunk to deeper depravity and sin. The power of their election died at the grave, while on the other hand, the world, who had remained without the knowledge of God, who had been rejected, in fact, as to divine revelation, when they came to die, undoubtedly received their allotment in the spiritual

world, not by an arbitrary appointment of the divine will, but according to the use or abuse of what little light they did enjoy. This little light some of them quenched and became exceedingly corrupt. While under this little light, good men made such advancement in goodness, that our Lord himself affirmed that they should come from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, and sit with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while elected children of the kingdom should be cast out when they deserved it. The purpose of God according to election, therefore, is not to decree this one to heaven and that one to hell; but to decree special privileges in the life that now is, to one, while these privileges are denied to others during the same term, and when the appointed term is past, God calls them to account, each for what he received, and for his use or abuse of the same. I am the farther upheld in this view of our subject, by the words of our Lord Jesus, the image of God, to his disciples. He made a choice among men of certain ones, to be his twelve apostles. There were others good, perhaps as good as they. He therefore says, ye have not chosen or elected me, but I have chosen you. Here is election, absolute, but the question is, did he elect them to carry them to heaven? Hear his further words and be satisfied; Have I not chosen you twelve, and one

of you is a devil. He surely never chose a devil to carry to heaven, to the mansions of holiness, love, peace, and truth. But he did choose one, in the person of Judas, to enjoy every religious privilege which man could enjoy; he elected him to live in his own family, to hear his daily conversation, to witness the daily movements of his spirit, and to know all things relating to the kingdom of God. He thus empowered him to be as holy as the holiest and as happy as the happiest. But Judas was a wicked minded man; he perverted all the favors which his election gave him, and in the end went to his own place. How absurd it were to imagine that Judas must be certainly saved, because in this life he was one of Christ's elected or chosen! And so it is in all cases, election saves no soul, but merely confers powers and privileges for the present life, while heavenly happiness, spiritual joy is reserved only for those whose hearts are right with God — without regard to election or non-election. We lose much by not believing the direct eternity of man. Embrace this truth, that man shall live forever, and then we can see how God can, with all consistency, grant special privileges and stations to one, and deny them to another in the present life, seeing that he can restore the equity in the life to come, — and we can perceive how great purposes may be carried on, by electing one and rejecting another during

a temporary term, or during mortal life. Seeing there is space enough, in eternity, for the last to become first and the first to become last, according to their inward dispositions to use or abuse what is entrusted to them severally.

Regard the matter thus, and the purpose of God according to election brings to our view some very solemn thoughts, concerning our individual responsibilities. He has elected all of us to be born in a christian land, with all the means and religious advantages contained in the christian religion, while to a great part of the world he has denied the privilege of hearing the very name of God and Jesus his Messiah. This is as true an election of us, as when of old he elected Israel and rejected Esau, as when he elected the nation of the Jews and rejected the Gentiles. Use this religion to the glory of God, and our spiritual welfare; or else its slighted warnings, its abused powers, its perverted privileges, its celestial promises, and its soul saving and God serving provisions shall bear witness against us, at the judgment seat, and we may see souls from the ends of the earth, where the Messiah's name was never heard, coming to the Zion of God, with new songs and gladness and everlasting joy upon their heads, and ourselves cast out.

God has elected some of us to know much more of the knowledge of the Most High, than he has

allotted to others ; even among ourselves he has blessed some with education, with instruction from pious parents and friends, with various and multiplied means of acquainting our souls with divine truth, and powers for the discharge of duty. This likewise is election, as truly as when of old he elected prophets to be acquainted with him, and bear forth the knowledge of God and do his works. Regard this election from God as we ought, and being chosen by the will of God to such favors, let us employ the talents entrusted us, in the service of him who has elected our times, in an age when unexampled light is flowing over the world, and has elected the bounds of our habitations in a portion of the earth where all facilities exist for serving God, and honoring Christ, and making advancements in mind, soul and spiritual preparation for eternal life, and for leaving a speaking example of religion and good works to those around, and who shall come after us. He has elected some of us to receive large measures of his inward influence, giving man understanding, and shedding abroad his love in the soul ; he has elected some of us to see those deeper mysteries of the christian religion, concerning which others have even yet a veil over their face, and to perceive those magnificent truths in regard to which many are in the dark prison of error.

He has elected many of us, now present, to see

the glorious truth of his single and magnificent unity ; and others he has elected to fill those stations in domestic life and in the social and religious world, which give us much influence, and empowers us to do much good or evil in the cause of godliness by conversation and example according to our disposition, and while God is thus dividing unto us severally as he will, let us never forget, that unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required. And, as the elect of God, let us put on bowels of mercy towards our associates ; and, establishing our souls before God, in the name of that spiritual ruler, within whose kingdom God has elected that we should be born, give up ourselves and ours to the eternal, who has made us partakers of a heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, in the life that now is, and make this our calling and election so sure, in our own choice and fidelity, that death shall not dissolve the bond, but shall only transfer us to a state, where we may again be chosen to discern the brighter glories of God, penetrate to deeper recesses of the divine mind, and rejoice with more exceeding joy in him who hath called us, and chosen us, to our present happy lot, in Christ Jesus, from the foundation of the world.

S E R M O N I X .

SPIRITUAL SLEEP.

EPHESIANS v. 14.

AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE
DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT.

THIS passage of scripture addresses itself to human beings, in any of those states of mind which may properly be compared to sleep — ignorance, indifference, indolence, and sin.

It exclaims, in the *First* place, Awake, thou that sleepest in ignorance of God and Christ, and the great interests of eternity. This is a state in which we all are when we first enter on this present world — ignorant then, not merely of the great things that make for our eternal peace, but ignorant even of those things that are necessary for our subsistence and comfort in the life that now is, not knowing what we want, and even if conscious of our wants, still ignorant of the ways and means to satisfy them. This kind of ignorance in regard to things of this life is, however, quickly dissipated, and the human being soon becomes

wide awake to his natural wants and the means of supplying them — and, once awakened to these things, he continues alive, yea, frequently irritably alive, to the cares, concerns and various affairs of the present state. They act upon his senses and excite his feelings in a thousand ways, and keep him in a kind of perpetual motion, which leaves him neither rest nor slumber. But with all this wakefulness, in regard to the things of earth, he still may, and very often does, remain asleep in utter ignorance of religion. The mind is often well stored with knowledge of human learning, and well versed in things, whereby our earthly state may be advanced, and yet, know little or nothing concerning God, Christ, the christian religion and that spiritual world, to which we are hastening away. And so long as nothing is known concerning these essential things, so long the feelings are dead with respect to them, and the soul unmoved by things of a religious nature. 'To one in utter ignorance of religious truths, the invitations of God may be spoken in Jesus Christ, but he hears not the voice, or if he hear at all, it is only an uncertain sound, which he does not understand, and has no perception of the state unto which these invitations call him. Unto him likewise, the thunders of the law may roll, and the threatenings of God may blaze, as lightning over the heavens, but, like as it is with us in the natural

tempest, which sometimes passes in the night, during our natural sleep, he experiences nothing of the power of these manifestations of God, or at most, no more than an indefinite dreaming sense of something, he knows not what. So likewise, christian ordinances, christian institutions of every kind may be uttering a continual voice from God, which in his ignorance he does not hear, and the very spirit of the Deity may stir and move within, but his unenlightened mind is unconscious what it means, and knows not unto what it impels him. If any such be here, we exhort them to awake from their dangerous sleep. The great and eternal concern of the soul is with God, with Christ, with the spiritual world. This truth is the same, whether we be conscious of it or not, and nothing endangers the salvation of the soul more, than to retain ourselves in wilful ignorance of God and his spiritual kingdom. Is the mariner any more safe because he refuses to acquaint himself with the rocks and quicksands which lie in his course, or because he does not set himself to learn the true direction to his final port? Is the traveller any more safe because he gives no heed to know the dangers of his road? Or is any one in more safety because he sees not the precipice on whose border he stands, and over which the slightest motion may cast him down? Awake, oh man! who art soon to appear before a God with whom thou

hast now no acquaintance, but in whose spiritual judgment thy lot must be cast for eternity. Awake, before the desperate plunge is taken, which shall decide thy doom. Awake, thou that sleepest in ignorance of religion, acquaint thyself now with God, and lay foundations for eternal peace.

Secondly. Our text addresses itself to the indifferent. Awake, thou that sleepest in careless security, and bestir thyself to the work which God calls thee to effect. There is an unfortunate condition into which the human being is prone to fall. It is that state, where the mind is well furnished with the knowledge of truth, and yet the heart takes no interest in it. There is a knowledge of the truth, which may be great and extensive; a knowledge, in which man may see clearly the general system and the great objects of the christian religion, a knowledge in which the whole region of Christianity may be plain to the mind, and yet the man remain utterly indifferent, whether he have a share in the powers and consolations or not. Like one who acquaints himself with the form and comeliness, the regular streets, splendid palaces, strong fortresses, wise laws, wholesome policy and general means of happiness, of a distant city or a distant kingdom, which he never thinks of making the place of his abode, and in the affairs of which he of course takes no interest; so in regard to religion, are some minds, who

think of it as beautiful and joyous, but a thing for which they have no personal desires, a region in which they do not think of making their own spiritual lodgement. Indifference to religion may result from many causes. It may spring from a pressure of worldly cares, from the entanglement of worldly pleasure, from an unwillingness to think on anything but what presses itself on the mind, from the love of self, of pleasure, and a dread of contemplating death, and more especially from an unfortunate disposition to consider ourselves as exempt from the changes which we see taking place in others round about us. From whatever cause it springs in any mind, indifference to religion exposes the soul to imminent hazard. It is this state of mind, in which man voluntarily exclaims to his Maker, "depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." It is this state of mind, which makes man callous to the exhortations, instructions and influence of Christianity, hardens his heart against that love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, closes the avenues of truth to his mind, and makes him careless as to the manner of his life, and the dread solemnities of his death. In a state of indifference to religion, man is careless what errors he embraces, what truths he rejects, what examples he sets, what words he utters, and what works he performs. In a state of indifference to religion, man suffers the present

world to usurp his faculties, occupy his thoughts and attract his affections, while the lasting objects of eternity are thrust aside from his mind. In such a condition, the soul is neglected, and suffered to go its own course, without discipline, or guidance. And unto what end the undisciplined and ungoverned human soul will go, in the corruption of its thoughts and feelings, how far away from God, judge ye, who know the deceitful nature and corrupting tendency of the heart. From this state of indifference to the concerns of the soul, the gospel exclaims, Awake, thou that sleepest. Is it the care of this world and its affairs which renders thee careless for eternity? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Is it thine unbelief which makes thee disregard the things of God? The truths of God remain the same, and we shall experience them in all their power, in his own time, whether we believe them now or not. Is it a distaste of religion, a dislike to the things of Christ, which turns one away from them? This distaste, this dislike, is itself the love of darkness rather than light, the condemning sentence of the wicked soul. Awake from thy carelessness. Look round and see how the fashion of the present world passeth away, and its grace and glory perish even in the using. Look forward, and contemplate the state to which we are hastening, and if

eternity be longer than time, or the soul more precious than this body of death, then bestir thyself to secure an interest in the christian heavens, and lay up some treasures which shall abide when all material objects vanish away. Think as deeply of the affairs of the soul, as we are always ready to do of those of this life, and the sleep of indifference shall soon be dispersed and our hearts become alert and active in the works of God.

Thirdly. Our text addresses itself to the indolent. There are those among men, who do know the truths and commands of God in Christ, and who feel strong desires to have a share in the kingdom of God, nay, who have at times effected a decision, and mean to be Christ's disciples — but have allowed themselves to relapse into an indolent, torpid condition, and make no energetic exertions to insure their calling and election. Indolence may be contemplated in regard to two conditions of the human being, either as unbelieving or as believing. There are occasions when to the inquiring mind, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified, and man experiences a powerful impulse to make his choice and be his fixed follower, persuaded that this alone is the real path of life and peace. But his indolent spirit deadens his desires, palsies his energies, and leaves him halting, debating and doubting about the threshold of the christian state, meaning to go in, but exerting no

stirring energy to effect the work. In this case, a procrastinating, excusing and parleying disposition gains possession of the soul, and man is apt to think so much about becoming a Christian at some future period, that the present time never seems fit for his purpose, and he goes on from day to day and from year to year, still thinking of some more convenient season, and neglecting every present opportunity, till life is exhausted and eternity falls upon him, disconnected with the only true medium of the great salvation of God.

There are occasions also, when man, having effected one great endeavor, and caught a hold upon the Son of Man, experiences an interest in the things of Christ, and feels established with his great Master — but afterwards moulders backward from the spirit to the flesh, grows lax and indolent in the appointed duties and services of religion; takes little or no heed to grow rich in faith and good works, and ceases to concern himself about laying up treasures in heaven. In this kind of indolence, man becomes, at best, such a lukewarm Christian that he is in constant peril of being cast out of the Saviour's kingdom; but he is more like to become an offence and a scandal to his cause, by putting the Son of God to an open shame. Nay, indolently neglecting the inward watch and discipline of his heart, he suffers the lusts and passions of the flesh to regain the mastery over

him, and render his last estate perchance worse than his first. Awake, thou that art suffering the debilitating power of indolence. Awake, oh man, whose mind is thinking of an interest in Christ, who seest the way, but art too indolent to walk in it. Awake, for thy hours are numbered and thy moments measured, and though from us, the number and the measure are both concealed, yet are they fixed and sure in the mind of the Highest, and the end is at hand, when the right and the power of choosing our lot will have passed away. While this right and the power remain, exert it, to effect so deep a connexion of the soul with Jesus Christ, that in fine we may lay effectual hold on everlasting life.

Awake, thou that sleepest, trusting to thy citizenship in Zion, and yet art lying stupid in indolence and neglecting the solemn precepts of the master of the house. There are duties before thee which thou art obligated to perform — works in thine own heart and works in active virtue, in the discharge of which treasures may be laid up in heaven, but in the neglect of which wrath is treasured up against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Inasmuch as ye did it not, is as condemning a sentence, as is the word, ye workers of iniquity.

Fourthly. Our text addresses itself to the impenitently sinful. In the pursuits of sin there is

a benumbing, and soporific power. Habitual sin blinds the eye of the mind, sears the conscience as with a hot iron, besots the intellectual faculties, and renders the soul so sensual and so selfish, that man becomes wholly unmindful of spiritual things and often regardless of his best interests even in the present life. The spiritual objects of God in Christ exert no influence over a mind hardened in crime, bewildered in chosen delusions, and buried in habitual corruption. From this state he must arise and shake himself from the dust, before he can perceive or taste the salvation of the Lord.

To the impenitent sinner our text addresses itself in solemn admonition. Awake, thou that sleepest in sin. Thy condemnation slumbereth not, though thyself may be buried in drowsiness. The witness of thine iniquities neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. The judgment is ever awake to convict and condemn, and the worm which dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, can neither be soothed to slumber and buried in darkness, because thyself wilt lie down in criminal disregard of them. Fearful, indeed, must be the final awakening of the soul, who slumbering away his human opportunities, in a delusive dream of guilty pleasures, shall awake at once to the broad blaze of the judgment of God, and read his doom in the glare of light before which the heavens and the earth are fleeing away. Awake, even now, and

turn and repent and call upon thy God, and secure a peace with him which the destruction of the universe cannot disannul.

A state of spiritual slumber is extremely perilous to any soul. When Samson was sleeping on Delilah's lap, his enemies laid innumerable plots for his destruction, and during one of his periods of insensibility, the locks of his strength were shorn and he awaked, a fallen, powerless and altered man. And during our periods of spiritual drowsiness the powers of darkness are active to ensnare or to debilitate the soul. And then, when we awake at last to our duties, roused perchance by the terrors of the Lord, we find ourselves enfeebled in our energies and shackled in our powers, and are made to endure hard bondage and long imprisonment of mind, before we can be free to serve and love God in the satisfaction of religion.

Awake, thou that sleepest, either in ignorance, indifference, indolence or sin. Awake and arise from the dead. The hour is coming, nay, perchance it now is, when dead as we may be to the motives and spirit of Christianity, and deep as we may be buried in our sensual or selfish graves, we shall and must hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth. And then, if we know nothing of him with whom our great concern lies — if we take no interest in his plans and purposes, if we indolently count his work burdensome, and op-

pressive, and if in our sinful impenitence we love iniquity and loath religion, on what shall our eyes be opened but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversaries. But awake now, and arise from the dead with souls disposed to seek salvation, and Christ shall give thee light. Christ in his gospel calleth us to what? To be acquainted with God, and take satisfaction in his government and character, to seek and enjoy a refuge, and a rest of the soul in God. He calleth us to what? To exalt our minds above the present variable and unstable world; to rest our affections on a state beyond the reach of change and trial, to become the citizens and take an interest in the affairs of a city, which hath eternal foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He calleth us to what? To a lively, cheerful and energetic course of christian duty, a course, which, in itself is pleasantness and its end is everlasting life. He calleth us to repentance of sin, and to an establishment with himself for time and eternity. Over all this state, into which he calleth us, Christ — in his instructions, precepts, spirit, example, death, and especially, by his resurrection and present existence, the living Lord — throws a light, shining with the wisdom and the love of God, that illumines, and cheers, and animates the whole. But the willingly ignorant, the carelessly indifferent, the indolent, and the impen-

itent, have no power either to see or walk in this heavenly illumination ; it is the sincere, the interested, the cordial servant of God alone, whose eye can perceive, and whose heart can relish, the brightness. Therefore, again we say, awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, for then and then only shall a day dawn, and a day star arise, whose lustre shall illumine the dark periods of our earthly course — whose shining shall cheer our despondencies, console our afflictions, and alleviate our sorrows ; a bright and morning star, whose stationary existence in the eternal world shall be our point of attraction, and our joyful guide through the dark and mysterious voyage of death. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give the light.

S E R M O N X .

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR 1826.

JOB xxiv. 1.

TIMES ARE NOT HIDDEN FROM THE ALMIGHTY.

MY brethren, we are now gathered in the house of God, for the last time in the present year. A few hours more, and its whole circuit shall be completed; this portion of duration shall then exist only in name, and we shall have no further connexion with it, than so far as the consequences of its events, and of our doings, in the course of it, shall affect our temporal or spiritual state. It will soon close its account; seal up its testimony concerning us, and deposit it in the record on high. And seeing that these times are not hidden from the Almighty, wherefore should we allow them to be hidden from us? They are had in remembrance of God, and we, as his creatures, accountable to him for the use of our moments, shall do well, to have them in our remembrance; and at the closing of the year, bring ourselves to heartfelt

meditation on the passing of time, and the near approach of eternity. There are many thoughts which spring in the contemplative mind, at the end of the year, and we trust that our Sabbath moments may be usefully devoted to such of these, as the occasion suggests, and which I now propose to set forth.

The *First* thought that occurs on the close of the year, is the great space, which has now been stricken out of our earthly lives — the large proportion of our time which has finished its course, never to return to us. Estimate the measure of our days, if we will, at three score and ten years; and one more seventieth portion of it has now ceased to be. But from our estimate, strike out the portions lost in infancy, childhood, sleep, sickness, imbecility and various modes of uselessness; and of the little that remains, a year consumes a fearful part. We look back upon the space when it is finished, and lo, we have one year more, to account for, and one year less to live. We have one year less to anticipate of the duties, labors, trials, and changes of mortality — one year less of earthly comforts, pleasures or pursuits to expect; and we have one year less of opportunities for repentance, faith, profession, moral virtue, and practice and experience of religion. The sun that daily rolls over our heads, shall diffuse his light upon us, through a term now shortened by another year;

and the shades of night shall shadow us in equally diminished number. Winter and summer, seed-time and harvest, have each, for us, struck out another unit from their sum; the term of our various occupations, waits for our presence and labors, by a space now lessened in the measure of a year. The places that now know us have lessened the period through which they will know us, in time to come. And the whole scene of our earthly walk, has contracted its circle, and approached so much the nearer to extinction. Mortals! to whom God has allotted on earth, times before appointed, and bounded habitations for a temporary space of action, can ye see this space so greatly diminished, witness the summing up, and the close, of so important a portion of your human being, without receiving to the heart the solemn reflection, that so many of our allotted sands have run, and that we have completed our way across so large a portion of our mortal existence? Time rolls his ceaseless course, and bears us on his rapid stream, nearer and continually nearer to the boundless and fathomless ocean of eternity. Dream not then upon the years that are to come; but here, at the end of the present, let us pause, and recall the moments past away, and lay it up in the heart, how vast a portion of our human life is already spent; how little of course must remain; and how rapidly we are pro-

ceeding to exhaust even this little space, and hastening onward to the world where time shall be no more.

Secondly. At the close of the year, the mind naturally reverts to the deaths which have occurred in our social circles, during the term that now ends. In this religious society the number of those who have died is twelve, comprising persons of all ages, from the infant of a few days, to the gray haired elder; through all the stages of childhood, youth and middle age, and of all conditions, from the dependent pauper to the man of affluence. There were among them parents and children, brethren, sisters, lovers and friends; united to their correlatives by the tenderest associations of the heart. And these deaths, in the midst of us, have created vast and painful chasms in many of our social and domestic scenes. Then add to these the deaths of relations and friends who dwelt in other towns, or were connected with other religious societies, and of course are not enumerated in our sum. In view of them all, contemplate the hopes destroyed, the pleasures blasted, the props of mind broken down, the desolations of heart, which, in consequence of these events, we have either experienced in ourselves, or witnessed in our friends. Extend our contemplation to the souls which have gone forth from earth forever, eternally separated from its scenes and opportuni-

ties ; and, truly, we have cause to be sad, in the passings away of the fashion of this world, the fadings of its grace and glory, which have taken place in our social sphere during the year which now hastens to its close, and we have more cause to send our thoughts after those who have entered the eternal world ; to tread in spirit the same region which they are treading, in fact, and bring our souls to the trial, whether we, in true resignation, can deliver them over to God ; and whether we ourselves are ready to undergo the same great change. Consider likewise, that these events, painful and trying as they are, have yet taken place within a very small portion of the whole human family, a portion too, comparatively blessed with much health, and subject, in comparison with a large part of the world, to but few of the causes which endanger the life of man. What then must be the amount of death, which has occurred over the earth during the same term of time ; the innumerable multitude of souls from every nation, and kindred and people, which have gone forth to “ that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns ” ? The tears which have been shed, the hearts which have been broken, the affections that have been torn asunder, the amount of heartfelt anguish endured, and the fearful monitions which have visited mankind, in the unearthly breathings of souls as they passed away. God

grant that our hearts may listen to these voices from the dead, and, moved by the mysterious whisperings of souls that still retain a tie upon our feelings, may set forth, with all power, to effect our preparation for the dark event that awaits us all ; and truly, counting after the manner of the scripture, a year as a day, and a day as a year, we may, some, if not all of us, hear the voice of departed friends exclaiming unto us, Be ye also ready, for tomorrow shall ye be with me.

Thirdly. At the close of the year, the mind reverts to the other changes besides death, which have occurred in our several spheres. There are many changes taking place on earth, which often affect our personal, or relative condition most essentially and most deeply, besides the changes of death ; and, during the revolution of a year, without dispute, some such have approached near to many of us. These are cases, however, in which, while some changes are so manifest, that the world may see the whole, and can measure the amount of prosperity or adversity which the altered state of things has brought unto us ; still other changes have occurred in such a manner, that the heart alone knoweth the bitterness they have produced, and the stranger intermeddleth not with the joy they have created. Then, when we stop at the end of the year, and look back, let us look through to its beginning, and compare ourselves

now, with what we then were. If in the course of this time happy changes have occurred, let the present be a day of thanksgiving for the favor; at the same time, let the very consciousness, that our favors have been conferred through the instrumentality of change, be a speaking witness to our hearts, of the excessive mutability of the world we inhabit; and that what one alteration has given us, another may take away again; so in our very rejoicing, maintain the surrendering spirit, which holds God himself, beyond all outward things, the main support of the mind, greater and better than any or every gift. If in the course of the year, disastrous alterations have occurred, here bring the heart unto submission to our Maker's will, and let the thoughtful spirit, tossed hither and thither by the storms and tempests of earthly variation, take a refuge in the great and good Being who knows not the shadow of a turn. Oh, that the varying prosperity, and varying adversity of our human existence, might, both, have the one effect of bringing us to God, and establishing our hearts in him forever and ever. Yea, and if in comparing the beginning with the closing of the year, we perceive that our Maker has led us through its days with an unvarying tenor, that we find our condition and our prospects much as they then were, let this too, move our souls to bless and trust in him who has made his providence to drop its blessing

on us every day, as the sun rises and the rain descends. And may this equable progress of earthly events be made to our willing minds, the pledge and earnest of a world where changes never come.

Fourthly. At the close of the year, the mind reverts to the events of former years. In passing back, through the periods and occurrences of one year, the mind springs farther still; flies rapidly across our former years, and gathers up as it goes, the important events which have marked their course, and various things which have affected our state and condition. When we thus, in the rapidity of thought, recur to the past, the soul at times shudders to perceive how many, and what important things have crowded themselves into our little span of life. The stations we have occupied in the school, the apprenticeship, and the family; the parts we have fulfilled in the laboring, the commercial, the civil, the literary and the religious world; the prosperity that has crowned, and the adversity that has frustrated our pursuits; the many friends with whom we have associated, and whom death or change has separated from us, leaving us to tread the wine-press alone; the parents who nursed our infancy; the friends who smiled on our childhood, and blessed or guided our expanding powers; the brethren who shared our pleasures and our toils; the near

companions who loved us in our happier day ; the children who have hung upon your arms and smiled at your tables ; with all the many associations which once existed, and now are blotted from the things that be ; these, as the mind recalls them, cast a saddening and a sobering influence over it. We replace the past to our minds, retrace the enjoyments and the hopes of other years, and, though experience and wisdom prove their fallacy, the heart still loves its ancient hopes and joys, and receives a softened sadness in the reflection, that such things once were for us, but now have melted out of being.

Time chastens and soothes the sorrow of past afflictive events, but calls on what wisdom is within us, to guide the feelings, now, to some surer rock of rest. And, if the events of a single year powerfully admonish us of the lapse of time and mutability of earth, how much more shall the recurring events of former years, lead off our minds from this material state, to that in which we trace the shadows of objects of old affection ; and enlighten our present darkness, by the commingling lustre of memory and hope. And, my brethren, while, now, at the closing of one year, we retrace the events of many, let us at the same time trace the government of a wise and good God, in all, over all, and through all ; separating our souls for a time from a world so varying in its fashion, and

so changing in its modes of action, lay hold on things eternal, in the heavens, and rest our hopes upon a state, where there is neither fleeting months, nor rolling years; and time is lost in one eternal day. And here we remark

Fifthly. That at the closing of the year, in recalling past events, and recurring to the changes we have gone through, the mind naturally turns also to things to come. Experience of the past, indeed, painfully teaches us how little dependence can be placed on what shall yet be. And at the same time reveals to us what may be, in a solemn aspect. In the mirror of the past, look at the year to come, and contemplate the events which may befall us, and which probably will occur to many of us. There is change in perpetual motion; and, in its progress, who shall predict our state at the end of this new period of time? In the expansion of our country, know ye where the bounds of our habitation shall then fall? In the progress of art and science, know ye the new pursuits to which we shall be led; the very modes in which we may be seeking our subsistence, or urging our plans for wealth? In the changes of feeling, who shall say what friends shall be associated with our hearts, or who shall be arrayed in enmity against us? In the course of the seasons, who shall predict what abundance shall be gathered from your fields, or what famine shall blast their productions and

wither your hearts in looking on your fruitless toils? In the movements of the elements, who can foretell the prospering gales that shall waft your ship over a joyous sea, in a successful voyage, or what tornadoes shall sweep her to destruction, and give the body of the mariner to those recesses of the deep, wherein it shall lie till "the sea shall give up its dead"? Of all that we now possess, who can foresee the continuance, or the loss; and where is our certainty of aught of earthly favor, amidst the unceasing changes of this changing world.

Death likewise is as constant in his action, and as imperious in his demands, as in the year, and in all years past. Blessed with associates, parents, children, or near companions now; have we made, or can we make a covenant with death, to spare them through the approaching year, and assure us of their presence, sympathy and aid, under all its burdens, and through all its events? Do you not see, how diseases are threatening and perchance have already fixed their grasp on some? Hear you not the sea, claiming its portion of human life; accident and violence demanding their share, and the pestilential atmosphere of foreign lands, waiting for its part of the annual prey? And what is able to assure unto us the lives of those we love; and allow us to rest on their continuance? Nay, to ourselves, the solemn reflection approaches with

fearful nearness. "This year thou shalt die," was a message from God, to one of our race, in the days of old ; and truly was the word accomplished. And perhaps the same message may be sent unto us, with the opening of the year which we now anticipate. To some of us the declaration is undoubtedly true, perchance to many. The year will commence and number out its counted hours, and when its last hour is telling — then, in this very house, another voice may be repeating, in other ears, the tale of past events ; and calling other souls to contemplate the changes and fates of those who now are gathered here, and shall then, possibly, have gone hence to be here no more.

Seeing, then, that such uncertainty attends the lot of man, it becomes our part to make sure of something, if anything there be, over which time and change have no power. And the God of eternity has offered unto us here in time, one precious gift that endures to everlasting life. This invaluable gift is religion ; comprised and embodied in Jesus Christ, the great author and finisher of our faith ; who, when he tasted death, abolished it, and brought life and immortality to light.

'This thought has so often been set forth in this place, that the naming of it at this time may seem like the cold repetition of an oft told tale, and yet in closing our accounts with the closing year, it

may be for our soul's good to recall the state of mind in which we were at its beginning, especially in regard to the salvation of our souls. Let us then cast our minds back to the beginning, and see if we then had made no promises to ourselves in this all important concern. Were there then in our hearts no resolutions of amendment — no vows of reformation — no decisions to turn unto God — no feelings of repentance — no acceptance of Christ in faith — no determinations to acknowledge his name — to walk in his ordinances, — and establish our souls in his outward and inward kingdom? No fixed purpose to effect what God has appointed for our course of religion on earth, and for our preparation to stand before his face? We doubt not there were many such thoughts in many minds. And we request each soul to answer to himself, whether his purposes have been fulfilled, or broken off; and how far he must adopt, as his own, the language of the scripture: "The summer is past, the harvest is ended, and we are not saved."

And will we not now accept the admonitions uttered by the year as it closes over our heads? Let us hear it as it exclaims in its mysterious flight, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

My brethren, the few hours that remain of the

present year, are rapidly dwindling down to minutes and seconds of time; even while we count them, they are fleeting away, and between the setting and the rising of the sun, shall deliver us over to another year. Oh, let this year then leave us so reconciled to God, so confirmed in Christ Jesus, so filled with a holy spirit, so ready for our duties on earth, and so prepared to meet our God in heaven, that it may ever afterwards look back upon us with a smile, and exhibit a record of our thoughts and feelings, our decisions and our doings, which we too may regard with heartfelt satisfaction.

As the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times — and the turtle, and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, so may we know the judgments of our God. And in our heartfelt surrender unto him, our cordial union with his holy one, our preparation for his service in worlds beyond the reach of time, may we in experience, realize every year of our lives to be a good and acceptable year of our God — and in patient perseverance be continually advancing toward the state where neither time nor change affects the condition of souls that dwell in God, and God in them.

SERMON XI.

A REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST.*

PSALMS cxliii. 5.

I REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD.

THERE are occasions in the life of a minister, when it may be useful for him and his people to stand aside from the common routine of pulpit service, and set forth some thoughts more particularly applicable to the existing occasion. Such an one, perhaps is the present, when we meet to worship for the first time, after having reciprocally expressed our minds in regard to the dissolution or continuance of our relation as minister and people. The events of the past week have tried my mind much, and I doubt not have also been trying to some of your minds. And while thinking on what subject it might be best to address you this morning, I have scarce for a moment, been able to abstract myself from the memory of

* Preached near the fifteenth anniversary of Mr Goodwin's settlement.

the past. Visions of former days have been continually floating before me, and things which long since have been, return and fix themselves as though they again were present. And I cannot help thinking, that it may be well, to lay before you some thoughts relating to these things which have occurred to me, at the present season; and though to some, perhaps to many of this congregation, by reason of their younger age, or more recent residence in this place, the things that took place long since among us, may seem more like dreams, than realities, yet, we doubt not, they will be willing to have them brought to view, and perhaps can experience a portion of sympathy in common with the rest of us. Fifteen years have, within a few weeks, rolled over our heads since I became the established minister of this parish and church; and with all truth it may be said that I have been among you, as your minister for more than sixteen years. The mere mention of the uncommon circumstance, of my having resided with you, as the minister, for more than a year and a half before our connexion was sealed by solemn ordination, recalls to mind the dark, troubled, and tumultuous days of that painful period, when agitations of a thousand kinds were rending men's minds, and the light was so nearly confounded with darkness, that it was scarcely possible, in many cases, to discern the path of real duty. It may

truly be said, that we, at that time, chose one another in a "furnace of affliction," and cast our lot together in an hour of doubtful tribulation. Providence has conferred some blessings on our connexion, and has also chastised us with a portion of afflictions, — no doubt, we have deserved the latter; and while we have much cause for humiliation that we have made no better use of the former, we will at least be grateful that we have received them. If God has kindly shewn favor to us, we, conscious of our unworthiness, will praise him for the blessings he has conferred, we will acknowledge his mercy in graciously bearing with our follies and our sins; and at the same time will confess the justice of those dispensations, which have so often tried our hearts and bowed down our souls.

A recurrence to this period of our first connexion, recalls to mind, not merely the general, troubled state of things which then existed in this place, although that is the first view we are apt to take of the subject. But, when we have cast our thoughts hastily over that general state of things, we soon begin to look at more particular objects as they then were, and compare them with the many alterations which have taken place, during so long a portion of time as has since elapsed. And when our mind's eye opens itself on this scene, behold how many persons appear in that

distant region of the past, who were then our friends and relations, whom we may now seek for, over the whole earth, and seek for in vain. We cannot find them, either on the ocean or the land, neither at home nor abroad, and if we would reach them at all, we must pass beyond the bounds of place and time, and look after them only in the world of souls. The fathers, where are they? and the friends and associates of ancient time, how have they vanished from the things of earth! I find, by recurring to my record, that during the sixteen years past, one hundred and fiftyseven persons have died in this parish, within my knowledge, and whose funerals, with one or two exceptions, I have attended. There have, I am aware, several deaths taken place within our local parish boundaries, which, from peculiar circumstances, have not entered into this enumeration. These instances, however, can have been but very few; and the above number may be assumed as exact, in regard to those families which have been associated with us in worship; and also those which have accounted themselves as associated with us in religion. The enumeration includes all; from the youngest child, to the oldest man — those who have died at sea, and in foreign climates, of whose death we have been made certain, as well as those who have died in the midst of their families. Upon a more accurate calculation, I find, that of

the whole number, one hundred and fiftyseven, thirtythree persons had reached to more than seventy years of age, making rather more than one fifth of the whole; of these, twenty had arrived to upwards of eighty years of age, and seven had exceeded ninety years; from which it appears, that of those who have died, twentyone in the hundred have lived seventy years; twelve in the hundred have lived eighty years, — and four in the hundred have lived ninety years.

Also, among the deaths which have occurred, seventythree have been of persons under thirty years of age; of these, thirtythree were under fifteen, and forty were between fifteen and thirty. It is rather a singular coincidence, that exactly the same number of deaths have occurred of persons under fifteen years old, as of those over seventy — thirtythree of each; the same number of children, as of aged grandparents; twentythree persons have died between thirty and fifty years of age, and twentyeight between fifty and seventy. The average number of deaths in each year is a little short of ten. Assuming the number of persons in this parish at seven hundred, which however is mere conjecture, it gives an average in each year of one death for every seventy persons living, which, I believe, is not far from the general average in this part of our country. And the proportion of those who had attained to over seventy years is

greater than is common. Of those who have lived over ninety years, the proportion is much greater than the common average of New England. We have enumerated seven of these who have died in this parish, and we know of some others who had reached that age in this town, but who are not comprehended in our account because they were not members of this parish ; it certainly bears much testimony in favor of the healthiness of our region ; notwithstanding our climate is so capricious, notwithstanding our sky is so often "foul with clouds," our atmosphere so often surly with the east wind, and so often disturbed with tempestuous gales ; notwithstanding we are at times deluged with rains, and then again burnt with excessive heat ; still it tells much in favor of the tendency to longevity in this region, that so many have survived to such extreme old age ; and that so many even now exist, who still sustain the shocks of years and the attacks of time, and are advancing with good hope nearer and nearer to the same reverend station in society.

But I have been much moved and it is greatly affecting to perceive, that the greatest proportion of deaths have occurred between the ages of fifteen and thirty years ; the number between these years being forty, and that several others exceeded the last date, some only a few months, and some but two or three years. This is very different

from the common habit of our country in this point of view. I sought the cause of this difference, in the perilous pursuits of our young men on the ocean, and in foreign climates; and a great part of the cause may be found there. As many as thirteen of the forty have perished on the sea, or by accidents connected with a seafaring life, or in distant unhealthy regions of the globe. Others of our young persons have died, not in this town, but still in our own country; but by far the greater proportion have sickened and died at home. This then, is perhaps that period of life, at which our climate threatens the human constitution the most, and hence our hearts have so often bled, at witnessing the sickness, suffering and death of those youthful ones, on whom society was relying for its future constituents, and on whom parents were trusting for the support and solace of their old age. In making this calculation of those, who, during my ministry, have died in childhood, of those in youth, middle life, and old age, strange and mysterious thoughts have risen before my mind concerning them. In setting forth to you the result of these calculations, I doubt not that thoughts equally, perchance more strange and mysterious, have floated before your minds. The venerable forms of fathers and mothers, whom our hearts delighted to honor, return from their mysterious place of abode, and move in our sight once more,

in spiritual majesty; and call from within our souls, those feelings of respectful reverence which we were ever used to render them, when they stood among us in living substance, and, while they lay their finger on the mark, that designates the distance we have now travelled over the world, they beckon us along to that eternal state, of which they already have become the citizens — associated with them, appear to our minds, the forms of those, in the meridian of life, as though they were visiting again the hearts with which, in human nature, they were so often and so deeply associated. Nor will there fail in the vision, the images of the young children, that from year to year have been translated to the spiritual world, without having been wounded by the sting of death. And last, not least in the group, there shew themselves the images of interesting, beloved and endearing youth, severed from this earthly state, at an age when heartfelt affections, and new and better interests, and high and holier hopes were clustering round them in our souls. When in our inward sight we perceive these objects of our love again, and renew for the time the associations of feeling which once existed between our souls and them, it is surprising what little difference we make between the infant of days, and the man of gray hairs; they stand before us in one group, citizens of one spiritual state, with one admoni-

tion, they remind us of eternity, and with one exhortation they call us to make ready, and follow them. These whom we thus recall were your own parents, your brethren, your sisters, your conjugal companions, your children, tender and dearly beloved, our associates in the daily walks of life, our acquaintances and our friends; and coming, as we may say, out from the deep regions of the spiritual world, they, in their whole number, utter the one exclamation to us all, "tomorrow shall ye be with us," and direct our hearts to seek in our God, the only refuge which any of them have experienced, whether in the material or the spiritual state. And while in him we trust, concerning those whose deaths we thus recall, may this review of the past move us to effect our own establishment with Christ, the Lord of the dead and the living, and insure our peace with God, that so we may secure our interest, and our portion with whatsoever is valuable, in those who have gone into eternity before us. That so, also, we may retain them in our mind, as portions of our treasure in the heavens, and objects of our hope and interest in a better world.

In reviewing the past, next to the statement of the deaths which have occurred, we observe concerning marriages, that during my ministry I have attended the solemnization of seventysix marriages. This number perhaps comprises two

thirds of the marriages which have taken place in this parish, and if this calculation be correct, it would make the whole number about one hundred and fourteen. Marriage we esteem an occasion of joy, as it commonly is, a season for blessings and every expression of good will. And yet, in looking over a record of the marriages of fifteen years, some dark spots appear, and painful views arise even in this respect. The separations by death which have already taken place; the misfortunes which have attended some of those who set forth together with happy hopes; the sicknesses, the varied afflictions of their families, and the new and distant destinies which sometimes followed the union; these cast a sombre aspect, over a retrospect of the marriages of so many years, reviewed in one mass, and certainly have much effect in sobering our views of human life, and diminishing our satisfaction in contemplating the extension of our settlements, and expansion of our growth. I know not that we have more reason however to be sad, in such a retrospect, than would be the case in any other society in our country; and, most assuredly, the retrospect gives us much reason to rejoice and be glad in the families which have sprung up, or have been renewedly established around us, by means of the connexions which have taken place within these years. We will, therefore, bless God, for the

favours he has conferred on us herein, while we must needs humble our hearts, when we contemplate the frequent destructions of the hopes of man upon the earth, brought to remembrance by this review.

The number of baptisms which have been administered in your church is one hundred and four — of these eightyfive were children, and nineteen adults. I would, my brethren, that this ordinance were more generally attended, that the church might often witness parents bringing their children to be consecrated to God, and offering themselves also living sacrifices to the Lord. I would that your hearts might often experience the sealing, or the renewing of a covenant with God. Inhabiting as we do a material world, and blended as we are, with outward modes of existence, this outward ordinance, sincerely practised, is not only one of those great helps, which God has prescribed for the exercise and nourishment of the inward sense of religion, but also one of his appointed means for maintaining religion in the world ; and could this matter be fully perceived, in all its objects and designs, we can scarce believe that parents would consider themselves as having their rights in their offspring satisfactorily established, on just foundations, till they had brought them to the house of God and consecrated them on his altar, and received them back anew, as

freshly intrusted to their care, to be brought up for him whose name had been invoked upon them.

The number of persons who have entered your church, during my ministry, is seventyfour. Of these fourteen are dead, nine have removed from the town, and six have transferred their relations to another church, leaving fiftyfive members of this church, who have become so within the last fifteen years. There are still surviving twentysix members of the church, who were so at the time of my ordination, making in the whole eightyone, and of those who have died in this parish thirtyfive were professors of religion connected with your church. During the first eight years of my ministry, no year passed without witnessing an increase in the number of professors of religion, greater or less, from year to year. The church grew and multiplied, at least in numbers; whether in grace, we leave it for God to judge; but, during the last seven years, there has been a most painful deficiency in regard to the profession of religion in your church. In one case, three entire years went by without witnessing the entrance of a single individual into this relation with God. While man however has been sitting silent in this respect, and watching the wasting away of this part of the city of our God, death and change have been busy at work, and through the operation of these causes, your church is now thirteen less

in number than it was four years ago. It was this circumstance I confess, which wrought upon my mind as much as any to induce me to propose a separation. I beheld your Zion mourning for the loss of her sons and daughters, and becoming from year to year, more and more waste and desolate. And though I do not believe, with some, that salvation cannot be found without the pale of the church, nor yet, that there is not much religion, in those who make no formal profession of it, yet I also believe, that where religious principle is embraced in the heart, it naturally leads to some mode of covenanting with God, and of establishment with Christ, for the confirmation of the mind, and the support of his cause — and the becoming members of his church by profession of his name, being the common mode among us, we look to this of course, as the way for the Christian, and where no such things take place, we are sad, and feel as if the work of the great Master were not proceeding. I could not believe that all this failing state of things was owing to the people only; a portion of it, if not the whole, must, I thought, be owing to the minister, and thinking that a change of the person might perhaps produce a good effect, I was induced, from this, among other causes, to propose to you the measure which I did. You, it seems, thought differently from me; and to prove it, made an alteration in the mode of my support,

for which I most cordially thank you, and finding myself in the minority, in my opinion of the separation, I felt it a duty, to accord with the expression of the people's mind and remain your minister. Time only can develop the effects of this proceeding, and God alone is acquainted with the consequences which will follow. It is my own wish, and my purpose, while I sustain this office, to give myself to it entirely. But well aware of many deficiencies in myself, and aware that there must exist others of which I am not conscious, I enter on this renewal of duties with much meekness and much trembling, and much consciousness that a higher power than man, can alone render it effectual. That there have been some good effects resulting from my past ministry, I cannot help believing, and will not affect the humility to deny; for with true conscience I can at times extend my mind into the spiritual world, and hold communion with souls abiding there; whose earthly sorrows were once soothed, whose minds were once enlightened, whose ways of religion were once in a measure guided, and whose death beds were cheered, by the grace of God reaching them through the instrumentality of my services, however poor and unworthy. And I will even allow myself to hope, that there are some souls yet on earth, who have received some thoughts on religion through my mind, and whom

my words, however weak, through the blessing of God, have enabled to take some hold upon a better and a happier world. But sensible, likewise, how little has been effected where so much ought to have been done, the opportunities neglected, which ought to have been improved for my Master's work, and the uselessness, which in so many cases has attended my way, I can now do no more than follow the present indications of providence; to walk further along through the wilderness of earth with you, and put myself into the hands of him who orders our destinies, and rules our events, and leave it for him to make what use of me he will in the present time, and be ready to follow whatever order of things he may mark out before us in time to come. If it be his will that one shall sow and another reap, he also can graciously ordain, that he which soweth and he which reapeth shall yet rejoice together.

We have so often seen man appointing and God disappointing, human hopes prostrated and expectations made vain, that in entering on any new state of things, we cannot help indulging many doubts and fears, and suffering glooms and shadows to gather in many points upon the prospect before us. Such also is the peculiar nature of the christian ministry, and so mysterious the operations of mind, which may render it vain, that God alone can foresee the effects of anything relating

to it ; while, therefore, we order our plans according to what we think right, and good, we must repose our supreme confidence in something higher than our own wisdom, and superior to our own desires. We can but offer such sacrifices of righteousness as we think requisite, and then put our trust in the Lord.

'The great object of the christian ministry is usefulness ; in the hope of this, we have now adopted our measures, and may the God of our Lord Jesus grant his blessing on them.

SERMON XII.

A DUE ESTIMATE OF THE PRESENT LIFE.

JOB vii. 16.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY.

WHEN I read this expression of Job, in this public manner, my mind images forth many thoughts, which may naturally spring up in the minds of many of my hearers. You, perchance, repeat the passage to yourselves, and say the words, "I would not live alway," with many doubtful imaginations, as to the truth of the sentiment. What, it is suggested to one, is not the light sweet, and is there not attractive beauty and excellent glory in this creation of God? We answer yes, so long as we have eyes to behold it, mind to contemplate it, and a heart to feel it, so long, it is a desirable thing to live in a world where the glory of God is shining from morning till night, to delight the mind, and day unto day is uttering knowledge of the Most High.

"I would not live alway," replies another.

Why thus? Is there not abundance of pleasure to be sought and gathered on earth, in things which are soliciting our enjoyment? If we are disposed to be pleased, we have but a little way to go in the pursuit of pleasing things; see you not how spring breathes fragrance, summer inspires joy, autumn scatters plenty, and even winter itself extends its hours of cheerful satisfaction; and the different relations of social and domestic life, do they not afford pleasures innumerable inviting us to partake? And would we not live alway in a world where so much pleasure can be reaped? Perhaps so, as long as we retain the elastic limb, the healthful pulse, the cheerful heart, and spirit, unbroken by disappointment and misfortune and always willing to be happy; as long as we retain that state, in which all things minister enjoyment to the sense, so long it is desirable to live in a world, where our kind Creator has accumulated so many means, for satisfying the wants and gratifying the will of his creatures.

“I would not live alway,” it is again exclaimed, with exceeding incredulity. What! not amidst the engaging plans and schemes and interesting purposes of life, the skilful pursuits of wealth, honor, and ambition? Amidst the works in arts and sciences, in which we are engaged; our various occupations, which afford to ourselves subsistence and are daily bringing forth something

for the benefit and convenience of our associates? Not amidst the intellectual pursuits which occupy our minds, and the search after truth, which leads to so many pleasing discoveries? Occupied as we are from hour to hour, with skilful, interesting, and pleasing plans, labors and pursuits, shall we not wish to live always? It may be so, at least as long as the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, bread to the wise, riches to men of understanding, and favor to men of skill, and so long as success always attends caution, prudence and persevering endeavor. As long as man retains a heart devoted to the same objects and taking an interest in the same occupations, cares and pursuits, — so long it is quite natural, that man shall not much remember the days of his life, because God is now answering him every day in the daily joy of his heart. And we too, it is again replied, would not we live always, who are walking amidst a circle of friends, with whom we hold free communion of mind, associates, who lighten our labors and cheer our hearts with daily intercourse; we who meet at our firesides the heart connected with our own in every care, labor and earthly purpose? We, who have children rising by our sides, and becoming daily, more and more parts of ourselves — we, whose affections are enlarging, and whose hearts are gathering new objects of attraction and communion — would not

we live alway? And truly if there be any one circumstance better calculated than another to make life desirable, it is the possession of such associates of the heart. Man was intended by his Creator for a social being, and so attractive and soothing, are true friends and near relatives, that, surrounded with these, one might indeed be but little disposed to adopt the sentiment of our text, and say " I would not live alway."

But notwithstanding these many thoughts which the expression in our text may suggest to our minds, still there are many and powerful considerations, which tend, sooner or later, to diminish the attractions of the present life ; and which proceeding in their influence, destroy at last the very wish to live. And we perhaps may do well to pause for a time, and lay aside for a season our multifarious engagements, to consider within ourselves, how many things exist, which may bring our hearts at length to be weary of life, and to contemplate death itself as a relief more to be sought than continuance in the present state of being.

There is in the *First* place, a frequent and painful variation going on, in those outward things, with which we are closely connected in the world. Man's happiness, so far as relates to this life, consisteth not in the abundance of his goods, but in the satisfaction he takes in those things which

he possesses. But satisfaction is the peculiar property of the mind itself. No one is happy, any farther than he realizes satisfaction in his own soul, let the state of external things be as it may. Now, in our present mixed condition of flesh and spirit, we, all of us, have our views and feelings more or less connected with certain peculiar states of outward things, and suffer our plans, hopes, and expectations to blend themselves so intimately with these, that an important alteration of external affairs, often dashes the cup of joy from our lips, strikes out of view brilliant and happy hopes, and spreads before the soul, nothing but darkness, gloom, and desolation. Could it be, that any prosperous present state of things should always remain the same, then, perhaps, we might always be gathering our sufficient measure of satisfaction out of it. But it is the order of God, that the fashion of this world shall be continually passing away, and all that there is in it of grace and glory, at the present moment, shall be perishing from before the mind. And from this appointed mutability of earthly objects it happens, that riches so often take to themselves wings and fly away, and he who was trusting in them experiences desolation. Hence too it happens, that the wisest plans are frustrated by unforeseen events, and man, who thinks his purposes are ripening fast, finds himself unexpectedly shaken from the security of his

strong holds. Hence too it is, that friendships deep wrought in the heart, sometimes wear away, and dissolve, unconsciously, almost without cause, and sometimes, amidst the diverse collisions of mind, are suddenly exchanged for enmities. From this it is, that hopes, well founded and highly exalted, are frequently prostrated, and come to nought. From this same order of providence it falls, that death, in doing its annual work on human nature, sweeps away from our side the loved associates of our earlier years, the companions who shared our pleasures and our toils, the relatives who cheered our domestic circles, and the children in whom the hearts of parents were resting. As these things pass away, it is true that other objects sometimes approach and offer themselves to our interest. New associations of the [mind spring up at times to assume the stations of those which have vanished out of sight. But then the mind, which has once been made desolate of its affections and hopes, is cautious how it trusts itself to new ones, and the new objects, which come to us in after days of our life, never fully occupy that space in the heart, which our first affections filled; there is still a void remaining, which mars the power of things of later date, and leaves the heart much less to attach it to life, than it once had. And these things of the later days, themselves likewise, in turn change their countenance and

pass away. Those which succeed them, bring to the vacated heart still less than they did; each successive change of outward objects leaves, to the soul, still less and less on earth to desire and love; till, lonesome, desolate and weary, man sighs for relief, would gladly flee away and be at rest, and covets nature's kindest boon, to die.

A *Second* cause, which produces the same effect, is the alteration which is taking place from time to time within ourselves. Allowing for the moment that our outward objects of connexion are now in a prosperous condition, and shall always continue so, that no convulsion of nature, nor doing of man, shall frustrate our plans, or disappoint our hopes, and, that so long as we exist, all outward things shall remain the same, then ask we of ourselves, whether our feelings in regard to them shall continue equally unvaried? Let past experience teach the answer. There are few of us who cannot now recall past schemes and purposes, in which our hearts were once all concentrated; schemes and purposes, which, long since, have lost all interest for us; objects and things of former days, which, when they now recur to the mind, seem more like the floating shadows of a dream than solid realities of life; and let what has been, bear witness of what shall be in the mind, in years to come, with respect to those things which in the present moment most deeply occupy our thoughts and feel-

ings. The accidents which we encounter from time to time, the diseases which enfeeble and emaciate our frames, the disquietudes which in different ways corrode the heart, and “the thousand ills that flesh is heir to,” produce such changes in the mind, that the very things we love most truly now, take it in turn to become objects of disgust, and pursuits we once followed most eagerly, the heart in turn shrinks from and loathes. Then also the very progress of life, from age to age, produces a similar effect. How different are the feelings of they outh, towards the same things, from those of the child — how different the feelings of the man from those of the youth; and as old age advances, with its infirmities, how different still are the feelings towards all outward things. Man, after a certain period, as he advances in age, most commonly advances in lonesomeness, — of his objects of attachment, some die and others lose their power to interest; as the season advances, more and more of these things sink into oblivion, and vanish out of sight, till, in the end, the lonely pilgrim in the vale of years, labors at last under the burden of mere existence, with its daily cares, and must be more in love with silence and solitude, than human beings in such state commonly are, if he should wish to live alway.

Thirdly. We remark, that, a weariness of life sooner or later takes place, because God never

intended that the human mind should be satisfied with what it finds on earth. He intends indeed to give, and he does give us, much in the life that now is. But the soul he made for himself, and he will not suffer it to stay itself in anything short of that spiritual felicity, which is to be found in himself alone. This, we think, is the true reason why the human soul never feels itself complete in any, even the most extensive accumulations of pleasant things on earth; they soon become wearisome to the heart, and the soul, conscious that in these it cannot experience real repose, turns from them with a species of disdain, and looks earnestly and anxiously after something which can satisfy its spiritual hunger and thirst. Some vast, some infinite, some all-sufficient and eternal mind, in which the mind of man may always experience repose, reciprocation and satisfaction. This all-sufficient object is God, and without himself, he never will suffer the soul to be at peace. This we think to be the real cause why he has so ordered our mortal destinies, that after our number of years for earth has rolled over our heads, we shall then become, from year to year, less and less pleased with earthly things, nay, more and more dissatisfied with them, and so, by the very desolating of the heart, be made to seek for that infinite one which can fill the susceptibilities, and meet, in every step, the expanding thoughts and feelings of

the expanding spirit. To this same cause, may be also traced this principle, which it has often fallen to the lot of visitors at the bed of death to remark — namely, that however much the human intellect may be shattered by disease, or old age, however memory, understanding, energy, and power may have ceased, still where true religion has taken deep root, in the inward spirit of the man, then, this heavenly power has always remained in the heart to impart its consolations when the soul was insensible to every outward thing. The breathings of religion have been heard, rising from the depths of the soul through the shattered materials, the wrecks and ruins of nature, and the inward spirit of holiness has been seen anointing the heart, when knowledge had vanished away, tongues had failed, and prophecies had ceased — a pledge and earnest of the truth of the assertion that love never faileth. Then, let us never wish for an earthly immortality ; it were a gift, which, if God should grant to our prayers or request, we in time should most devoutly desire that he would take away again. We can scarcely contemplate ourselves, as having lived till all our earthly associations have perished ; standing solitary individuals in a new generation that knows us not, nor we them, without shuddering at the prospect, and imagining ourselves as entreating of God that we too might pass away and be

at rest with those who have gone before us. But while we view the matter thus, — let us see to it, with all prudence, that we prepare ourselves for the issue. God may will that we may stand on the earth for a time, the breathing monuments of a generation which has long since ceased — to be gazed and wondered at perhaps, as the monuments and ruins of ancient Egypt are now experiencing as little sympathy from the then existing age, and possessing as few common objects of remembrance, or communion. And oh, that we might now make true and successful endeavors to secure to our hearts that resource in God which never fails; that inward union with the Eternal, in which God shall become our dwelling place in all generations. The christian religion is the friend of man in life and death, for it assures him that though he cannot and ought not to wish to live alway in the present world, still, no farther distant than across the grave, a world expands, where God reveals himself in all the brightness of his countenance, and the soul that loves him shall always experience a consolation, increasing with its increasing powers of perception and joy. To him then let us hasten, and effect our lasting union with the Almighty, by him whom he hath sent, for however long or short be our continuance on earth, still the hour approaches, and that with rapidity we cannot measure, when nothing can sustain the

heart but God, nothing afford a refuge but the Eternal One. And while we know it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, let us avoid the necessity of such a fearful fall, by approaching to him, willingly, while he invites us, and make our peace with him by the embracing of his accepted Messiah, and, having our Creator for our object of supreme confidence and daily communion, we may smile in composure at the external changes of outward things — may watch, without dismay, the decaying of our earthly natures, and when all inferior objects melt away and leave us alone, still shall we hold on him who never leaves nor forsakes the soul, and still shall we rejoice in the God of our salvation.

SERMON XIII.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE PRESENT STATE.

2 PETER iii. 11.

SEEING THEN THAT ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE DISSOLVED, WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YE TO BE IN ALL HOLY CONVERSATION AND GODLINESS ?

IN this chapter of his epistle, Peter discourses much concerning the dissolution of the visible heavens and earth, the destruction of the outward universe ; when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, and then sets forth by way of inference, the inquiry in our text, “ Seeing, therefore, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness ? ”

Many different opinions are held, with respect to the exact meaning of the divine inspiration in this passage of scripture, whether it was the intention of God, to affirm, that the outward

universe should literally be destroyed by material fire, and the great frame of external nature, with all its fair proportions, be reduced to its original chaos, or whether it was the purpose of the divine spirit, to represent, by these modes of speech, that which takes place in the individual mind, when we, ourselves, are separated from all these material connexions, and when we, becoming wholly spiritual existences, shall have no further perception of any outward things. For myself, I believe the latter to be the truth. We have accounts, on which we can rely, of the early ages of the world, and of the state of things among men, then existing in regard to knowledge, wisdom, and the general condition of thoughts and feelings in the human mind. We compare that condition of things of the soul, with the present state of things in the same point of view, and the difference between the two is immense. In every successive age, human nature has been making advancements, either in knowledge, wisdom, or virtue. And, in regard to religion, compare the world now with what it was in its first ages, and truly we may say, "the earth has been brought out of darkness into marvellous light." And I can but poorly think that God would have created the world, and administered his government over it in such a manner as to have led the human race up, from what they originally were, to what they now are,

and that he will continue to carry on the same work for ages to come, and be leading, onward and upward, the character of the earth's inhabitants, and yet intends at last to overthrow this whole state of advancement by destroying the earth they inhabit, and so extinguish out of being all of truth that ages have taught and eyes have discovered, and all of goodness, that time and institutions have consolidated and brought into effective and beneficial operation. These considerations, among others, and many more, of equal and greater power, have impressed on my mind a deep conviction that the dissolution of the outward universe, described in the scriptures, is intended to express what takes place in regard to the individual mind, when death dissolves our connexion with it, when we shrink away from the heavens and the earth, and all the outward frame of nature vanishes from our sight, at the spiritual coming of the Lord in his personal presence, and the glory of his power.

Understood in this spiritual manner, however, the doctrine is equally powerful, perhaps more so, to us, as individuals. And seeing that all the outward state, in which we live and move and have our being; seeing that the brilliant heavens, and fruitful earth, the orders of society with which we are now connected, and all the earthly powers that now influence our condition, seeing that unto us they shall all be dissolved, and a period shall ar-

rive, when they shall be forever lost to us, and we to them, then what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?

Death is the great dissolver of our material relations, the great dissolver of our earthly influences, and earthly relationships; and death is the momentous event which bears us away into a new, and untried mode of existence, into which we can carry no outward thing of earth, even as we brought with us no spiritual thing unto the earth, and for this reason, death is so frequently called by the name, dissolution.

Speculations are infinite in regard to the condition of man after death. And so many of these speculations rest on the notion of some outward, some material condition in which man shall be placed when he leaves the earth, and are so inconsistent with our views of spiritual existence, that we deem them altogether worthless. Our minds recoil from every thought of any outward material heavens, or material hell for a disembodied spirit to abide in. Nevertheless, there are modes of contemplating the subject, which afford some views, more consistent with our ideas of spiritual existence, and which, if we will pursue them, may perhaps move our minds to some useful trains of meditation.

Consider therefore this one great truth, the nature of mind is always the same. The soul is

that, which thinks, feels, and wills ; and this same nature endures the same, whether the soul be living in a fleshly, or a spiritual body, whether it be in this world, or any other world. The soul will still be the same being, thinking, feeling, willing, and acting.

Now our bodily senses, as sight, hearing, &c. are the mediums, by which the soul holds intercourse with the outward, material universe. The soul, herself, dwells in her own secret chambers ; there she receives notices from the outward universe, through the animal senses ; and from her secret dwelling-place, she operates upon the outward world, by means of her bodily powers. But the soul herself is a totally distinct, and different substance from all these material things. She has an inward world of her own, a separate realm, into which she retires at times, and, therein withdrawn, has for the time, little or no consciousness of being connected with a material state ; no consciousness even of being associated with a body of flesh. Like Paul in the third heavens, she cannot always tell whether she be in the body, or out of the body.

I believe there are few among us, who have not experienced some of these seasons of abstraction ; these moments of separation from the outward world. How many a time have our fleshly members been carrying us through crowded streets, in which we were seeing no living being ; how often

have shrill sounds passed across the ear, of which we heard nothing, and even at the table have we sat, and partaken of our food, quite unconscious of the taste, or even of the act. The soul, absorbed into her own internal world, has been conversing with her own thoughts, either enjoying the society of the spiritual friends she has made by a wise use of her outward state, or enduring a hard struggle with the spiritual enemies she has made, by a wicked use of her outward state. This kind of season of abstraction from the external world we call by the name of an ecstasy, or standing afar off, a fit of absence, or being gone away from present objects and affairs, and when we call it by either of these names, we speak the language of true philosophy. It is a standing afar off, — it is a true absence of the soul from things present. The soul has gone away from outward objects of sense, and is withdrawn into her secret chambers, holding converse with her own thoughts and feelings.

These seasons of abstraction are sometimes brought about, by our sudden meeting with a severe misfortune, which shatters our whole earthly condition, destroys our earthly hopes, and desolates all that earthly world of present relations which we had been enjoying, — the soul, cut off from its outward state, and waked from its earthly dreams, retires within its secret residence, and it is as if

the outward heavens and earth had vanished away.

They are sometimes brought about by means of a sudden, and sometimes of a long enduring, disease, which dissolves the attachments of the heart for earthly things, sweeps them away from before the mind, and leaves the soul alone, with nothing to converse with but itself.

They are sometimes brought about, by reason of the predisposition of the mind to inward retirement, and meditation — sometimes by the intensity of the feelings, in regard to some particular object of interest, whether it be an object of desire, or abhorrence. And they are sometimes brought about, we believe, by the direct agency of God, by his own spirit and power, dissolving the connexions of the soul with external objects and affairs, and drawing her away into her secret chambers, shewing her to herself as she is, and convincing of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

These seasons of abstraction from earth, we believe are, and ought to be so considered, foretastes of death. They are partial experiences of what will take place in the full extent at our death, and by attending to what happens in our minds, during these seasons of separation from the outward world, we may gather some ideas of what shall probably befall us when we die. This, at

least, is what we believe, and we think to be in accordance both with scripture, feeling, and fair reasoning.

Now when, by any means, we experience a season of separation from the outward world, and the soul is gone into her secret chambers, one of the first things which the soul commonly sees in secret, is the temporary duration, and comparative slight value of external things, and the relations of the external world. The soul within herself is conscious of her own eternity, feels herself superior to everything material, and knows that while external objects are mutable and perishable, yet herself, a spiritual being, shall exist forever. To a being thus conscious of immortality, the outward universe seems but as a thing of a moment; its glories fade, its fashion changes, and its temporary images vanish away, and the soul can then realize of what comparatively little value are the possessions, the promises, or the hopes of the material world. She sees, through her spiritual eye, an unbounded spiritual region of spiritual existence, and the little specks and spots of material being fade and vanish, in the vast comparison. And if, to any extent, the world recedes, or disappears from the soul, during her temporary seasons of retreat from earth, so soon to return to it again; how much more shall it be thus, at the momentous period, when she is withdrawn not merely into

the secret chambers of her house of flesh, but separated from the flesh itself, into those mysterious spiritual realms, where neither sun nor stars themselves appear, but all things vanish before the spiritual coming of the spiritual Lord, and the brightness of his eternal glory.

A second course of things, which takes place, in seasons of deep abstraction is this: The soul carries with her, to her secret recess, the memory of the past, and the anticipation, of the future, and the whole host of thoughts and feelings associated with such remembrance, and such anticipation.

In the hurry and confusion of the outward world, memory often sleeps upon her post, and lets the past escape from the mind, and anticipation forgets to look into futurity. The multifarious present, with its objects and cares, engrosses the mind, and the soul, drawn out, and diffused among things that are seen and are temporal, ceases to remember the unalterable past, or anticipate the future.

But when, by the action of events, or by the direct power of God, the soul is separated from its common outward associations, and driven back within her own secret hiding places, — then memory resumes her office, and anticipation again exerts its power.

Like the captive prisoner in his dungeon, the soul recalls the past events, her past doings, and

her past omissions of action, her good deeds and her evil deeds, her past neglects of duty, and her conquering resistances against temptation to do wrong; all that she has done, all that she has neglected to do, and all that she has refused to do, whether of good or evil, in the outward world of matter, follows her into the inward world of mind, and, conscious of the past, she anticipates the future, either with gloomy forebodings, or with joyful expectation. And this takes place, to a greater or less extent, in proportion to the greater or less extent of her present separation from the outward world.

And if so much of this consciousness and anticipation takes place in those temporary seasons of separation from earth, which occur at times to the soul in this life,—how much more shall it be thus, in that dread hour, when the whole heavens and the earth shall vanish away, not for a little while, to return again; but forever and ever, never more to be seen. When all that we have been, and all that we have done in outward life, all that we have neglected, and all that we have refrained from, come floating up to the mind from the past, and the book of God's remembrance opens itself, in the consciousness of the individual soul; and anticipations of the future spring up from every remembrance of the past.

For here we remark, that a third state of things

which takes place, in seasons of the separation of the soul from the outward world, when continued sufficiently long, is a sense of the divine presence.

The human soul, a spirit separated from the material, and borne into a secret spiritual state, sooner or later discerns the spiritual Deity. Her spiritual vision, unobstructed for the time by the films of mortality, perceives the throne of God, and him that sitteth thereon; and, in her own consciousness of her own condition, combined with an equal consciousness of the all-seeing eye of the Eternal, a judgment commences that searches not actions alone, but even the thoughts and intents of the heart. A judgment, which issues, in either a happy acquittal, the peace of accepted penitence, a sense of rest in the Most High, the beginnings of "eternal life," — or contrariwise, in the disquietudes of conscious guilt, a sense of unrepented sin — a consciousness of the wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men, the beginnings of that spiritual destruction which await those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And if such spiritual judgments, with their soul rejoicing or soul harrowing consequences, take place to the extent of which we are at times conscious, in this mortal life, how much more shall it take effect, and how much deeper shall it extend, in death. When every earthly envelopement that

now screens the soul, shall be dissolved. There will be no rock to fall on us, no hill to cover us ; but the soul, with all its consciousness, shall fall tremblingly alive into the hand of the living God ; and which way soever she looketh, shall see, on every side, herself and the divinity, now, and for ever more. Happy and blessed is he, who, as in his last dread moments he sees the heavens and the earth dissolving away, beholds the elements melting, and the universe fleeing away, may calmly feel himself borne into the mysterious world of soul, with a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and in all the mansions whereof, his covenant God is manifest — and who shall there experience a renewing consciousness of earthly words and works, professions, doings and habits, ordained of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, his own deeds done in his body acceptable to heaven, and coming back to him with refreshment and blessing in eternity ! Happy and blessed is he, who shall then experience reviving consciousness of repentance, faith, and holiness, and hear the voice of his judge saying, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee !

And wretched, indeed, the condition of him whose reviving consciousness in the spiritual world, of things wrought in the flesh, shall present only a scene of unrepented sin — of violated obligation, neglect of duty, and habitual strife against God.

That conscious ungodliness which shall be in itself its own source of unhappiness — an undying worm and an unquenchable fire.

And seeing, brethren, that all those things of time and sense, which influence us so much in the life that now is, shall surely be dissolved, — let us carefully and deeply think, what manner of persons we ought to be in this present life, in all holy conversation and godliness. Let us make such use of our outward state and earthly condition, more especially, make such use of the religious institutions, and religious privileges we have on earth, that we may furnish our souls with grateful recollections for our spiritual existence, to survive and enjoy, such as shall visit us with an anointing influence throughout all ages of our spiritual being. Let us order our earthly ways of virtue and religion, with constant reference to that eternal consciousness of the past, which shall abide with us forever and ever; and as Christians, for whom the Son of God has died as to the flesh, and for whom he lives in the spirit, let us so mark our course in the outward world, that when we are forever borne away from it, into the spiritual kingdom of God in Christ, our own consciousness may enable us to see the face of God in peace, and melt into harmonious union with the eternal mind, and the witnesses that follow us from the material world, may enable us to hear the voice of our

judge, reminding us of our earthly lives, and saying, I was an hungered, and thirsty, a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye visited me. And as Christians, also, let us leave nothing undone in this mortal life, which may give occasion to our secret witness to say, that we have ever been ashamed of our spiritual Master himself, or of his words of spiritual and everlasting life.

SERMON XIV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE SOUL

MATTHEW xxii. 31, 32.

AS TOUCHING THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, HAVE YE NOT READ THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN UNTO YOU BY GOD, SAYING, — I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB? GOD IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING.

THESE words form a part of our Lord's argument, against the doctrine of the Sadducees. The Sadducees, as you doubtless recollect, were a sect of the Jews, who believed there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit. Their minds accepted nothing beyond the outward things and outward persons of this present life, and utterly denied the thought of any resurrection of the dead, or any world whatever, beyond the present.

Now the doctrine of Christ was directly the contrary of all this; eternal life was the great theme of his discourse, and the spiritual world, the world of souls, was the great scene, which he

endeavored to present to the minds of his hearers. The whole sanction, and power of his religion depended on the one thought of the resurrection, and everlasting life of the human soul ; and this great doctrine he failed not daily to proclaim, and enforce.

The Sadducees could not, by any means, bear with this perpetual contradiction of their main tenet, that there is no spiritual world, nor any resurrection of the dead ; and they attempted to confute our Lord, by asking him a captious question, concerning the woman who had seven husbands, “ whose wife she should be in the resurrection.” He overturned the whole force of their argument, by the single assertion, that there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in the spiritual world, but all are as the angels of God. He then proceeded to enforce his great general doctrine of eternal life, by the words of our text, in which he states, that God called himself the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and affirms that God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

It is my purpose, at this time, to offer some remarks upon the great truth contained in this text, and lay before you some scriptural thoughts upon the resurrection of the human soul. It is no part of my purpose to enter into the question as to the nature of the soul. The essence of matter, or

spirit we know not. But in speaking of the soul, it will be sufficient to say, that whether material or immaterial, it is that which possesses the powers of thinking, feeling, willing and consciousness. It is that which is essential to identity — that which makes us ourselves.

Now, my hearers, my own opinion upon the subject of the resurrection and eternal life, is well known to many, if not to all of you, — and where it is not so known, it is my earnest desire that it may be, inasmuch as it often becomes my duty, to address you on a subject so interesting to the soul, and my ministry, in this respect, would be worse than useless, if when I speak upon the resurrection and the world to come, I should always leave you in doubt of what I mean by it.

I therefore repeat what I have said before in this place, and what I would have distinctly understood, that I believe the resurrection to be immediate to every individual person after his death. That when the body dies, the soul rises immediately out of it, as its grave, and enters, at once, upon a spiritual mode of existence, and goes into a spiritual sphere of action; a state in which the presence of God is instantly and always perceived. That a judgment then takes place, which reveals man to himself, in the light of the Eternal's countenance, and his lot in the spiritual world is assigned, according to his fitness or unfitness of

heart for the service and enjoyment of God. This, I believe, is the only resurrection, and only judgment which man has to go through after death. Having once left his body, he returns to it no more, and is forever entered into his new state, without reference to any other future judgment, or any other resurrection.

I make this brief statement of my belief, through a desire to set it before you with all plainness. I am well aware that there are not very many who coincide with these views; that in many respects, I stand alone in them, and, of my brethren in the ministry, the greater part view the matter in a very different light. Nevertheless, believing it with the most entire fulness of persuasion, I cannot with true conscience refrain from expressing it to you, and doing what I can to persuade you of its truth.

The most common doctrine, upon this subject, is, that the resurrection, spoken of in scripture, does not take place till the final end of the world. That when that period arrives, and the earth is destroyed, then all mankind will be raised at once, and be judged all together, in the presence of God and each other, and the final allotment be then made between the good and the evil. Concerning the state of the soul, between death and resurrection, many different opinions are entertained.

Some believe that the soul, after death, enters into an intermediate state, that it is either happy or unhappy, according to its goodness or wickedness, but not to the full extent of its capacity, and in this middle state, waits for the general judgment, before it becomes completely happy or miserable.

Some believe that the soul, after death, goes at once either to heaven or hell, in the entire fulness of one or the other, and at the end of the world, the body is raised, and the soul comes back into it, to go through a judgment with all the rest of the world. Others believe that the soul sleeps with the body, in the grave, till the final end of the world, and is not conscious of anything till the last day; that then the soul and body rise together as one, and man receives his everlasting doom, as one new risen from a long sleep. And there are various other opinions, differing from these in a greater or a less degree, — but, generally, referring the resurrection and the judgment, to the final end of the world, the far distant, last day.

But I must affirm, that my own mind dissents entirely from every view of the subject, which thus sets the resurrection and judgment at a distance. I believe it is near at hand — little, if at all, farther off than death. There are many considerations which have fully persuaded me, that man rises again, when his mortal body has become unfit for

the longer residence and use of his soul ; that God finds occupation for him in another world, and that as soon as he quits his house of flesh, he becomes the immediate inhabitant of a new spiritual body, stands instantly in the presence of his Maker, endures the judgment of God upon him, and receives his new allotment of station, duty and condition of being, and having once left his body of flesh, has never any more connexion with it. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.

It has often been said, and doubtless it is more often thought, that these opinions are rational, but are not scriptural ; that reason is in favor of them, but that the scripture is against them. It is true, rational views are in favor of our doctrine. It is perfectly consistent with all right reason to believe, that man begins here to live, and when he has done with earth, goes onward to another state, and returns no more ; but so far from the scripture being against it, we think directly the contrary, that the scripture is wholly in favor of it. And we now propose to set forth some of those scriptural views which decidedly uphold it.

In doing this, we go back to the beginning of the scripture account, and read that man was made a living soul. A living soul, made, as it is, in the image of God, is an active, thinking, intelligent existence, and we can hardly think of such an

one, that the living God, who created it a living spirit, would suffer it either to perish, or allow it to lie through unknown ages, in a state of unconscious death, inactive in the grave. Much less, can we think that God, having advanced this living soul far into eternity, in knowledge and power, would at some distant day bring it back from its wide extension, to be compressed once more in the beggarly elements of flesh and blood. It is far more consistent to believe, that the living soul, once having gone out from its material tegument, shakes it off, like a worn out garment, and leaves it forever with the farewell words, "dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return."

Also, we read of Enoch, that he walked with God, and was not, for God took him. This is explained by the apostle, who tells us that Enoch was translated without seeing death. In other words, he passed, immediately, from the material to the spiritual world, and instantly commenced a new mode of existence, entered a new scene of duty and enjoyment, and was introduced to new and better modes of walking with God. And as to his mortal body, we think it was dissolved into its constituent elements, as the soul ascended out of it and left it to its fate. But we read of one, at least, who was expressly called righteous, and acceptable to God, before Enoch, and probably, there were many more. Are we to suppose, that the

privilege of immediate immortality was accorded to Enoch alone, and the rest forsaken? Far otherwise, I think, that the translation of Enoch was intended to evince to the world, the immediate immortality of all good men. That though, in general, it was their lot to deposit their bodies in the grave, and go through the circumstance of dying, and endure the formalities of the taking down the house of flesh; yet, by this event of his translation, it was made manifest, that the soul did not remain in the dust, but ascended to the God who gave it.

Also, when God called Moses to deliver Israel, he said what our Saviour quotes in our text. *I am* the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob; not *was*; he said this four hundred years after these men had departed from the mortal state. Undoubtedly then these men were at that time alive, in a state of active service, love, and enjoyment of God, when God spake thus to Moses; and therefore, he was not ashamed to be called their God, still; as he would have been, if he had suffered them either to perish out of being, or had left them to lie unconscious in the grave; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Further, we read of Moses, that God buried him in such a secret manner, that no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day. Believe that his mortal

materials were dissolved to their original elements, and his immortal part arose to the world of souls and all difficulty vanishes, on this subject, which without such a supposition, is encumbered with countless difficulties. He was buried, we believe, by dissolving his body into its primitive elements, and not by digging a grave or framing a sepulchre.

Also, we are told, that Elijah was suddenly and miraculously taken up into heaven, with horses of fire and a chariot of fire, and in a whirlwind. And we cannot imagine, that he was taken from the world in this miraculous manner, in order to be cast down again into a grave, and lie there in silence till a general resurrection, and far distant judgment. We cannot for a moment doubt that he, too, was translated to the world of souls, the presence and enjoyment of God. And we can but poorly think that the bodies of either Enoch, Moses, or Elias, were brought down to be buried in some secret grave, and there kept till a distant end of the world, for them to look them up and assume them again. They were doubtless clothed then with their spiritual bodies, and their earthly ones were restored to the elements out of which they had been compounded at first.

Nay, we know that the two latter men were in existence, and consciousness, and action, in the time of Christ, for when his death drew near, they came down from heaven to converse with him con-

cerning it ; and were, doubtless, anticipating the new joy they should experience, when, his earthly decease being accomplished, they should receive him to reign in the midst of them, in divine majesty and power. And it were absurd to imagine, that these few individuals were all who had inherited immortality, at that period. What think you of Noah, of righteous Abel, of Melchizedeck, Gideon, Samuel, Daniel and all the prophets, and the whole host of good men, who had wrought righteousness and served God, and unto whom the Most High shewed so much favor? Were they forgotten in the dust, or remembered, only in view of some far distant day? And are they still asleep, unconscious, silent, inactive, and dead? And does the scripture of the Old Testament range itself then against our doctrine of immediate immortality? If any say so, I will call on Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Elias, to bear witness to the contrary ; and compassed about with this cloud of witnesses, we fear not to affirm again, that when the dust returns to the dust as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Further, we remark that this is the doctrine of our Lord Jesus himself, that eternal life was his great theme — and that he understood the resurrection to follow near on to death. It manifestly appears, in his conversation with the Sadducees, from

which we have taken our text, in which he shewed how much they erred, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God — and plainly revealed the then present immortality of some, and proved thereby the immediate immortality of all.

It equally appears, in his conversation with the sisters of Lazarus. They believed, in the common way, that the resurrection was a great way off, at the last day, so distant that it had no power to comfort them in grief, or affect their hearts in any way. Christ said to Martha, on that occasion, thy brother shall rise again; and she replied, I know he shall rise; but when? in the resurrection, at the last day. A period, so distant, that she could gather no consolation from it, for her present affliction. But Christ answered at once, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.” The same thought appears in his last conversation with his disciples, when he told them that he was going to provide a place for them, and would come again and receive them to himself, that where he was they should be. He made no mention of a distant day of judgment, when he would come and receive them, but seems plainly to have meant the day of their death. And, in this sense, he fulfilled his promise to his

martyr Stephen, when, at the moment of his death, he showed himself on the right hand of God, ready to receive the spirit of his dying disciple.

Christ, himself, also rose almost immediately after his death ; he rose, to be sure, in his mortal body, for he had need of it, for many reasons, to prove the reality of his resurrection ; that he might say to those who doubted, “ It is I myself, handle me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” He had forty days’ earthly work to do, and needed his earthly body to do it in—but when the whole was finished, and he ascended into heaven, I have no doubt at all that his earthly body was dissolved in his ascension, dispersed and scattered to its constituent elements, earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes ; and that nothing but the emancipated spirit of the conquering Redeemer, extended at once, ascended to his father and our father, his God and our God. And in this opinion I am the more confirmed by the words of the Apostle ; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Also, we read that Christ, since his resurrection, is exalted to a kingdom ; a kingdom to which he earned his title, by his toils and sufferings on earth, for the redemption and salvation of man, for suffering death ; and are we to imagine, that after having done so much to gather subjects for his kingdom, he now is contented to sit upon a

solitary throne, shining in a barren glory, and reposing in a lonesome rest? Nay, we think, he would not count his kingdom worth possessing, could he not share it with his disciples; and we much prefer believing the fulfilment of his prayer, Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may see my glory. And without dispute, such is the fact. To this state of immediate spiritual felicity, St Paul was looking, most certainly, when he desired so earnestly to depart and be with Christ. This apostle, in his views of death, never seems to have thought of anything else, than being immediately with Christ, earnestly desiring to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. And it seems greatly absurd to imagine, that after the apostle has been once raised, and has dwelt with his great Master, thousands and perchance tens of thousands of years, with all the expansion and glory to which he must have attained, that he should afterwards be brought down to this little spot of earth, and enter once more into his corrupted and dissolved body of flesh, to go through another resurrection and another judgment. St Paul, indeed, at different times makes some outward descriptions of the resurrection, which are not quite consistent one with the other; but in them all, you see this one leading thought, that he himself expected either to be changed in a moment,

in the twinkling of an eye, or to be caught up, suddenly, to meet the Lord in the air. At all events he expected to go to be forever with the Lord, and not to have to leave him, at some distant period, to assume the body again, and go through another resurrection, another trial and another judgment, and receive a new allotment of his destiny. If therefore, we are not satisfied with the testimony of the witnesses of the Old Testament, to our doctrine, we will call in those of the New. And if we believe not Moses and the prophets, we will certainly believe him who has risen from the dead, and abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; and whose inspired apostles lived and taught and died in the same faith and hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. Trusting these witnesses, we will count, as we ought, the last day to be the last day of our mortal lives, the resurrection to be the rising out of the grave of our corruptible bodies, the day of judgment to be the day of our own personal appearing before God — and the world of souls so near, that in spirit, we can, even now, enter into its mysterious regions, and see the face of immortality unveiled, in the noon of heaven, and realize our near approach to the state, in which, amid the broad splendor of the sun of righteousness, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. We will look upon the

promises of God, not as afar off, but near at hand, and set our affections on the things of a world, not lying beyond an impassable gulf; a state not distant by innumerable years, but so close to the soul, that nothing is interposed, between us and it, but the material fabric in which we now have our being, and which will soon be dissolved, and we be clothed with a new spiritual body — that which by the power of God in Christ shall be fashioned like our Saviour's glorious body. Oh, that we might in the powerful spirit of our God, at times, break through these walls of flesh, lay hold of, enter and repose, by faith, in the city which hath eternal foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Trusting the witnesses of eternal life, our faith shall people the regions of the world to come with the souls of the great and good and wise of all nations and kindreds, and with the souls of our christian relatives and friends, and those objects of our affection and attachment who have gone into the spiritual world before us. We will not think of them as corrupting in the tomb, or mouldering in the grave, nor even as lying in a state of unconsciousness, silence and darkness. We will not seek our living among the dead, but will think of them as having entered into another state, even into the presence of God, clothed with new powers, and free to enjoy or suffer, according to their own dispositions of heart in regard to God

and his laws. We will cherish the remembrance of everything good in them, and build our hopes on every foundation we have seen laid, of virtue, truth, or holiness in the mind; and suffer nothing to die, which we believe can be made of use in the spiritual region of God and Christ. Every good soul, and everything good in the soul, we will esteem a portion of our treasures in the heavens; laid up for us to find hereafter, and enjoy. It shall be to us a portion of that life of the Christian which is hid with Christ in God. It might perhaps be well for us sometimes to change the name, to call it not always death, but a transition from the material, to the spiritual state; and bring both worlds together, in the heart, as one, the kingdom of God within you. By doing this, we may keep open a door for our souls to the world of spirits, and maintain a communion of the feelings with such, as in true conscience we can relish as associates, and love as objects of affection in this or the next state of being, and give ourselves up, with more confidence, to be the followers of him, whom God has exalted to be Lord both of those in this world and those in the world of souls.

Instead, therefore, of setting the resurrection and judgment afar off, let us take it to the heart, as what is close at hand, and prepare ourselves, with all diligence, to meet our God, in the day when our connexion with the material world shall be

dissolved, and we ourselves shall hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and rise from our corrupting bodies to the judgment of the Eternal. And instead of maintaining an impassable wall between ourselves and eternity, let us often go into eternity now, and become acquainted, as the scripture invites us, with the spirits of the just made perfect, — that so we may be ready, at our resurrection, to be associated in the same assembly with Moses and Elias, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all good souls, in the presence of him who created our souls for eternity, and the mansion of him who gave himself for us, that he might bring us unto God.

S E R M O N X V .

S'T PAUL'S PREPARATION FOR DEATH.*

2 TIMOTHY iv. 6.

I AM NOW READY TO BE OFFERED, AND THE TIME
OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND.

By being ready to be offered, the apostle, without dispute, intended to say, that he was ready to die ; and knowing the danger of death in which, in that age, he constantly stood ; yea, having it revealed to him, that tribulations and bonds and persecutions awaited him everywhere, and knowing too that he must soon close his life, by a sudden and violent death, he was always conscious that the time of his departure was at hand. Yet, from this approaching end of life, he shrunk not in the least. This mortal life appears to have been a minor object of his consideration, so much so, that he was always ready to give it up, when called for ; nay, sometimes choosing it, and prefer-

* Preached at Kingston on the last Sabbath of Mr Goodwin's public ministrations.

ring to die rather than live. This state of mind, however, in which he chose to die, rather than live, seems even in him, to have been only an occasional state; it was not always so; but a readiness to part with life, when required, appears, plainly to have been habitual with him. It was his constant frame not to estimate his life dear; and the approach of death, unto him, never seems to have excited a feeling of regret at leaving this world, nor a feeling of fear, at what might afterwards befall him. This is by no means the common habit of human nature. To by far the greater part of our race, death is an object of terror, and wide dismay; something [frightful to contemplate in all its different relations; a thing, the dread of which in so many cases, keeps the souls of men, all their life-time, subject to bondage. There must then have been some exceedingly powerful principle in the heart of the great apostle, which had thus conquered the last enemy, made him as willing to die as to live, and kept him steadfastly waiting, with calmness of mind, for the time of his departure, ready to be offered. It may be well for us, to inquire, and ascertain if we can, what the causes were, which produced and maintained this state of mind, in this eminent apostle, and, by divine grace, we may, perhaps, gather out of this mode of contemplation, something for our own edification.

In pursuing this inquiry, we remark, in the *First* place, that he had made his peace with God, by an entire submission of himself to his sovereignty. This appears evident at the time of his conversion. When the first words he uttered, after the change of his mind, were these, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” This apostle, before that period, was, like other irreligious men, supremely a lover of himself more than a lover of God; and he, in particular, was so inveterate in his selfish ways, that he was prompt with all malice, to persecute and destroy everything which interfered with his selfish modes of thinking, whether it were in religion or anything else. And in that state, we believe, death was as terrible to him, as to any other man, conscious of no peace with God. But after he had effected this submission, and surrendered himself to the divine disposal, he found himself in a new relation to the Most High, and in true conscience felt that he was not his own, he was the property of God. His mind, falling into this track, learned to estimate death, as well as other events, under the absolute control of the God to whom he belonged. He saw that he, himself, had no right to his own life. That the great Sovereign, to whom he had given himself over, had the only right, as well as the power to dispose of him and his, according to his own wise counsels, and in furtherance of his great purposes, — and in this gen-

eral feeling of entire submission to the divine will, he kept himself waiting for the divine command, ready to die, when such should be the manifested pleasure of his Almighty Ruler. This is a principle of immense consequence in our views of religion. Self is the first, great and supreme object of the human soul by nature; and God is the supreme object of the true child of God. And, the rejecting of self as the sovereign of the heart, and the embracing of God, as the sovereign, is, we think, the conversion so often spoken of in the scriptures; it is the being born of God; it is the passing from death unto life — the entering into that kingdom of God which is always nigh us, even at the door. And we suspect, that many of the disquietudes of human nature, in view of death, arise from not giving sufficient attention to this particular. It is true we sometimes hear strange and incredible things said in regard to conversion, things which perhaps make us reluctant from the very word. Nevertheless, the doctrine itself is true, and when we reflect upon the exceeding great change of the feelings that takes place, when man forsakes self as his supreme lord, and embraces God as his sovereign, we may well expect expressions of deep feeling from the heart, when it first experiences satisfactory repose in the Most High; and whatever mixtures may sometimes take place, at such seasons, of things material,

with things spiritual, still, so long as it is true, that man must be turned unto God before he can have peace with his Creator, so long it is requisite that we make diligent inquiry into our own souls, whether this surrender unto God be not the thing we lack, when we experience disquieting fears of death. We never can be reconciled to this momentous event, of death, till we are reconciled to the God who rules it ; nor until we can give ourselves up to be disposed of at his sovereign will ; and if to any of our hearts, death shews itself always clad in terrors, and compassed round only with fear and horror, then, if we will enjoy quietness, we must repent and be converted, and seek peace of mind, by seeking peace with God, who alone is the source of calm repose, and the foundation of a serenity, which neither life nor death can unsettle.

Secondly, we remark, concerning the apostle, in relation to his fearlessness of death, that he believed in his heart, that Jesus was the true Messiah, and with equal depth of affection embraced him as his own Lord, and accepted his religion, as the system in which he could safely, and happily, and confidently serve God. There is such a thing as being surrendered to God, without believing in Jesus the Messiah. There is such a thing as being surrendered to God then, without being a Christian. These things took place in the

world, before the Messiah was born — when men gave themselves up to God, but knew nothing and believed nothing, concerning a Christ. These same things take place now, in those parts of the world where the Messiah is not known, where men, at times, have unwavering faith in God, but have never heard the name of Jesus the Messiah. And we cannot help believing that they take place also, at times, in what we call in general, christian lands, but in those places, or under those circumstances which exclude the author and finisher of the christian faith from the eye of particular minds. So that men see not, and know not Jesus the Christ, and yet submit themselves to the judgments of the Almighty. Now all such surrendering to God, if it be only sincere, induces a blessing, and does much, to overcome the fear of death, inasmuch as it brings the human soul into contact with the Deity; makes the man a spiritual being, in a measure, and lifts him off from this present narrow world, into the eternal regions of God, the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity. But man, in such a converted state, needs and wants some present religion, for his guidance, his consolation, the support and establishment of his mind; and there is no religion approved and acknowledged of God, or accordant with conscience, but the religion of Christ. This religion the apostle embraced, when, in his heart he embraced Jesus as the true Messiah;

and, having established his soul in this system of faith and practice as the true one, he went forward from day to day, with confidence, that he was now following a master whom God had acknowledged, and was doing the will of the Most High, by being the disciple of Jesus his Messiah. Hence he so often spoke of the satisfaction he experienced from serving God with his spirit, in the gospel of his dear Son. This single circumstance had immense power upon his mind, in eradicating the natural fear of death. For he had now found, what he knew was acceptable to the divine Being, had embraced it in his heart, professed it with his mouth, and set forth to practise and follow it in life and godliness; and in this solid faith of the soul and habitual practice, he knew that it was not in the power of life or death, nor things present nor things to come, to separate him from that love of God, which he saw so clearly to be in Christ Jesus, his Lord. Perhaps, my brethren, when the thought, or the prospect of death makes any of us greatly afraid, our terrors may arise from our want of this establishment of the soul in Christ. When we think on God, and make our choice of him as our supreme object of affection, we want some assured religion, which we are confident God acknowledges as the truth; by which we may safely order our ways, on which we may erect our hopes, and out of whose treasury we may

extract our supplies and consolations. God has graciously given us this needful thing in the religion of his dear Son, and if we would have our disquietudes assuaged, and our souls at rest, then hear and obey the voice of his inspiration, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and thou shalt be saved." And truly in embracing him, we embrace a Master whom our Creator himself has acknowledged; in honoring him, we honor one whom God has honored; and in following his religion, we may offer ourselves and works to God, in unwavering confidence that they will find acceptance. In this course we may experience redemption from the dread of death, for believing and obedient hearts well know, that death cannot separate the soul from the living God, any more than any other change.

But we remark, *Thirdly*, concerning the apostle, that he believed in his heart, and professed and proclaimed the doctrine of another life immediately to follow the present. He knew it as a fact, that God had raised up Jesus from the dead, and made him the first fruits of human nature. In this one great truth, he saw the pledge and promise of the resurrection and a future state for every human soul, and this faith, on everlasting life, in its expanding disposition, scarce noticed the grave, but passed immediately over it, and laid hold on things eternal in the heavens. He

knew that his Lord had entered into the true spiritual world, where he had provided a place for his people, and that when he should die, he should depart to be with Christ. Death, therefore, was not to his mind, what it is to many of ours, the descending into the grave, to "see corruption"; the abiding in unconsciousness for thousands of years, nor the destruction of all sense, motion, and enjoyment. It was rather the going out of his "earthly house of this tabernacle," into a spiritual "building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And, being unwaveringly submissive to the divine sovereignty, decisively devoted to the divine service, always willing to go, and be, and do, as the Most High should ordain, in any or every state, and verily believing his own eternity, it mattered but little whether he remained to serve God, on earth, a few years more or less, or were translated to serve him in other worlds. Certain of being in the presence, oversight and government of God, he knew he could serve, worship and enjoy him, as truly and extensively, in future worlds, as the present, and therefore he was at peace in all his thoughts of death. Nay, contemplating his prospects beyond the grave, so infinitely better than those on earth, he felt, and affirmed, saying, We are confident and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, and for this cause,

saith he, we labor not to live long, but that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him. Here, I cannot but think, is a particular, in which we are very apt to fail. We do not attribute power enough to the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, nor to the prospect of immediate immortality which our religion opens before us. We think much, as we ought to do, of the death of our Lord, for he died for us, died to redeem us, died to save us, gave himself the just for the unjust; but without his resurrection, that follows this event, his death itself had lost much, if not all its power to redeem the soul. As it is written, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. It is the resurrection of Christ, by which, even more than by his death, he is "lifted up" so high from the earth as to "draw all men unto him." It is his resurrection, by which he is "exalted to be a prince and a saviour." It is his resurrection, by which he is "declared to be the Son of God, with power." And it is his resurrection, by which "God hath begotten us again to a lively hope of an inheritance, undefiled, and incorruptible, and which fadeth not away." And in the doctrine which flows from it, the doctrine of our immediate eternity, that as Christ lives, so we shall live also, that as partakers of Christ in his sufferings

and death, so shall we be in his resurrection and life, the chief efficiency of the christian religion abides, and acts upon the heart. Through this belief of eternal being, the powers of the world to come descend upon the soul, for a spirit from the eternal descends, through him who for the offering of death is crowned with glory and honor, upon the believing heart, empowering, animating and creating it anew in Christ Jesus. And so long as we have hearts reconciled to our Maker, willing to be disposed of, and made use of, according to his wisdom and goodness, in any state of being, and remain fixed in our purpose to serve him, and seek our enjoyment in him, so long we may contemplate the change of death, with quietness of mind, and keep ourselves ready to be offered up whenever and however we are called.

And here, we remark, *Fourthly*, concerning the apostle, that he had not only effected his peace with God in unconditional submission; embraced Christ for his Master, and his religion as his guide, and rested his happiest hopes upon the world to come; but he also continued in these truths, and in obedience to the daily duties that flowed from them. Hence we read so often of his fighting the good fight of faith, of his struggling so manfully by the grace of God, against self, and the world, in all its various modes of temptation, of his prayers, and professions of Christ, and his

labors and various christian duties in the church ; in short, his habitual endeavor to maintain himself always in Christ, that whether present with, or absent from, he might, in every moment, be accepted of the Lord. This, in truth, was his only certain way to be always ready to die. To keep himself at all times in Christ, by faith and following him, and then he was sure to be found in him when he should be transferred to another world ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world, looking for the blessed hope, and bright appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, be the manifestation made, when or how it might. In the imperfection of human nature, it too often happens, that man experiences conversion, and embraces Christ to be saved by him, and experiences the power of his death crucifying him to the world, and the power of his resurrection begetting him again to a lively hope, and then feels satisfied with this, rejoicing at the present moment in God, and exulting in his new found hope of everlasting life. But, afterwards, he comes to set less and less value on his religion ; does not keep it close to his heart, to regulate his feelings, and rule his practices, restrains prayer, neglects profession, forsakes the ordinances, and rejects the rule of assembling for worship, and, in short, does not make it his law to keep himself constantly in close connexion with

the great head of his religion, but suffers the spirit to faint in his heart, and the practice to fail from his life. The consequence is, that his secret prayers are neglected, his conscience becomes blunted, his christian duties are discontinued, and sins, without name and without number, accumulate upon his soul. To one in such a state, what can it avail, that he once effected an act of submission to God, if he has now disowned his sovereignty—or that he once believed in Christ, if he has now, in effect, denied his Master, or that he once laid hold on eternal life, if he has now relinquished it, and buried himself again in the beggarly elements of the present world. No wonder that he is afraid to die; he ought to be, for his earthly work is not done, nor his clearances effected, and he has no right to expect a calmness in contemplating a change for which he has made no provision; and one might as well expect to stand with quietness of mind, waiting for a ship to come and take him up, and carry him on a distant voyage, when he knew that, on one hand, affairs demanding his instant attention were criminally left lying in confusion, and that, on the other, he had laid up no provision for his voyage, as to expect to wait with calmness for death, when he is conscious of habitual disobedience to Christ, and criminal negligence of christian duty.

The only way to keep the soul ready to be of-

ferred, is to maintain it steadfast in the discipleship of Christ, without allowing ourselves to defer, till tomorrow, what conscience and God prescribe that we ought to do today. Whether it be positive acts of obedience, or regulation and rule of the passions, reparation of injuries, repentances of sins, declarations of truths, works of special service to Christ, or of good will to man, let us finish within the day the allotted works of the time being, and we can then leave the morrow to take thought for the things of itself, and wait for its events, trusting in God. And if the morrow witness our summons to another world, it shall then find us prepared to answer it, and ready to be offered at the will of God, for it shall find us ready to leave all things behind in good order, and to follow the same path of faithful obedience and confident reliance on God, in that other state to which death shall transfer us.

A happier state of mind cannot well be imagined than that of a true Christian, waiting for his change, with no dismay nor disquieting terrors, but with humble hope, expecting to enter into the presence of his Lord, and willing to shake off his connexion with the flesh, that he may go forth into regions of the spirit, and commence a new course of obedience, and enjoyment in a scene of enlarged powers, and increased facilities. And contrariwise, a more wretched being can scarce be

imagined than one who is perpetually disquieted through dread of death, starting at the sound of a shaken leaf, and seeing nothing in eternity but a fearful looking for of judgment. Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And we, to whom the alternative of one or the other of these states is offered, shall do well, if we bring our souls to the trial, and enter into judgment with ourselves on this question, so essential to our everlasting welfare. "I am now ready to be offered," is the expression of a state of mind, which we, no doubt, every one of us desire to possess, and our neglecting of which is literally sinning against our own souls. Let us, my brethren, who soon must die, whether we be ready or not — let us think of earth, as a state with which, in a little while, we shall have no connexion; of its affairs, as what will soon cease to concern us, and of all its interests, as what will soon excite in us neither sorrow nor joy, neither hope nor fear. But think of God, of Christ, and eternity, of a world to come as what shall concern us forever and ever — and, knowing that we must soon be offered, whether we be willing, or not, let us make sure of our peace with God, and give ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant — never to be forgotten, in time or eternity, and establish our hearts in Christ and his gospel, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh — and without partiality or

hypocrisy, finish what is given us to do, and then commit ourselves to our Maker, with all confidence, and be exalted in the faith of Christ, and the love of God, above the fear of death, which would keep us all our life-time subject to bondage. Remembering, also, that one day is, with the Lord, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, let us keep ourselves steadfast and immovable, in Christ Jesus, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as when ye are conscious of eternity, ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.



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