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SERMON'S
AND
LECTURES.

By the Same Author,

ESSAYS; THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS; AND
SERMONS: on Various Subjects. Third Edition. 8vo.

LETTERS ON 'TITHE. 8vo. Sewed.

SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

WITH

THREE LECTURES

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE

BOOK OF RUTH.

BY

THE REV. HENRY WOODWARD, A.M.

FORMERLY OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD,
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Three Lectures on Ruth, with which this Volume concludes, are added, principally, with a view to ascertain how far they may meet a favourable reception from the religious public. Should it be the will of God, for such a mark of encouragement to attend them; and should He be pleased to add another year to the life of their composer; he hopes to present to the world a Series of Discourses on Select passages of the Old Testament, written in the same style and manner, and of which these three Lectures are furnished, as specimens or samples.

The Author is unwilling to omit, on this occasion, the expression of his gratitude to Almighty God, for the success of a former Volume, now in the Third Edition; and for the grounds which

have been afforded him, of humble confidence that it has, in some special instances, suggested motives of comfort to the afflicted, and of consolation to those who mourned for the loss of friends; and raised their affections to Him who, alone, can heal the broken-hearted, and turn their sorrow into joy.

It is with the hope, that the present endeavour may be attended with a like success, that this Volume is offered to the Public. And if it be made the humble instrument of bringing some who are weary and heavy-laden, to the only rest for man, some wandering sheep to the only Shepherd of the soul; if it be the means of convincing some self-approving sinners, that the blood of Jesus Christ, alone, can present us, with acceptance, in the light of the glory of the presence of God,—of turning the footsteps of some lambs of the flock, into those sweet pastures, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace,—or of pointing out to some weather-beaten voyager, on the world's tempestuous ocean, that

he may enter the haven, even at the eleventh hour, and turn the close of this life's evening, into the morning of never-ending day ;—if these blessed objects are accomplished,—nay, if even one of them is attained, in but a solitary instance, the design of these humble pages has been answered and the feeble prayers of their Author have been heard.

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S E R M O N S.



S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.*

GENESIS xlvii. 8.

“AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JACOB, HOW OLD ART THOU?”

NOTHING can be more exquisitely simple and affecting, than the answer, which this inquiry drew, from the venerable patriarch: “The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.”

But I shall not stay, to enlarge upon the circumstances of this particular case. I shall, at once, propose the words of my text, as a question, which every individual who hears me, would be wise in often putting, with solemn seriousness, to himself. The inquiry is suited, with a peculiar fitness, to the present moment. We have arrived, this day,

* Preached on New-Year's Day.

at the commencement of another year. One of those brief periods, so few of which make up the whole of life's amount—one more of these has closed. Another year has joined the years beyond the flood; and left us so much nearer our latter end. We have, this day, as it were, taken one step more, down that descent, which brings us to the boundless ocean of eternity, where all is to be left behind, and we are to embark for ever. Are we preparing for the voyage? Are we in readiness, like those who know not at what instant the summons may arrive? Are we making our calculations, like those who really believe that the day of eternity will shortly dawn? Do we often examine, how the glass of life is running? Do we inquire of conscience, like one who called to the prophet, and said, "watchman, what of the night?" Do we, in a word, often put the serious question to ourselves, "How old art thou?"

But since this may not be the case, and since, at all events, it is a matter, on which we cannot be too frequently reminded; I desire to address myself, to each individual in this assembly, separately, and with all the pointed application of a personal inquiry, and to say; how much of the time allotted you here, is gone? how near are you, in the ordinary course of nature, drawing to eternity? "How old art thou?"

One class of you might, indeed, reply; "It is

still but the morning of life with us : we are but young ; and, in the usual course of things, many years lie between us, and the closing scene of life." To this the obvious answer is : look around you, and you will see the young dying as well as the old. Nay ; the life of very young persons, is still more precarious, than that of the adult, or even of the aged : and, in all probability, some who now hear me, will never reach to years of manhood. But I desire to give the subject quite another turn ; and request, for the advice I am just going to offer, the particular attention of all the children, now here present before God.

You have, my young friends, in your hands, and in your power, what many grown persons would give worlds to purchase, had they, indeed, worlds to give, and could worlds call back the past. I mean the commencement of life ; those hours for sowing the good and precious seed ; that bright morning which, if rightly used, will shine, more and more, unto the perfect day, and expand into a happy life, and a happy immortality. Alas ! if you but knew the secret agonies, which swell the bosoms of many, who have thrown away their early opportunities ; whose seed-time is over, and no seeds sown, but those of remorse and bitterness : you would rejoice, with joy unspeakable, at still being young ; at still being able to *set out*

well; to remember your Creator, in the days of your youth; and lay up, for the evening of your days, as far as belongs to fallen man, “the calm remembrance of a life well spent.” Too many will be apt to tell you, that you were born in innocence, and that your faults are but playful follies, and the fruits of harmless nature. But you, I trust, have been better taught. You were born in sin: you bring into the world a sinful nature: and your hearts, (need I tell the youngest of you?) are prone to depart from the living God. If you were what man was once in Paradise, you, like the holy angels, would have no pleasure, but in doing your heavenly Father’s will; no employment, but love to God, and love to all around you. But from this happy state you fell: and none but that gracious Being, who came down from heaven, can restore a sinful creature, to the sunshine of God’s favor. He alone was innocent, and undefiled by sin. But he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring you to God. And is it too early, while you are still young, to love and serve that dearest of friends, and best of benefactors? Is it too early, to secure that bright crown, which all who confess that Saviour on earth shall wear in heaven? Is it too early, to accept that happiness, which true religion is sure to bring—to fly the dark and dreary road which leads to hell, and set out upon that path of pleasantness and peace, which, through a

Saviour's merits, conducts the soul to heaven? Many of you, I know, have read the lives and deaths of pious children. But if you would read such memorials, with real benefit, resolve that you will be followers of these youthful soldiers of the cross, as they were followers of Christ. When you rise from the perusal of one of their interesting and affecting stories, and see how God, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, can perfect praise; how children can adorn his gospel, in their lives, and "infants glorify him, by their deaths;" do not suffer the impression to pass from you, as if it were that, merely, of an amusing tale: but say to yourself, "Why should not I become an early saint, like this? I have the same Saviour, the same Spirit, the same God, to go to; the same eternity is before me; and the same heaven is opened to receive me!" Oh! Remember, that religion does not consist in giving ready answers, and in saying fine things. Religion is nothing, or worse than nothing, unless it show itself in daily practice. Well, then, begin the new year with this resolution; that you will devote your childhood, and your youth, to God. Accompany that resolve with fervent prayer; and God will hear it, and grant your heart's desire. Angels will listen, and rejoice: and approving conscience will attest the truth of that, which you have so often repeated in your hymn:

If we devote our youth to God,
'Tis pleasing in his eyes :
A flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no mean sacrifice.

But to the inquiry of my text, some might answer; "We are now at the period of life, at which fierce temptations urge; at which the world presents itself, in all its importance, and its power; and brings its hopes and fears, its occupations and anxieties, to bear, with all their force, upon our minds." In truth, these matters are not small, to flesh and blood. You are now in the heat of the battle: the burthen of the day is upon you: and you are amidst the swellings of Jordan. This is precisely the time, at which men ought to think the most, but at which, in reality, they think the least, of another state of being;—at which they are so often imbruted with sensuality, struggling, with their whole might, to provide for themselves and families, or saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up, for many years." So live those, between whom and eternity, the line of separation is as brittle as the spider's web. And when, in this state of profound delusion, the summons (as it often does) suddenly arrives;—when the suspended sword, in the twinkling of an eye, descends, and cuts the slender thread of life:—O blessed God! what a change is here! The soul, at one moment,

sunk in animality, and buried in the flesh; and the next moment, ejected from the “earthly house of this tabernacle,” and turned out upon the wide world of spirits! At one moment, the unhappy sinner, encircled with the things of time, and secured behind all the entrenchments which they can throw around the mind—living as if there were no life but this—every avenue effectually closed against the piercing, painful light of truth—conscience slumbering—all busy inquiries, and troublesome misgivings, about the future, hushed to rest—the world in quiet possession, and all things promising peace and safety—and, in the midst of this deathlike sleep, surprised, by a hand which thunders at the door, and a voice which says, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!” Now end all the pleasures of time:—the bubble of the world is burst, and nothing of it is left, but the recollection that it has been our ruin. Now begins, in good earnest eternity. Now the other life presents itself, as a real thing. Now the soul perceives, that the warnings which it had despised, are true; and that it has struck on the very rocks, which had been so often pointed out to it, in vain. Now it believes, that but one thing is needful; and finds how *little* he is advantaged, who has gained the whole world, and lost his own soul.

These, my brethren, are serious and awakening thoughts. Before these terrors of the Lord, when brought to bear upon the mind, fly all the dazzling follies of a low ambition, and all the false appearances, by which the world can flatter or terrify, like a dream when one awaketh. Before these considerations, even the important inquiry of my text, vanishes into nothing :—For what are years, whether few or many, interposed between us, and hopeless, endless misery ?

Are there any of you, now in the prime of manhood, who are still living without God in the world ? To you I would say, let the coming year bring home the message of salvation, to your souls. Hail its first dawn, as the commencement, to you, of life eternal. You still have time. It is not yet too late. Avert from your own heads, the horrors I have described. Beware of a death-bed without hope. Fly for pardon, while it may be found :—fly to him, who can expiate all your guilt, and whose blood can cleanse you from all sin.

Do I address myself to some, whose pilgrimage is well-nigh over—whose years are but labor and sorrow—and who have lived, to say, of things they once enjoyed, “there is no pleasure in them?” Did not facts so abundantly disprove it, such as these, it might be thought, stood always, with their loins girded about, and their lights burning, and

they themselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. But alas! it often happens, that none more systematically and effectually put away from them all thoughts of death, than those, who, in the course of nature, are drawing near the grave;—that there are none, whose hearts are more devoted to the world, than those who are on the point of leaving it. And whether this strange fatuity be considered as strong delusion, sent by God, or as the triumph of Satan over the rational soul: yet so it is, that man, in his fallen state, is thus a mockery of himself. Led by blind instinct, and not by reason, the creature of habit, rather than reflection, he cleaves to the world, merely because he has been long a slave to it.

But the masterpiece of this perversion is this— not only, that man sets his heart on the world, when he is about to leave it; but that the last passion which seizes the human soul, is the love of the world, in the shape, and for the sake, of the very thing, which has now peculiarly lost its use. The fact is, that three ruling passions reign, successively, in the child of earth, and fill up the history of his life below: the love of pleasure, the love of power, and the love of riches. Sensuality, ambition, and avarice, form the grand outline of man's apostacy from God. Now, if this order, or rather disorder, were re-

versed; if riches were first sought, with all the energies of the soul, nature would thus make provision for a fund, to feed the appetite for pleasure, and gratify the lust of power. But nature, fallen from God, is but blind fatuity: and all the machinery of man is out of course, unless it tend to *Him*. And thus the soul, by a just judgment, gropes in a vain shadow, is cheated by false appetites, and grasps at nothings; sets a value on means, when no value for the end is felt; and, in a word, serves and worships mammon, precisely in proportion as the mind has lost its relish for the only things, which money can purchase, or wealth procure.

But I trust these observations have no personal application here. It is my fervent hope, that of the elder portion of this assembly, there are some who can, with the pious Hooker, say, that, "by God's grace, they have loved him in their youth, and feared him in their age, and laboured to have a conscience void of offence, to him, and to all men:" or, with Simeon of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

And, yet, there may be those among you, who have stood all the day idle, even unto the eleventh hour. Oh! let this new year commence, with a voice which speaks, and speaks effectually, to you, saying;

“Go ye also into the vineyard,” and whatsoever the gospel, in free mercy, promises, that shall ye receive. It is the property of religion alone, to bring forth fruit in old age. When a man is far advanced in life, to commence the attainment of any human art or science, would be vain and fruitless. These must be entered on, in all the freshness and vigour of man’s youth and prime; or the attempt is but labour lost. Not so, with that celestial wisdom, by which the soul acquaints itself with God, and is at peace. Simple, as the fountain from which it flows; convincing by its own light, and not by elaborate deductions; sent from above, to tranquillise the heart, and not to fill the head with notions; a science suited to all ages, because addressed, not to the faculties which fluctuate and fade, but to the immortal spark, to the principle which links the soul to heaven: this wisdom can descend upon grey hairs, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. To you, then, I would conclude my address, by saying: You, who, so emphatically, have nothing else to turn to, turn, even now, to the Lord your God. Turn to him, I say, and, behold, I show you a mystery: God can change your old age into youth; the close of this life’s day, into the morning of a bright and cloudless immortality.

And now, having, at the suggestion of my text, addressed my hearers, according to the several stages of the life of man; I would, before I dismiss you, make a general application of the lessons which this day teaches, to the two great classes, into which the human family is divided—namely, those who serve God, and those who serve him not.

One reason, why the Almighty has ordained, that Nature should not be stationary, but pass through successive stages, and run her course, rejoicing, through all the changes of that circle marked by heaven; one of the reasons of that allotment, was, I say, to give fresh opportunities, and renewed encouragements, to the sons of men, to turn from the error of their ways, and set out, as it were, from some marked and memorable point, upon a new course; leaving painful recollections, as well as habits and associations of evil, behind them. Are any of you, then, living insensible to these gracious calls, to this language, which the whole Creation speaks, throughout her varied operations? Is it in vain for you, that God has placed his lights in the firmament of heaven, to be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years; and caused this globe on which you tread, to shape her annual voyage, through the ocean of wide space, and to run her race of glory

round the sun? Is it in vain for you, that the seasons return, and that this commencing year comes down, like a new messenger from the regions of eternity, and serves you with a fresh notice, for your attendance at the bar of heaven? Shall all this, I say, be in vain? "All things," says the Apostle, "are yours." It is for the salvation of souls, that the visible heavens, and the visible earth, were made. This lower creation is but a scaffolding, to raise up the spiritual temple of the sons of glory. But we must improve our opportunities; and for our privileges we are accountable. The stars, then, as in the case of Sisera, even the stars in their courses, fight against the man, who neglects so great salvation. The whole system of nature, leaves him without excuse. And the years, which have passed unheeded round, will all be summoned back, and re-appear, to testify of the warnings they have given him.

My brethren, let it not be so with you. Whatever your past years have been, let this year enrol you, amongst the citizens of the new Jerusalem. If the annals of this world, as some suppose, live throughout eternity, upon the pages of the records of heaven, Oh! may 1837 be registered there, as the year in which you were born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Oh!

may your names stand written in that book, as, from the date of this coming year, ranked amongst the heirs of glory, amongst the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

A few words I would now add, to those who have found joy and peace in believing. You cannot be exhorted to turn to God ; for you have turned to him already. Your desire is to serve one master, and to lay up your treasures, beyond the chances of mortality, or the reach of time. And, assuredly, those of us who have thus resolved, have made a happy choice. “ The lot is fallen to us in a fair ground ; yea we have a goodly heritage.” If we be of that number, we may well congratulate one another, on the setting in of the new year. Every annual revolution tells us, that the night is fast spending, and the day is at hand ; that our redemption is drawing nigh ; that now is our salvation nearer, than when we believed.

But, still, the children of God have much to be thankful for, when time is granted, to grow in grace, and to perfect that which is lacking. There is a clear distinction, between a state of mere salvation, and the sanctification, which sheds abroad the Holy Spirit, and breathes his consolations, in all their fulness, through the soul. We may be justified, and yet babes in Christ. We may have our treasure secured in heaven, and often sigh for peace on

earth. We may often endure heaviness of soul, from the weakness of our faith, and from the consequent power of manifold temptations. But religion should be a continual progress; and the Christian should exhibit, every year, an improvement, and an advance, upon what he was before. Let all of you, then, whom I may address, in the true sense of that important term, as *believers*, take advantage of this new season, to examine and prove the state and temper of your souls. Have you, I say, fully, or in any comfortable degree, realized, and made your own, that holy, contented, and happy frame of spirit, which you see so amply described, in Scripture, as the privilege of God's children? If not, there must be some let, some hindrance, some intelligible cause. Is it that you suffer your mind to be ruffled and discomposed, with petty provocations, and with the daily trials of domestic life? Is it that you are voluntarily engaged in more business, than suits a heavenly mind, or than befits a pilgrim, on his road to heaven? Do the cares of life press too heavily upon your spirit? Does a hasty temper lead you to offend, and often put you in the wrong, even when the cause you are defending, is that of righteousness and truth? Do you neglect the Christian rule, of never saying anything to any man's disadvantage, without some positive intention of doing

good thereby? Are you temperate in your meat and drink? I do not, of course, mean this, as opposed to indecent excesses; for these are altogether out of the present question: but do you measure your liberty, by this standard, that you should be as fit for study and for prayer, immediately after your meals, as at any other time? And, lastly, do you set God always before you? Do you live in the spirit of prayer? Are you frequently before a throne of grace, supplicating for the Holy Spirit, for the mind that was in Christ Jesus, for the image of God upon your souls, for all the fruits of humility, purity, and love?

Examine yourselves, closely and faithfully; bring all to the law and to the testimony, and to the light of Scripture: and, when your own wisdom fails, and your own strength is weakness, throw yourselves on God. "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find."

In conclusion, "I beseech you, brethren," young and old, rich and poor, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And Oh! let us all resolve, that as a year has departed, so old things shall pass away, and all things become new. Let us unite our prayers to God, that the coming year may arise

upon us, with healing in its wings ; that if, before its months are over, we are numbered with the dead, we may, through a Saviour's merits, ascend to those happy realms, where no suns go down, no fruits decay, no years wax old and fail : or if, through mercy, we survive the commencing year, on earth, we may so pass it, and all the other waves of this troublesome world, that, finally, we may come to the land of everlasting life.

SERMON II.

EXODUS XX. 5.

“FOR I, THE LORD THY GOD, AM A JEALOUS GOD.”

WHERE human affections are, in any passages of Scripture, ascribed to God, I am aware, that such ascriptions must be meant and understood, in a high and peculiar sense. But still, where God has been pleased to reveal himself, it is not for us, to refine away the plain terms of the revelation, by notions, which we ourselves may form, of the divine counsels, or the divine nature. We shall best, perhaps, receive the impressions, we are, in such instances, intended to receive, when, to the utmost of our power, we divest whatever quality God condescends to attribute to himself, of every imperfection or alloy; and then feel and act towards God, as one in whom that quality actually resides. If God, then, says that he is a jealous God; let us not be wise, above what is written. Let us not grope in the depth of the incomprehensible mind, to find *how* this can be: but let us contemplate only what is most elevated and tender, in that temper of the soul; and then remember,

that the Being, on whom our highest interests depend, is, in that sense, a jealous God.

God's jealousy appears in this, that he will not give his glory to another.

It is according to the order and constitution of things, that greatness should command and receive the homage of respect. And even where the distinction is merely human, those who wear it, feel that tribute to be their right, and resent the refusal of it, with high indignation. And, in truth, to earthly greatness this homage is, in general, most amply yielded; not, merely, with that manly and cheerful submission to the powers ordained of God, which the Scripture everywhere enjoins, but with a certain prostration and servility of soul, often felt most keenly by those, who keep the secret best from others—nay, who conceal it even from themselves. The brilliancy and splendour, the thousand nameless marks of conscious superiority, which wealth can purchase, and greatness throw around it, have an almost magical effect upon the natural mind. Many men boast of independence, merely because they are mortified, at their own exclusion from these envied prizes. Others rise up early, and late take rest; put genius, talents, time, and labour, all upon the stretch; satisfied with a life of toiling and clamouring up the hill, if, peradventure, at the close of

evening, they may reach the shining eminence. Such is the general passion. Thus do all people, nations and languages, however disunited in other respects, fall down, and worship the golden image.

This moral apostacy from God, is easy to be accounted for. Admiration is a passion, originally implanted in the soul. Like every other appetite, it seeks, with restless anxiety, for its connatural food. But it can range only within the circle of its own experience, and select only amongst those materials, which are presented to its view. If our minds, then, are bounded by this present scene, its artificial lustre must intensely and powerfully engage them. Nothing can give to admiration its right direction; nothing can convert it, from a feverish distemper, into an ennobling principle of the soul, but that which can outshine the dazzling lights of time; namely, the sober dawn of eternity. Let faith once remove the veil; and the soul will recognise, at a glance, the real purposes, for which God had formed her with such lofty aspirings, and such high ambition. Like one who, amidst the lingering dregs and faded lamps, of some mingled scene of mirth and heaviness, draws aside the curtain, throws up the window, and lets in the pure breath and blessed light of nature: so faith opens another system to the mind;

the morning of an endless day begins; and God, the Sun of that new world, rises in perfect beauty. The soul then recoils, with horror, from the objects of its former worship. It wonders at its past delusions. It asks itself, how it could have refused this happy and familiar intercourse with the King of heaven, that it might crouch beneath the footstool, or touch the hem of the garment, of some perishing mortal. It sees that it had been placing idols in the temple of the living God. It understands the meaning of these words; "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God;" "and I will not give my glory to another."

No jealousy is so strong, as what arises from the consciousness of having highly benefited, and deeply loved, the object of that passion. But in applying this principle, to the relations in which God stands to us, no tongue of men or angels, could show forth all his praise, or recount those endless mercies, in the midst of which we live, and move, and have our being. Upon so vast a field, the mind is lost, and wanders through the boundless prospect, without the power of fixing its affections anywhere. If we would appreciate God's claims upon the heart, we must narrow the circle. We must view his perfections, not as they are in themselves, or in the wide spread of their general bearings upon us, but as the Scriptures paint

them; clothed in circumstances, facts, and instances, wrought into the texture of real life, and standing forth, as it were, embodied to the mind.

To bring the principle we are now considering, into exhibition, let us contemplate our blessed Saviour, at that interesting moment which St. Luke describes, when he drew near to Jerusalem—when he beheld the city, and wept over it! What must have been, on this occasion, the associations of his infinite mind; the tide of recollections, which poured in upon his tender heart! It was he who had addressed himself to this people, in the language of my text, “I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.” His name was in all their records, and he had been a party in all their interests. He was the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the friend of Abraham, the fear of Isaac, the angel that redeemed Jacob from all evil. It was he that brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. He had led them through the wilderness, as their directing star, by night, their sheltering cloud, and their defence, by day. “In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” In

Jerusalem he recognised the favoured city, which he had chosen out of the whole earth, to place his name there ; the residence of his peculiar people, the centre of the true religion, the sanctuary of the oracles of God. Before him lay, in one connected view, those palaces where he had been a sure refuge—the gates of Zion, which he loved—the Temple which he had called his house of prayer, and where his glory had dwelt between the cherubim.

Add to these, our Saviour's human recollections. "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," the blessed Jesus was alive and true to every pure and tender feeling of man's nature ; and doubtless bare, upon his heart, many fond remembrances of Jerusalem. He called to mind those early years, in which one day in God's courts was better to him, than a thousand. His parents, we are told, went to Jerusalem, every year, to the feast of the passover. His pure and healthful soul was filled with gladness, when they said unto him, "Let us go into the house of the Lord ;" when he "went to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." That memorable occasion was, perhaps, peculiarly endeared to him, when, unable, as it were, to tear himself from the beloved spot, he tarried behind his parents at Jerusalem, and

was found in the midst of the doctors, astonishing all that heard him, by his understanding and answers. All those feelings which the Psalmist so beautifully describes, when he “longed, yea fainted, for the courts of the Lord,” and when he “preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy,”—in these tender sentiments the incarnate Saviour sympathised, with all the peculiar, patriotic, and ardent attachment of a Jew. They were written, with the finger of God, upon his heart, and burst from him, in that torrent of grief, at which, if there be sorrow in heaven, the angels might have wept: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

But, my brethren, when Jesus wept thus, over the beloved city, he contemplated an event, just now at hand, in comparison of which, all his former mercies were but as the small dust of the balance. Nigh unto Jerusalem, his death was to be accomplished. The clouds were gathering, and all things were now preparing for that hour of darkness, when the Lamb of God was to offer himself, as the great sacrifice of atonement, upon the altar of the cross. The noble army of martyrs, and all the prophets, from the foundation of the world, whose blood was to be required of that generation, arose, by a natural association, to his view. They had

trod the dreadful path, before him: nor could his human weakness have failed to derive supplies of fortitude and patience, from the consideration, how *they* had borne their sufferings, and been carried through the fiery trial.

When we view our Saviour, under these affecting circumstances, and behold the Lord of glory, brought down to these the lowest depths of sorrow and of humiliation, for our sins; his claims upon our gratitude, and upon the entire affections of our heart, are, you will admit and feel, triumphantly made out. But if we would do full justice to these claims, we should take some instance, in which his humiliation is seen, in immediate contrast with the height of majesty, from which he descended. For this purpose, I have often thought it would be well, to take the Scriptures, and write down those passages, on the one hand, which record the high and enraptured praises, addressed to the Son of God, in heavenly places; and those, on the other hand, which detail the revilings and reproaches, which assailed him, in his earthly pilgrimage; and then to compare the two together, when placed in juxtaposition before our eyes. A few examples I shall quote. In Isaiah, the seraphim are represented, as covering their faces, and crying to him; “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” In the Revelation, the

blessed angels are exhibited as round about his throne, in number ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and saying; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." This is the song, which angels and archangels sing. But no voice, save that of God, can show forth all the Redeemer's praise. Hear, then, the language of the eternal Father to his co-equal Son. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Compare, I say, these wonderful expressions, from the mouth of God himself, with the bitter and contemptuous scorn to which the blessed Jesus was accustomed, in the days of his flesh. Compare them with such specimens as these: "As for this fellow, we know not whence he is:" "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Compare them with the loud voices, which cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" or with the unfeeling insults, which mingled with the dying groans, and parting ago-

nies, of the Lamb of God: "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." It is, I say, in the view of these extremes, as far as our limited capacities can combine them—it is in the contemplation of the glory of God, veiled in the ignominies of a malefactor's death, that we can best comprehend the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of that love which passeth knowledge. And if jealousy be as I have stated—if it be always in proportion to the sense, that we have highly benefited, and deeply loved, the object of that passion,—how may the divine jealousy burn like fire for ever, against those, for whom a Saviour has, in vain, endured the cross, and despised the shame!

There is an additional consideration here, which I cannot avoid suggesting, though, I trust, I do so with reverential awe. We know that men of generous minds, often feel a keener resentment of the injuries done to those they love, than of the injuries inflicted on themselves. And may not such be the case, in that adorable Trinity, who formed us in their own image?

In the parable, where the Almighty is said to make a marriage for his Son, he is awfully described, as "sending forth his armies, to destroy" the rejecters of that invitation, "and to burn up

their city." And in that other parable, where the Jews are represented, as casting the heir, the well-beloved, out of the vineyard, and slaying him, they, unconsciously, pass this tremendous sentence upon themselves: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out his vineyard to others." In like manner, that Being, who is to judge both quick and dead, has declared, that whoso speaketh against him; shall be forgiven; but "he that shall blaspheme," saith he, "against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." On this principle, then, as well as every other, let us take care, how we provoke the Lord to jealousy. It is true, that God so loved the world, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. But it is equally true, that every soul which will not hear that Son, shall be destroyed from among the people; that he shall not see life, but that the wrath of God abideth on him. In a word, to become the objects of that infinite jealousy, which God may feel for the honour of his Son—to be marked by the eternal Father, as those whom the sufferings of his Son could neither win nor soften,—may involve consequences, and lead to a ruin, greater than our finite imaginations can conceive.

But the Gospel was revealed, not for our destruction, but for our salvation. Its joyful sound

proclaims free pardon to the guilty ; forgiveness of all that is past ; oblivion so entire, that no more mention is to be made, of goodness slighted, omnipotence insulted, the sanctuary of God's presence violated, a Saviour's blood and cross trampled beneath our feet. These are the offers which are made, without money, and without price, to every sinner, who will repent, and believe the Gospel. But, more than this ; the Son of God was manifested—his pure and spotless life, and all the endearing motives of his painful death, have been set before us—to bring back our alienated hearts to God ; to make a powerful appeal to our affections ; to gain our friendship to Christ's human nature ; and, by its mysterious union with the divine nature, to identify that deep attachment, with the fulfilment of the first and great commandment, the love of God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. This latter is, in a word, the sum and substance of religion. Without this, or at least without the desire of this, all that is called religion, is childish vanity, and senseless superstition. It is a total misconception of the meaning, and the very essence, of the thing. The truth is, that it appears almost trifling with so serious a subject, to explain the nature of this delusion, by comparisons which alone can suit such gross fatuity. It is as if a man were to

mistake his purse, for his gold—were to throw away his treasure, and then to boast of his riches, when he had not wherewithal to buy his daily bread. Or, as if he were to fancy that he had mastered all the intricacies of science, because he had reckoned all the letters, and could spell back all the syllables, in the works of the philosophers. Or, lastly, it is as if a man mistook the restoratives of health, for health itself; and, while disease was preying upon his vital organs, boasted of the soundness of his constitution, because he had collected an exhaustless store of medicines and prescriptions.

If I have been obliged to use comparisons, which appear, as I almost fear they may do, ludicrous to some, it is because folly in one shape, is the best comparison we can use, for folly in another shape: and nothing, assuredly, can surpass the folly, nay, nothing can be comparable to the more than madness of that man, who, in the one great and paramount concern, where his all is at stake, and where an eternity of weal or woe is trembling on the balance, mistakes the remedy for the cure, the means for the end, the signs for the all-important realities which they signify.

And, yet, into this deep delirium we have fallen, if we do not, by an intuitive perception, by a felt experience, know that religion is love; and that

this, and this alone, is the golden cord, which binds the soul to God. Every thing else in religion, is merely instrumental. The knowledge of Scripture—the use of sacraments—the exercises of self-denial and of prayer; even faith in Christ; nay, the very truths themselves in which the heart believeth unto righteousness—the manifestation of God in the flesh—the Redeemer's life, and death, and satisfaction for sin;—all these are but means: the end is charity in the soul of man, and his restoration to the lost image of that God, whose name and whose nature is love. Here, then, is the main, the tender point, on which God's jealousy appears. “My son, give me thine heart,” is the language of the Father of our spirits. And if we gave all the substance of our house to him, for love, it would be utterly contemned. All his commandments are comprehended in this saying, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart.” This is the first and great commandment; not merely by God's appointment, but by its own rank and station, in the order and constitution of things, and in the unchangeable relation of the creature to the Creator. It is the great principle of spiritual gravitation; by which all intellectual nature tends to God; by which the rational creation pours back all its streams, into the Fountain from whence they flowed. In a word, to love God

is the eternal rest, and only happiness, of the soul : and those who keep this great commandment, have, in a measure, their heaven begun. Trials and troubles they will have, while passing through this vale of sorrows : but their incorruptible seed remaineth in them. And when this short winter is over and gone, when the dews of Paradise descend, and the sun of the new heavens shines out in all its warmth, and all its glory ; this seed will become a plant in the Paradise of God, will rise, and scatter wide its branches, and bring forth fruit unto God for ever.

There is a notion in some minds, that, if the love of God fills the soul, there can be no room for any other sentiment ; and, consequently, that all other interests and duties, must be relinquished. But this fancy is founded, altogether, in misapprehension. The love of God does not fill the mind, in the same way that water fills a vessel, or as one gross substance fills another, and excludes thereby all substances but itself. No : it fills the mind, as the daylight fills the vault of heaven. The cheering presence of the sun displaces nothing ; it interferes with nothing ; it requires no room ; it clears no space, for itself to occupy. It still *is* everywhere : it pervades all nature ; it enlivens everything, and gladdens all the prospect. All things, in a word, but darkness, can dwell with

light. And so it is, with the love of God. The love of God excludes no duties, but animates them all; and sets the heart at liberty, to run the way of God's commandments. With one thing only it is at variance, and that is sin: because sin resists this pure and sacred principle, and opposes the love of God; precisely as, in the material system, darkness is opposed to light. It is at variance with sin, in every shape; in its subtlest disguises, in its most distant approaches, however sanctioned by custom, and though a united world were on its side. For the love of God assimilates the soul to God: and the man who is thus renewed, after the image of Him that created him, hates all sin; because his religion is not form—it is not bodily exercise, mysterious rites, and magic ceremonies. It is a stream that issues from the fountain of all purity. It is a beam that flows from the Father of lights, and from the God of glory. It is the anticipation of heaven. It is the coming forth of the soul, from the imprisonment of its nature; to rejoice in the early dawn, and to inhale the morning breeze, which usher in the cloudless, glorious, endless day of eternity. The man who is thus attracted by Almighty goodness, is no calculator in religion. He does not look about, to see how far this or that individual may go, in serving and in loving God; lest he should do more than is neces-

sary, and so take on himself an unfair proportion of the common burden. No : his is a fidelity, which no influence can warp, no example can seduce ; a flame which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it. He loves God for his own sake, and walks in all his commandments ; because they are the joy and rejoicing of his heart ; because that in keeping of them, there is great reward.

But I must conclude. Do you, my brethren, believe the statements which I have made ? Or do you doubt whether religion be, indeed, that blessing, which I have represented it to be ? Go, then, into your closets, and ask of God. Ask, whether any man ever yet trusted in the Lord, and was confounded. Ask that blessed Saviour, who loved you, and gave himself for you, whether he is now less compassionate, or mighty to save, than when to his little flock, in the midst of a hostile world, he said, “ My peace I leave with you—my peace I give unto you ; ” or when he invited every child of misery, in those comfortable words, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Ask him, whether he is now less competent to fill the boundless capacities of the soul, than when he said to the woman of Samaria, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; ” or when he an-

nounced himself as the true manna, and living bread that came down from heaven; adding, in words which I pray God to bring home, by his Spirit, to all your hearts, “ He that cometh to me, shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.”

SERMON III.

EXODUS xxiii. 2.

"THOU SHALT NOT FOLLOW A MULTITUDE, TO DO EVIL."

MAN is, by nature, a social being ; and is formed with wants, and wishes, and affections, suited to that condition. Amongst other tendencies, which thus qualify him for such a state of life, there is implanted in his original constitution, a proneness to conform himself to the habits of his fellow-men ; to imitate what he sees them practise ; to like what he sees them like ; to go with the stream of custom ; and, as my text expresses it, to " follow a multitude." We are all of us, though we seldom think of it, or advert to it, daily, and hourly, yielding to the influence of this principle. Everything we do, almost, in the common routine of life, is done in a way, which grows out of this unconscious imitation. The manners of those who are strangers to our country, prove this clearly. In a thousand nameless instances, we are struck with a difference between a foreigner and ourselves. And all this arises from the fact, that men are in the habit, in numberless trifles, of conforming to what they are accustomed to see, without perceiving it.

Nor are we forbidden, by the laws of religion to comply with customary habits, where those habits are laudable or indifferent. Thus far, the imitative disposition, wisely implanted in us, may be, and ought to be indulged. But against the perversion of so powerful a tendency, a strict and jealous guard is wanting. And, in thus guarding us, the language of my text is plain and positive : “Thou shalt not follow a multitude, to do evil.”

Such a warning is the more necessary, because false reasoning often conspires with natural disposition, to lead persons astray, in this particular. They behold the great majority of men, pursuing either a sinful, or, at least, a careless course ; and consider that what has so many suffrages, must be right. “Is it reasonable,” say they, “to suppose, where we see multitudes, on the one side, and an insulated few, on the other, that the multitudes are wrong, and the few right ? Are the peculiar opinions of a mere handful of individuals, to be set in the balance, against the convictions of all around them ; against the general sense, and common suffrage, of mankind ?”

To such reasonings we might, at once, reply, that this rejection of the doctrines of the cross, by the world, at large, has been expressly foretold in Scripture, and must be fulfilled ; that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of

God ; that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.

But, even admitting that the general suffrage of society is always right, and that peculiar sentiments, opposed to that suffrage, must consequently be wrong ;—yet a distinction is to be made, between men's convictions, and their practices. And, assuredly, nothing can be more inconsistent, than the opinions and the conduct of the world, in matters connected with religion. Certain it is, that many, who are living just as the multitudes around, are, at bottom, persuaded that they are leading a foolish, unprofitable, and dangerous life. It is hard, in general, to come at this conviction : for, in fact, it is the great object of life, with such persons, to stifle it, or to conceal it even from themselves. Business, and sports, and company ; the fulness of the table ; and, even when they are alone, dreams of the past, and castles in the air for the future ; keep up a certain hurry of mind, which has wonderful success, in parrying the assaults of conscience, and putting down the risings of serious reflection. And if they can, in some degree, conceal these suspicions, from themselves, they can do so far more effectually, from others. Long practice gives thorough skill, in appearing satisfied, when a man is ill at ease ; in looking gay, when his heart is disquieted within

him ; in seeming to like the very persons he most dislikes ; in joining, with apparent pleasure, in things which, in his inmost soul, he feels a tiresome, toilsome drudgery. Such a skill is one of the leading accomplishments, of what is called good society. And no wonder that, in a system of such practised falsehood, and refined hypocrisy, it is not easy to discover the real sentiments of the heart.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this self-deception, and this deception of others ; in spite of all that outward homage, which the multitude pay to the maxims of the world ; there is, in the breasts of the very individuals who compose that multitude, a secret suspicion, that the whole is a system of the most consummate folly. Conscience will often pierce the clouds, in which they are enveloped. And at such moments, how agonizing must be the convictions of the children of this world ! Believe me, that many, who appear amongst the gay and happy, bear ample testimony against themselves. “What am I living for ?” they will sometimes ask themselves ; “and what is to be the end of this ? Am I pursuing the same fruitless course I was, ten years ago ;—with no difference but that I am growing older ; that every object is less fresh and interesting, than it was ;

and that I am drawing nearer to the gate of death? Have I rejected the service of God—have I thrown from me the blessedness of loving God with all my heart; that I may be the slave of that world, which I know, in my conscience, is all delusion, and which will be sure to give me over, in my grey hairs, and upon my dying bed? Am I scraping up riches, that strangers may gather them; or that my children may wish me dead, that they may scatter them? Or am I following after pleasures—after pleasures which have lost their relish—pleasures which I pursue, only because I have cultivated no higher tendencies, no purer tastes; or because I am afraid to show the world, that I consider her ways as vanity, her paths as misery, and her gods as idols?”

Oh! my brethren, these questions are sometimes asked in the silent chambers of the soul: and are answered, in some cases, by misgivings of the heart, which are secrets to all, but those who feel them; and in others, by rushing again into the world, as a horse rushes into the battle.

Such persons may affect indifference towards, if not contempt for, piety: but, here again, their heart misgives them. They inwardly admire that fortitude, that manly courage, that only sterling principle, which, in the face of general disaffection

and revolt, maintains true allegiance to the King of heaven. They envy those who dare to live as conscience dictates ; to practise the religion they profess ; to perform the solemn promises they have made to God ; to aim at being happy, rather than appearing so ; to confess that Saviour, in their lives, who for them endured the shame and agonies of the cross. Yes, my brethren : often will a worldly mind pay that homage to religion, which is known only to itself. It will, at times, perceive a wisdom, and a sunshine of the soul, in true religion, which make it pine its loss in solitary places ; and look on those, who are faithful to their God, with an agony like his, who lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom ; and contrast its own dark and gloomy prospects, with those scenes of light and glory, to which a joyful resurrection will conduct the righteous.

But there is another argument, by which those who follow the multitude, would satisfy their consciences. "The multitude," say they, "may be safely followed ; because it is a thing incredible, that God will suffer the greater part of his creatures in this world to perish." To this I answer, that even on the false and horrid supposition, that every child of man, hitherto born, would be finally lost ; their numbers would be, to the countless myriads of

God's creation, but as a handful, to the sand upon the sea shore. And while worlds unnumbered have held fast their integrity, and are filled with blessed spirits, and loud hosannas unto God; this may be, as it were, the petty prison-house of the universe, in which alone are found the children of disobedience. This earth may be like a miserable and insignificant corner of a distant province, in fruitless rebellion against a monarch, who rules a mighty and illustrious empire, with the mild authority of a father. What argument can, then, be drawn, against the danger of following a multitude, from numbers?—from numbers, which, though all the human race were lost, would sink into nothing, in comparison of God's happy children, and faithful subjects, in his universe at large?

But, independently of this, prophecy informs us, that the days will come, even in this world, when the multitude will be on God's side; that an age of righteousness is yet in prospect, when they shall be all taught of God, and all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. "It shall come to pass, in the last days," saith Isaiah (ii. 2), "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." In like manner, the prophet Jeremiah

speaks (xxxiii. 22), "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant." And Malachi, in terms equivalent (i. 11), "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." But I need not multiply such passages. The few recited will bring to the recollection of every reader of the Bible, how full the Scriptures are, on this important point; and with what bright and cheering evidence, both the prophets and the psalms, give witness, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea;" and that "the kingdoms of this world, shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." Thus we have reason to indulge the hope, that those who are saved during the latter days, will so outnumber those who perish in the great apostasy, as to leave, on the final reckoning, a balance abundantly in favor of the numerical happiness of the sons of Adam.

But however this may be, no delusion can be more complete, than to feel a security, merely in going with the crowd. Would it have been safe,

in the days of Noah, to take the multitude as our rule; when the world was teeming with inhabitants, and one family alone was rescued from destruction? Would it have been safe to do so, amongst the men of Sodom and Gomorrah; when fire and brimstone came down from heaven, and brought the heavy wrath of God, upon every living soul that dwelt there? Would it have been safe to do so, in the time of our Lord's abode on earth; when the whole multitude were, with one consent, calling down his blood, upon themselves, and upon their children? Would it have been safe to do so, in the very teeth of his tremendous declarations, that "many are called, but few are chosen;" that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life;" that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat?" No, my brethren. It would not have been safe to follow the multitude, then: nor is there any salvation, for those who do so, now.

Laying aside, then, all delusive arguments, let us—while we rely upon the Saviour's merits alone, for pardon, and his Spirit alone, for sanctification, and for guidance—humbly obey his indispensable commandment, and strive to enter in at the strait gate. Let us take our rules, from the word of God, and not from men, who inwardly condemn

themselves. Let us spurn a confederacy in folly, however general; a confederacy to elevate the body above the soul, and the world above the God that made it. Let us rise above the multitude, who have lost their way, and grope in darkness which they have preferred to light: let us rise above them, to the element for which our souls were formed; to the communion of saints; to the fellowship of angels; and to the friendship of the blessed God. Now, we see through a glass darkly; but a little while, and we shall see face to face. A little while, and those scenes and objects, which faith contemplates in the distance, will be present with us, and all around us. Once admitted to the bright regions of the blessed, old things will have passed away, and all things become new. Then, to "follow a multitude" will be our wisdom, our duty, and our happiness. Then, "the broad way" will be "The way of holiness;" and to do as others do, will be to delight ourselves in the Lord. Then, numbers without number will be on God's side. And while memory, as it doubtless will do, recalls the past, and brings us back, in thought, to times of trial here below, and places again before our view, those fellow-soldiers, with whom we fought against a world in arms;— Oh! with what transport shall we contrast that little band, with the countless millions who cover

all the plains of heaven ; angels, “ as the sand which is by the sea shore, innumerable ; ” multitudes, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, crying with a loud voice, and saying, salvation, to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

I cannot, my brethren, dismiss you, without a few words, applicable to the present circumstances which surround us. The times are long gone by, when a man, who sincerely desired to serve God, had, comparatively, no difficulty, in discerning the line of conduct, which my text points out. To renounce the vanities of time, and to exchange the allurements of a flattering world, for a life hid with Christ in God ; this was the trial, and the cross. And though the flesh was weak, yet, if the spirit was willing, the grace of God became, to those who diligently sought it, the power of God unto salvation ; and, when once the choice was made, the path was clear. There were not, then, as in the present day, two wide-spread systems, the one called religious, and the other worldly society ; in either of which, though greatly differing I grant, the pilgrim might miss his way to heaven. That there has been, of late years, a great revival in spiritual things, no man can fairly deny. Nevertheless, this extension of religion,

has its peculiar trials, for the children of God. It has rendered that line, which used to separate them from others, less distinct, than it was before. They are now, in many places, surrounded by a large society, professing the same peculiar doctrines, protesting against the same dissipations, and zealous in the same outward activities, as themselves. Amongst this multitude, that Satan has not failed to sow his tares, we may be well assured. Hence a new danger awaits the Christian: I mean the difficulty of preserving the separation, so indispensably required, from those, who are marked off from him by no visible distinctions. Hence, without redoubled caution, a spirit of less simplicity, and devotedness to God, steals, insensibly, upon true believers; because the infection breathes in the house of their friends.

The truth is, that the soldiers of the cross, have, in these remarkable times,* a powerful and marvellously compacted confederacy, against them. The most discordant principles coalesce. The most hostile elements intermingle and combine. Superstition, that believes every thing, and liberalism, that believes nothing; those who make reason the whole of their religion, and those who exclude reason from all share in their religion; all find a

* Preached in 1832.

centre of union, and principle of combination, in enmity to the truths of God. The danger is all around us. The clouds are gathering, and grow darker every day. There is a hurry in the times. Events are flying, on the wings of every passing breeze. There is a velocity in the motion, so rapid as to elude our vision, and to present the appearance, rather, of an awful pause. When that pause is ended, and when the overhanging clouds discharge, I do not ask, what they will bring forth : but I do ask, whether you stand prepared for whatever may be coming on the earth ? I do not ask, whether you believe, as many do, that the Lord is near at hand : but I do put it, as the most important of all questions, whether, if he *were* to appear in the clouds of heaven, you would fly affrighted from his presence ; or whether you would lift up your heads, knowing that your redemption was nigh at hand ? No question, I repeat it, can be more important. On this depends the main point, namely, whether our hearts are right with God. For, assuredly, no true love or loyalty, can dwell in the bosom of that man, who would consider his Saviour's appearance, as a calamity, and a misfortune.

But, my brethren, how near, at all events, may that day be to you, when you must stand naked and disembodied, in the presence of your Judge !

Oh! if you were now in the land of darkness, from which no traveller can return; if you were now beyond the possibilities of repentance, in a lost and miserable eternity; what an angel of mercy would one appear to you, who came with the offer of pardon and deliverance. But no such messenger could reach you there. "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." Will you, then, before it is too late; will you, while you have it still in your power, lay hold on the mercies which are freely offered you? Will you add another jewel to your Saviour's crown? Will you increase that joy which he set before him, when he endured the cross, despising the shame: when he counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might save us from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us, and guide our feet into the way of peace?

SERMON IV.

ST. MATTHEW, XXIV. 12.

“AND BECAUSE INIQUITY SHALL ABOUND, THE LOVE OF MANY SHALL WAX COLD.”

SUCH were the words of our blessed Saviour, when he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem; the general falling away of that apostate people, and the full measure of iniquity, which they were hastening to fill up. He foresaw the dangers to which his own followers would be exposed;—that some would, in this flood of evils, make shipwreck of the faith; that others would so far catch the prevalent infection, as to slacken in their zeal, and cool in the ardour of their affections towards him.

Nor were these dangers peculiar to the season then approaching. Human nature is the same at all times. What has happened once, will happen again, if similar circumstances arise. It is, therefore, a standing rule, founded in the nature of things, and in the constitution of man, that where “iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” The words of my text then, apply, in their full force, to the times and circumstances, in which we live

That iniquity abounds amongst us, requires no laboured proof. Indeed, if any are disposed to deny this fact, that denial itself is an instance of the very thing in question: for to justify the wicked, or to call evil good, is a sin most solemnly denounced in Scripture. The iniquity which abounds, is not so much one vice or another, as that which is the root of all vices; the fountain from which all the issues of sin, and all the streams of evil, flow. It is, in a word, insensibility to God. This is the disease, though the symptoms be, “as the sand which is by the sea-shore, innumerable.” It is the *heart* which has departed from the living God; and out of the heart it is, that every sin proceeds—evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. This insensibility to God, this strange deadness to the awful interests of eternity, is, in substance, the fall of man—the death which passed upon his spirit, when cut off, by that apostasy, from the root of life, and from the centre of its being.

The air which surrounds us, vast as its weight is known to be, presses nowhere sensibly, because it presses everywhere. So it is, with the ungodliness of the world. The systematic exclusion of the Almighty from any admitted part or share, in the concerns of general society, is so completely

carried into effect, that men do not perceive it, simply because it is not more observable at one point, than at another. It is the atmosphere they breathe ; the element in which they live, and move, and have their being.

When things are uniform and constant, we seldom notice them, till some interruption of the ordinary course arrives. Thus, if we are sailing on a placid sea, we perceive that we have been in progress, only when some obstacle impedes the motion of the vessel. Thus, by long use, we grow insensible even to the loudest noise, except when occasional pauses awaken us to attention. And thus is the general current of society, so uninterruptedly devoid of any mixture of religion, that nothing, but some sudden interference with the common course of things, will remind men, that they are living without God in the world. But it is in the power of any of you, to put this matter to immediate proof. You may try the experiment, before an hour is over. Ask the first acquaintance you meet with, whether he is preparing for the day of judgment, and whether he has found peace with God, through Jesus Christ. Or, if you do not wish to be too personal, say to him, "Can we ever be thankful enough, to the Author of all our mercies?" Now, supposing this acquaintance to be an ordinary, average specimen, of what pass for

steady, sensible characters, in the world; do you not know, that he would be as much startled and astounded, by such a manner of address, as by any attitude of insanity, in which you could place yourself before his eyes? But you will say, perhaps; "serious matters ought not to be introduced thus bluntly: these things should be spoken of, only when there is a good opportunity." I grant it. Religion should not be forced. It is too delicate a plant, to buffet with rude storms. But is it necessary, thus to seek for favourable moments, if we would inquire about a man's bodily health?—if we would ask him, whether he has sold his merchandise, or reaped his corn? There is nothing abrupt in talking of these things at once; and why? Because they are not against the common current of intercourse. But religion is against it. Religion belongs to that awful futurity—that strange and ghostly region—that eternity, which lies in vague and dreadful prospect before the children of this world. But the pleasures of sin for a season, they are resolved to keep. Hence, then, the keen vigilance, and ever-watchful jealousy, with which they guard against the approaches of that religion, which anticipates things to come. To speak of these, is, as it were, to introduce the other world, "before the time." It is, as with the hand of death, to draw aside the

curtain, and let in the chilling air, and the broad daylight of eternity, upon their deeds of shame, and works of darkness. It is, in a word, to rob them of their all; and to vilify and disparage, by overwhelming contrast, those present things for which, alas, they have paid too dearly; for which they have sold their birthright, and their inheritance, as immortal beings. Hence it is, that to introduce the subject of religion, to talk of heaven, of eternity, or of God; is to shock the feelings, and to do violence to the established order of society. Such, then, are the grounds, on which we assert, that iniquity abounds; that the whole world lieth in wickedness; and that the system which encircles us, is enmity against God.

In a world like this, it is no wonder, that the spirit of evil should be infectious, and that the love of many should wax cold. To live like the sons of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, is no easy task; and, consequently, many are wavering and unfaithful. Nothing, in a word, can outride the storm, but that unshaken loyalty, that firm attachment, which can fix its anchor upon God alone. It is true, that where God is loved with all the heart, neither life, nor death, can separate us from him. When a mind is thus omnipotently attracted, that iniquity which abounds, will rather animate, than damp,

its zeal. For as, in the physical constitution, when the body is strong and healthful, cold applications are responded to, by a genial glow, and vigorous revulsion of its vital heat; so it is, also, in the constitution of the soul. If its affections be fixed on God, the deadness and coldness of others, can only fan them into flame: for love like this, is stronger than death; many waters cannot quench it.

Even in human relations, there is a sterling and strong attachment, which varies with no change of time or fortune. True friendship lives in all weathers; and if the whole world should run us down, a friend thus born for adversity, would find us in the last retreat of wretchedness, or follow us, if persecution should hunt us, through every corner of the earth. Thus constant and immovable is the mind, which deeply and unfeignedly loves God.

Many there are, however, who have a sincere desire to follow after righteousness, and who are yet strangers to this victorious principle. Their dangers, amidst the general contagion, are great indeed. And in considering these, we must, first of all, remember, that man's chief enemy lies within. All outward temptations would be comparatively powerless, if our hearts did not betray us; if they were not "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." How hard then, how

critical, is the salvation of the soul ! How awful, and how affecting, is the condition of that celestial stranger, which is lodged within us ! Breathing after its native heaven, and yet drawn down by innate corruption ; panting for happiness, and embracing misery in its stead ; stumbling in darkness, and still hating light ; at enmity with God, and so formed for God, that it cannot rest, until it rest in him ! Such is our state by nature. Such the obstacles from within, which resist the soul, in all its tendencies and aspirations, towards holiness, happiness, and God.

And what does it find without it ? In the more interior circle which surrounds us ; in the bosom of domestic life, and in the sanctuary of home ; even here does the religious man often encounter the most trying and disheartening difficulties. In the midst of, not unfrequently, a kind and amiable family, the solitary member who feels a zeal for God, will, day after day, take his place in the animated circle ; and lament, in secret, that he can no more speak of Him whose presence fills his soul, than if “ constrained to dwell with Me-sech, and to have his habitation among the tents of Kedar.” Nay, those very households, who are exemplary in their attendance on the service of the church, will often look strange at the individual member, who, on the Sabbath evening

would allude to the same topics, which they had all been hearing from the pulpit, in the morning ; as if that individual were, thereby, arrogating superiority to himself, or setting up himself, as wiser or more religious than the rest. I have briefly noticed this, because I am persuaded, that in no shape does the iniquity which abounds, more effectually cause the love of many to wax cold, than it does, in this quiet fire-side persecution. It is that mode of warfare against religion, which does not assault the principle, and goad it into resistance ; but which takes the slower and surer method of cutting off its supplies, and reducing it by famine. Of lost and ruined souls, how many perish in this way, who can know, till all secrets are brought to light ? But sure I am, that the proportion is not small ; that many a bruised reed is broken, by the depressing weight of family discouragement ; that many a spark just struggles for a while, and then goes out, in the chilling atmosphere of home.

When a man, thus wounded in the house of his friends, goes forth into the wider field of general society ; what new conflicts await the soldier of Christ ! Needing support himself, he finds, in firm array against him, a confederated world. If, indeed, he could keep steadily in mind, that the general current runs against religion ; that the

spirit and principle which are abroad, are at enmity with God ; and that the atmosphere around him, breathes infection ;—if his fears were thus on the alert, and his caution thus in arms, he might be comparatively secure. But there are principles, deep in man's nature, which serve effectually, because insensibly, to set this vigilance asleep. The assimilative power of example, is, perhaps, the chief of these. It is one of our steadiest and strongest instincts, to yield to the law of sympathy ; to grow like what we daily see ; to go with the stream, and to follow a multitude. The Christian, then, may read in his Bible, and learn in his closet, that the broad and crowded way leadeth to destruction. But when he lays aside his Bible, and comes forth from his retirement, amidst the glare and noise, the moving scenery, and swarming myriads of the world ; he alone can keep the narrow way, who gives himself implicitly to God's own guidance. Dangers, on the right hand, and on the left, hover around his path. On the one side, lovers of pleasure watch every softer movement of his nature ; and, if there be one unguarded avenue, breathe their tainted breath into his soul, and fan the latent sparks of impurity into flame. On the other side, talents, and popular good sense, and all the mystery of worldly wisdom, unite, to prove, by arts which would

seduce, if possible, the very elect, that the cross of Christ is foolishness, and the religion of the heart a mere distemper of the brain. On the one side, frankness and good-nature, kind attentions, and friendly offices, solicit him, by little and little, to compliance; thus putting his refusal in the most unamiable light, and rendering opposition doubly painful. On the other side, every snare which the fear of man can lay;—respected character, and high authority; all the magic of dazzling station, and all the majesty of man's opinion; confederate against the allegiance of the soul to God; and press, with united weight, upon the single arm, which is lifted up, in the cause of Heaven.

But amongst the various enemies of the soul, the bad pre-eminence belongs to those, who, having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof. In other quarters, the danger is apparent: but how can the tender in age, and weak in faith, detect the treachery, which lurks beneath a fair profession? “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.” Such is the inimitable sketch, drawn by the Great Master's hand, of the prudent, calculating compromisers in religion;—those “false prophets” whom he elsewhere speaks of, “which come in sheep's clothing, while in-

wardly they are ravening wolves." Who these are, we learn from the context; where our Saviour bears his solemn testimony against them. They are not those who oppose the name, but those who lower the standard of religion. They are those, who deny that "strait is the gate and narrow the way, that leadeth unto life;" those whose gravest counsels tend to prove, that we can serve two masters, and go to heaven, with minds conformed to this present world. To such advisers, then, I say, the young and the unwary often turn. And no wonder; for they often wear the semblance of superior wisdom, and matured experience, in the things of God. No wonder that the unexercised and unskilful soldier of the cross, should rally, without fear or caution, to the friendly standard, wherever it is raised. But alas! where-withal shall a young man cleanse his ways, if, in an evil hour, he seeks for counsel from such guides as these? How is he to buffet with fierce temptation, and still those passions which strive for the mastery with giant force; if he is taught to moderate and repress the only principle, which can overcome the world, or purify the heart? To the young, then, especially I would say; Beware of counsellors like these. Beware that, in a wrong sense, you never know them by their fruits—fruits, which would in the end, be bitterness and death to

you. For they would early point to the wretched vanities of time, those affections, which should rise, as the morning incense, unto God. They would early quench that spark, which, if you have been blessed with pious parents, those parents have watched, with many tears and prayers; and would now, if in the land of the living, lay down their lives, to save.

Amidst such formidable dangers as the world presents, there is but one security; and that is, a firm adherence to Almighty God. "This is the victory that overcometh the world," says the apostle, "even our faith." Our unaided arm is utterly unavailing. We must seek for aid without us. We must form alliance with the Omnipotent: and faith is, in its very essence, union of the soul with God. Faith lets in upon the mind, that day-spring from on high, before which the lesser lights of sense and time, fade off, and vanish from its view. It is not, strictly speaking, with the world, with wicked men, and evil customs, as they exist without us, that our warfare is. It is with the effect and operation of these things upon our own hearts, that we have to do. Just as, in the natural vision, it is not the originals, as they stand around us, that we see; but the pictures which they paint, on the mirror of the eye. Within us, then, lies the field. on which the prize of our salva-

tion, must be gained, or lost. And of that field the world must hold possession, till God arise ; till his enemies are scattered, and they that hate him, flee before him. Faith lifts up, in the soul, that everlasting door, by which the King of Glory enters in. This is the great principle of gospel salvation ; Christ formed and dwelling in the heart—Christ reigning in the soul—“ Christ in us, the hope of glory.” All this emphatically implies, that, in the concerns of the soul, there can be no compromise. Christ has no concord with Belial : nor can he divide his empire with the world. One or the other we must obey : for no man can serve two masters. Religion is, in short, every thing ; or it is nothing. If there be an eternity, life should be one continued preparation for it. If there be a God, our souls, with all their powers and faculties, should tend to Him alone. If Christ be a true messenger from heaven, he himself has taught us, that, unless a man forsake all that he has, he cannot be his disciple.

But you will say, perhaps, that this declaration of our Saviour, cannot be taken literally. It must however, you will grant, have some meaning : if not a literal, some figurative, or spiritual signification. Have you, then, ever seriously considered, what that spiritual meaning is ? Have you considered, that upon your rightly understanding this,

your true discipleship, or, in other words, your salvation, depends? Have you ever prayed to God, to aid you in this examination, by the teaching of his Holy Spirit? If you have, I need not ask you the result. It has been, doubtless, this, that the renunciation of which our Saviour speaks, if it mean not an outward and literal, calls for an inward and spiritual, separation from every earthly tie; more deep, more lasting, and harder to flesh and blood, than if we, literally, parted with all our possessions, and set out upon the world, as naked as we entered it. But I will add, that this separation is not grievous to the enlightened mind; but that, on the contrary, it is the only true liberty of the soul; the only rest that it can find, or solid happiness it can enjoy, on this side heaven.

Nothing then, I repeat it, can secure us, amidst the iniquity which abounds, but that firm and close adherence to Almighty God, which establishes his throne in our hearts, and enables us to feel, that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.

To aid you, in attaining to a state so blessed, it is our duty, to set before you every suitable means and motive in our power; and, amongst the rest, the example of those who shine, as lights, in a dark place. It is good for us, to see that there are some, who, in the midst of an evil generation,

are willing to know, in order that they may do, the whole will of God concerning them. Allow me, then, briefly to call your attention to one such instance. I have had, within these few days, a communication from some unknown individual; of whom I may speak, as of one dead, because he assures me that I never can know who he is, in the present life. From this person I have received a letter, enclosing five pounds, for the poor of our parish; and asking for my counsel, as a Christian minister, upon a matter of conscientious doubt. He represents himself, as having a family, who depend chiefly on his industry, for support. This industry, he speaks of, as having been abundantly blessed: so that, after providing for his household all things necessary to life and godliness, a considerable overplus remains. Now, the question put to me, is this: "Is it my duty" (and here the writer quotes many appropriate passages of Scripture)—"is it my duty, to give *all* this overplus to the poor; and thus leave it to Almighty God alone, to take care of me, if I come to old age, and of my beloved family, when I am dead; having laid up no treasure for either, but in heaven?" This excellent man expresses himself, as anxious to be told, without reserve, the *utmost* extent of what the Gospel may, in this particular, require. Nay, he declares, that, were he to con-

sult merely his own feelings, he would be deeply gratified at hearing, that he ought to give up all. "For then," he adds, "having done this, I could, with more confidence, plead for the poor, at the throne of grace, and commit them and their miseries, into the hands of God." This letter speaks, in all the fulness of the writer's heart, of the utter worthlessness of any sacrifice he can make, on the score of merit. He speaks, in the most affecting terms, of his own sinfulness, by nature, and by practice; and declares that all his hopes are built upon the atonement, made for sinners upon the cross. I think it right to mention, that in answer to the question proposed, I merely said, that I did not think that the New Testament required the relinquishment he thought of. That it did, indeed, call on all who name the name of Christ, to give, according to their several ability, largely, to his representatives, the poor. That the only wealth a man could call his own, is what he gives to the needy and distressed: for when he leaves all his earthly treasures behind him, he will find this laid up for him, in heaven. But that I considered, if the wealthy lived in all sobriety and godliness, they would assist even the poor themselves, by employing them in their several trades and businesses, more than by relinquishing, for their sakes, the stations of trust

in which God had placed them. Such was the advice I offered, (in all humility,) to one, at whose feet it might be well for me to sit.

This person (let me repeat it, to set all vain curiosity about him at rest) has assured me, that even I, who have received his letter, can never know him, on this side of eternity.

May we all so live, that, through the atonement of a Saviour, and the mercies of God, we may meet this true disciple, till then unknown to us, in the morning of a blessed resurrection; and see him, where the merciful shall obtain mercy; and behold this stranger crowned with glory, and giving praise unto God and unto the Lamb, for ever!

SERMON V.

ST. JOHN ix. 41.

“JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, IF YE WERE BLIND, YE SHOULD HAVE NO SIN : BUT NOW YE SAY, WE SEE ; THEREFORE YOUR SIN REMAINETH.”

THESE words were spoken, on the following occasion. Our Lord had just given sight to one that had been born blind : and this man, for his honest confession, that Jesus had wrought the miracle, was persecuted by the Pharisees, and put out of the synagogue. But he was no loser by his fidelity. For no sooner does our Lord find him thus cast out, and thus injuriously treated, than he calls him to a still higher illumination, than that of nature ; even to “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” Struck with the remarkable contrast, between the happy state of this persecuted man, and the delusion of his persecutors, our blessed Saviour utters these awful expressions : “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and that they which see might be made blind.” The Pharisees, perceiving that they were pointed at, reply, “Are we blind also ?” They were blind indeed : but not in such a sense,

as could in any way excuse them. Our Lord leaves them, therefore, without even that extenuation of their guilt. "If ye were blind," said he, "ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth."

The use which I would make of this important passage, as applicable to our own concerns, and to existing circumstances, is the following:—

There is a general, and there cannot be too just, a horror of the state of those who avow themselves *infidels*: I mean of persons, who, educated and living in Christian countries, deny that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, or that Christianity is true. At this moment, especially, when, both in England, and in this country, no small efforts have been making, to disseminate these blasphemous and destructive principles, the public abhorrence of them, cannot be too strongly manifested. This dangerous spirit, now afloat, has, indeed, called forth a counter-spirit, on the side of order and religion, which every good member of society should further, with, at least, his prayers and wishes.

But, after all, laudable as this zeal may be, is there not a still darker shade of guilt, than even an avowed renunciation of the Christian faith? And does not that guilt attach to those, who profess to believe the Scriptures, but who hold the truth in un-

righteousness ; who own, and yet are proof against, all their powerful claims, and interesting motives ; whose affections are not engaged ; whose hearts remain unchanged ; who profess that they know God, while, in works, they deny him ?

To ascertain this point, and bring it to a fair trial, we must, first of all, consider what the Gospel is ; what that is, in short, which the infidel rejects, and which the nominal Christian admits to be authentic. The Gospel is the record which God has borne of his Son. The substance of this record is, that, “ for us men, and for our salvation,” the Son of the most high God came down from heaven : that “ being in the form of God, and equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” My brethren, these truths are familiar to our ears : but do we endeavour to “ comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” of this manifestation of our Maker and our God, “ in great humility ?” Do we pray, that we may know this “ love of Christ, which passeth knowledge ?” Do we dwell upon these mysterious truths ; so as to set before our mind, in life and power, and in the vivid characters of reality and

waking certainty, Christ thus crucified for us? Do we reflect on the severe chastisement which he suffered for our peace; upon those stripes by which we were healed; upon the agonies, with which the Lamb of God shed forth that innocent blood, which made expiation and atonement for our sins? Do we pause, and listen to that still small voice, which speaks to all, who, amidst earthly pursuits and vanities, forget their crucified Lord, and Master; “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!” Ah! my brethren, make the case your own. How would you like, or how endure, the indignities which your Saviour meekly bore? Would you put up with being scourged and spitted on? Would you patiently submit to be struck in the face, and, in the utmost extremities of pain, and grief, and anguish, to be held forth to the loud taunts and laughter, of an infuriate and inhuman populace? And, yet, these were but a small part of the insults and cruelties, which the Son of God endured, when he was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities.

And now, let the question be fairly answered: Which is the deeper depravity, that of him, who believes, dreadful as the error is, that the Gospel

is not true ; or of him, who professes to believe it all, and, yet, steels his heart against his Saviour's affecting calls, and earnest invitations ; who measures out his returns of gratitude, with grudging calculation ; and calls all generous attachment, and filial devotion of the soul, over righteousness, and carrying religion to extremes ?

Suppose that one of you had a beloved child, in whom you early traced the image of yourself, or of one dearer to you than yourself—a child who was the desire of your eyes, and, of all earthly treasures, dearest to your heart ; whom you had fondly looked to, as a credit to you in life, as a comfort to you in death ; as your representative in this world, when you had left it ; and your crown of rejoicing, your companion, and still your child, in the world to come. Suppose this beloved object, carried away by fierce temptation ; seduced into the paths of vice ; changed in character ; lost to you in affection ; forgetful of the guide of his youth ; an alien from the covenant of his God. But the ways of sin are ways of misery : and we may well conceive this unhappy wanderer, as shortly involved in complicated temporal ruin. Suppose, then, some extraordinary chain of circumstances, some unheard-of crisis of calamity, bringing matters, at last, to such a point, that now no possibility of his extrication offers, but what

requires some vast sacrifice, or suffering, on your part. Suppose, for instance, that, as his surety, and for his sake, you were called on to renounce your liberty, and to exchange the pure air of heaven, for the chilling damps, the polluted atmosphere, and all the nameless horrors of a dungeon. There, in solitude and darkness, you sit, from day to day; and hold no intercourse with the world, but to ask of the few, who visit such scenes of woe, if there are any tidings from that far country, in which your child is wandering; if any dawn of penitence appears—any hope, however faint or distant, that he will arise, and go to his father. You are told, that no such flattering prospect opens; that he is still wasting his substance with riotous living; sinking deeper and deeper, into vice and wretchedness; still obdurate, hardened, desperate. One more enquiry, then, you add, with trembling heart, “Oh! does he know all that I suffer for him? Has he been told, and does he believe, that I so love him, though in wilful estrangement from me, as to endure all these privations and miseries, for his sake?” Now, my brethren, who does not, at once, perceive, that, in such a case, a negative would be far less wounding to a parent’s feelings, than an affirmative reply? Were he to be told, that his wandering prodigal did *not* believe; would he not welcome that intel-

ligence, as the last fond hope, to which a parent's heart could cling? Would he not hail that incredulity, as the only favourable symptom in so sad a case—a sign still left, that his child was not irrevocably gone? “Blessed be God!” he would say, “a ray of light still cheers the gloom, and bids me not utterly despair. My child is still a stranger to my afflictions: at least, he knows but a part of all that I have suffered for him. He has not listened, because he could not bear the full recital of my wrongs and sorrows. He refuses to hear, because he knows that he has not fortitude, to hold out against a claim so tender, and so irresistible; because he feels that that tale of woe, if brought to bear, with the pointed evidence of truth, would pierce his soul, and add fresh anguish to the wounds of conscience. Oh! then, my child's heart, though perverted, is not lost to feeling. It has not been put to proof. My sufferings have not been pleaded with it, and pleaded with it in vain. The happy moment, therefore, may yet arrive, when, deserted by the world, and softened by his own afflictions, he will come to himself, and listen to the still small voice, that tells him of a parent's sufferings, and a parent's love; when he will hear, and believe, and return, in penitence, to my arms.” Is not this, I say, like the language of genuine feeling? Is it not true to nature? Is it

not what you would expect to flow, spontaneously, from a father's bosom? And, on the other hand, can anything be more opposed even to common sense, than the supposition, that a parent, circumstanced as I have described, would hail, with satisfaction, the assurance, that his child *did* believe the whole of what he suffered;—that this parent should actually consider his belief, as a kind of compensation for his crimes—a kind of substitute for his repentance;—that he should view, as a flattering symptom, that which proved only the malignity of the disease;—and rejoice in having made the discovery, that the most powerful remedy the case admitted of, had been fully, but ineffectually, administered?

And now, my brethren, I would apply all this to the point before us; well aware, however, that the parallel is most imperfect. That blessed Being, who gave himself for us, and suffered for our sins, has long since rested from his labours, and ceased from all his sorrows here below. His humiliation is past; the days of his mourning are ended; he has overcome the sharpness of death; and now dwells in regions of light, and bliss, and glory; and is seated, in calm majesty, upon the right hand of the throne of God. But, when he looks from that serenest heaven, upon the vineyard which he has watered with his own blood; and sees the

lives, and reads the hearts, of those who call themselves Christians: will the fruit they too often bear, and the returns they too often make, appear less vile, and less ungrateful, because they profess to know, and to believe, all a Saviour has done and suffered for them? No. Far more justly might we conceive, that his tender mercy would lay hold on infidelity itself, as some extenuation, if any there could be, of such depravity and guilt. We might, rather, picture to our imagination, our great High Priest, as pleading this unbelief, in bar of immediate judgment upon rebellious sinners. "Their blindness," he would say, "is deeply criminal: but in that blindness some hope remains. They do not believe all the ills, and all the agonies, which I have suffered for them. Give them, then, a further respite. Let them alone, this year also. Grant me one more opportunity of putting to proof, what new providences, new instruments, new ministers, and new visitations of my Spirit, may effect. Let me try whether afflictions may soften, or mercies win their hearts; so that they may be disposed to receive the truth, in the love of it, and to look on Him whom they have pierced. Yes: after all their obduracy and impenitency, now may be the accepted time; now the day of their salvation. The glad tidings may reach their

ears: and, when they believe, they will be converted, and I shall heal them.”

In what I have urged, you cannot conceive, my brethren, that I wish to lessen the horror, which, I trust, you feel, at the very thought of infidelity. The heaviest charge that can be brought against it, is just, let it come from what quarter it may. But infidelity can bring its charges too, against lukewarm, nominal Christianity. The celebrated Lord Rochester, after his conversion, declared, that the lives and conversation of professors, and *still most* of dignified professors, had, of all arguments, been the strongest, with him, against the truth of revelation. But, in fact, what Lord Rochester condemned, was not Christianity: it was but a poor pretender to the name; a paltry counterfeit of the thing. What he beheld around him was that mixture of high profession, and of hollow practice; that substitution of form and ceremony, for the inward and undivided homage of the soul; that which has been, in all ages, the scandal of the visible church, the laughing-stock of the infidel, and the pain and grief of all God's children. Such was the abomination of desolation, which he saw, and which he was told was Christianity. No wonder, then, that he ridiculed its pretensions, and rejected its authority, with indignant scorn.

Would to God, the time were come, that infidels and worldly Christians would both awake from their dangerous slumbers:—that the one would turn from darkness unto light; the other from the power of Satan unto God: that the one would believe that God is; the other that he is the rewarder of those alone, that diligently seek him: that the one would no longer deny the Lord that bought them; the other cease, while they say, “Hail! Master,” to crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. The Gospel opens one door alone to each: but it calls on both to enter in, and be saved. Christ is the door; and living faith the entrance;—faith in the Son of God, who gave himself a ransom for all;—faith, which worketh by love, which changeth the heart, and life, and nature; which raises the soul from the death of sin, and delivers it from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

This blessed transformation, this new creature, this conformity and assimilation of our tempers and our souls, to the whole mind that was in Christ Jesus, is Christianity; is, my brethren, the religion you profess. Are you, then, already, its true disciples; living in the spirit of the Gospel; breathing after God; crucified to the world; your

affections set on things above; your life hid with Christ in God? If this be so, then all is well. No change is wanting: for you have passed from death unto life. But if the case be otherwise; if you are hostile to these things; nay, if you are unconcerned about them: to you the Scriptures speak a language plain and unequivocal: "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is in vain to explain away such pointed declarations; to turn a deaf ear, to such tremendous warnings; or to get rid of them, by saying, "Have these things been revealed to any of the wise and prudent? Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed in them?" In answer to this, we can only make our steady appeal to the law, and to the testimony. Examine for yourselves. Search the Scriptures, and see whether salvation is promised there, to those that live, as the generality of Christians live; to any who do not, in heart and mind, come out, and separate themselves, from a sinful world. We can only present these truths, to those that hear, and pray for those that will not hear; beseeching all, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; and intreating Him, that He will, of His infinite mercy, call in every wandering sheep, and "so fetch them home to His flock, that they may

be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There is, to sum up the whole matter, a belief of Christianity, which only increases the condemnation of those that believe : because they admit, as true, a revelation of God’s goodness, which ought to bind the strongest cords of gratitude around their hearts ; and, still, resist its powerful and endearing motives. Even obstinate infidelity, that dark offspring of hell, is a degree less sinful, than such a belief as this. But there is a faith, by which the heart believeth unto righteousness, and which all may have, who seek for it in prayer. This faith cannot be unfruitful : for it opens to the view scenes and objects, which must, in the very nature of things, interest, attract, and animate, all the master affections of the soul.

Such a faith discovers to us, first of all, that religion is present happiness ; not the appearance, but the reality, of the thing. And this happiness, we now perceive, not to depend on outward distinctions. A man may be prosperous, and be without it : he may be visited with much affliction, and possess it : for the happiness of religion, lies deeper than the ruffled surface of life. It is peace in the centre of the heart ; a deep reliance upon God, in the calm recesses of the inward man. It

is a joy, so sweet, and so serene ; so soothing to the mind, and so consolatory to the heart ; so fitted to allay and satisfy the thirstings of the immortal soul ; in a word, so unlike the happiness of this world, that we feel instinctively, that it descends from a purer source ; that it is of celestial origin ; that it is a beam of the uncreated light ; a drop from the eternal fountain ; an efflux and emanation from the God of glory.

Faith discovers, also, to us, though still afar off, the promised land. It practically impresses upon the mind, that there is another, and a better world ; where there are things prepared by God, for them that love him, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive. And all this is brought home, with the power and energy of actual and living truth : so that, henceforth, our treasures are laid up in brighter scenes ; and, in the midst of sorrows, we can, by faith, pierce the lowering clouds above us, and see our city of refuge in the heavens. Under the loss of pious friends, we can rejoice in the sober certainty, of soon following them to the land of everlasting life. And, when the cup of happiness is at the fullest here, we need have no misgivings, that our joys will soon be over : for the Christian's most delightful hours, are when he feeds upon imperishable food ; and when his present

pleasures are of such a nature, as to form their own bright evidence within the soul, that they are the earnest of a joyful resurrection, the seed of a glorious immortality.

Lastly, and above all, faith reveals to the soul, that “God is love;” that he is reconciled to all that approach him, through the appointed Mediator;—that he is reconciled to us worms of the dust, in ourselves, guilty and undone. Let this faith be yours (and it is freely offered to you all, who seek for it in the paths of duty and of prayer): let this faith be yours: and your warfare is accomplished; your iniquity is pardoned. You have, henceforth, only to leave your sins and miseries behind, and to run, with patience, but still rejoicing, the race that is set before you.

SERMON VI.

GENESIS iii. 4.

“AND THE SERPENT SAID UNTO THE WOMAN, YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE.”

INDEPENDENTLY of our deep concern in the transaction, there is something unspeakably affecting, in the temptation and fall of our first parents. They were, at first, created upright, innocent, and happy. Nature, fresh from God's all-forming hand, had thrown her treasures, in rich profusion, at their feet. Every tree that is pleasant to the sight, or good for food, sprung up, spontaneously, before them: the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, as the sacramental pledge of immortality; the tree of knowledge, also, as the security of God's favour, on terms so easy and so gracious. All the inferior animals, tractable and gentle, paid to man instinctive homage. No cares or anxieties disturbed the peace, which reigned in paradise. The image of God was stamped on every lineament of the human soul. No passion swayed our first parents' bosom; save that for each other, they felt pure and cordial love;—a love which yielded only to the first and great commandment, “Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.”

Into this calm abode, sin and Satan entered. For this purpose, he assumed the form of one of those lower creatures, which, perhaps, before the fall, had faculties to converse familiarly with man. Under the appearance of the serpent, subtle by nature, but now the vehicle of infernal cunning; he thus assails the unsuspecting mind of Eve—“Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” As much as to say, “Surely it is not possible, that a wise and gracious Being, could forbid so innocent an indulgence, and lay a prohibition, for which no kind of reason can be given.” The poison had begun to work. But still the woman answers, in the words of truth and soberness, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden”—you see how bountiful our provision is: “but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The temptation to Eve was now complete. Sensuality, vanity, and ambition lent their aid. And, above all, doubts of God’s truth and goodness, and suspicion of her heavenly and Almighty

guide ;—all conspired to that fatal act of disobedience and ingratitude, which brought down

“———All our woe,
“With loss of Eden.”

“ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.”

Thus fell the human race; from innocence to guilt; from happiness to misery; from friendship with God, to enmity against him; from life to death, both temporal and eternal. Naked, destitute, ruined, this late happy pair, stood trembling before their Maker. Shame and confusion covered their faces. Hand in hand, they prepared to quit their beloved Paradise; and without hope, and without God in the world, to embark upon the voyage of endless misery. From what quarter of the lowering heavens, could one ray of hope shine forth? God had said: “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” The laws of Heaven could not be violated, without entire satisfaction to their full demands. And our first parents stood thus before the bar of justice, awaiting, alas! a punishment greater than they could bear. In this state, let us be assured that God looked upon them, with a tenderness of compassion,

which our minds can but faintly conceive. His justice, as sovereign Ruler, must have its course : his law must be made honorable : but his heart inclined to mercy. How, then, shall these be reconciled ? How shall mercy and truth meet together ; righteousness and peace embrace each other ? Divine wisdom had devised the plan : and even then, a door of hope was opened, in the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Without blood, there could be no remission. But God had provided himself a Lamb, for a burnt-offering ; the Lamb slain, in the divine counsels, before ever the earth was formed ; the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. The Eternal Son came forward, to do his Father's will. He felt all his Father's compassion for man's ruined race. He laid bare his spotless bosom ;—he took the crown from off his head ;—that the stroke of Heaven might fall, not on us, whose ingratitude had called it down, but upon himself, who did no sin ; who never had transgressed his Father's law ; whose meat and drink it was, to do his Father's will.

Such was the mystery of redeeming love, by which we are restored to the Divine favour, to a life of peace with God, on earth, and to a life eternal in the heavens. Thus reconciled to God, and admitted to filial confidence towards him, Paradise

has smiled again, and the desert of this world become as the garden of the Lord.

But if our blessings are restored ; if where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded, and raised every true believer to higher benefits than primeval innocence could boast : yet, our trials are proportionately increased. The prohibition is not limited to one tree in the midst of the garden. On all around us hang forbidden fruits, of which God saith, “ In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” The tempter before whom our first parents fell, is still abroad, seeking whom he may devour ; endeavouring to shake our confidence in God ; to seduce us from our integrity ; and to cut us off from the tree of life. As in the first temptation, so now, he assails us, under some deceptive form. Did he appear openly, in his proper character, “ Get thee behind me, Satan,” would meet and foil his best concerted plans. He is, then, wary in his approaches ; and often speaks to us, when we little know it, in the current maxims of worldly wisdom ; in the person of our nearest friends ; in the suggestions of our own deceitful hearts. How often does he thus deny the truth of God ! and where God has said, “ Thou shalt surely die,” over-rule that dreadful denunciation, and say, “ Thou shalt *not* surely die !”

Even as it respects our natural dissolution, what

is it that supports the multitudes around us, in a life of sin or thoughtless folly, but this imposing lie? Who that knows the secrets of an earthly mind, needs be told what warfare goes on there, between the fears of death, and a thousand stratagems to dispel those fears? At every threatening of disease; at every symptom of declining strength; at the decease of every near acquaintance; sometimes in the still darkness of the night; sometimes surrounded by gay companions, who little know what passes;—a voice is heard, in the secret chambers of the soul, saying, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” Death rises, like a spectre, on the imagination. Eternity opens her wide arms. The last summons—the funeral procession—the cold grave—and the horrors that lie beyond the grave—these pass in quick review; fleet, in hurried images, before the conscience; and, for a moment, daunt the stoutest heart. But the spirits quickly rally. The children of this world are veterans in this warfare. They can laugh it off. They can call it a fit of melancholy, or nervous illness. They can recollect how many are older than themselves. Their friends, or rather Satan, in the shape of their friends, can say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace; can say, “Throw off these fears—there is no danger for the present—thou hast goods laid up for many years

—eat, drink, and be merry—thou shalt not surely die.”

As it respects the second death—not the dissolution of the body, but the destruction of soul and body in hell—God proclaims aloud, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;”—“neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Does the most obdurate sinner, in good earnest, defy these threatenings? Does he count the cost, and for the pleasures of sin for a season, make up his mind, to dwell, at length, with everlasting burnings? No. There is a secret self-deception, which lies ever at the root of sin. Sin is not looked thus fairly in the face. Some palliation, some refuge of lies, is always resorted to, to quell the tempest of conscience in the soul. When God denounces death, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, sinners, all with one consent, begin to make excuse. One can plead peculiar strength of passion. Another, that his profession renders certain strictnesses impossible;—that, on some occasions, to repel an insult, or accept a challenge, blameable as the custom may be, is rendered, by society, absolutely necessary. Another says, he will not long pursue his present courses; but will make such arrangements, as will enable him to lead a virtuous

life. Another, that he is living, only as those around him are; and that God will not punish a few infirmities, with endless pain and death. These are the ways in which Satan speaks to men's deluded souls: contradicting, not openly, but most effectually, all God's warnings, with the primeval falsehood, "Thou shalt not surely die:"—flattering the conscience, while men are perishing in their sins, and are descending, with a lie in their right hand, into the fire that never shall be quenched.

But, my brethren, in the great question, who shall die, and who shall not die?—there is another material point at issue, between God and Satan. The Scriptures set forth, in the plainest terms, that the soul which is reconciled to God, and brought into a gospel state of salvation, is a partaker of a new, spiritual, and divine life. This life is described as flowing from Christ; as a virtue or energy, proceeding from him; and communicating Christ's nature, to every member of his body, united to him by living faith. Whosoever is thus united to him, is, according to the New Testament, alive to God. Whosoever is not thus united to him, is, according to the same record, religiously, or spiritually, dead. But let us hear the Scriptures themselves. "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of

God, hath not life." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." These passages, selected out of multitudes of the same import, have a most pregnant and practical meaning. They cannot be passed over, as mysteries, which no one can comprehend: much less can they, by any ingenuity, be brought down, to signify any mere outward change of state or circumstances. They, evidently, bespeak some inward work, upon the soul itself; a transition to a state, wholly different from its former state; a spiritual resurrection from death unto life. These expressions have, in fact, in view, that great change, elsewhere described, in terms, if possible, still more striking: such as, being born again; being renewed after the image of Him that created us; being turned from darkness unto light; being transformed into a new man, and a new creature. Nor is this change a matter of mere speculation, or of minor import. It is expressly announced, as essentially necessary to our salvation. We are assured, in the most solemn terms, that unless we are converted, we cannot enter into the kingdom

of heaven ; that without this, all our religion is nothing worth ; that neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature ; that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now, this is the doctrine, of all others, against which Satan wages the most inveterate war. We may multiply superstitious rites, and pompous ceremonies, as the sand upon the sea-shore : and to these he freely leaves us ; because, in the midst of these, the soul may be still in captivity to sin. But when men are really called from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; when he sees that energy at work, which he well knows can save the soul : his kingdom is then shaken ; and all his wisdom is employed, to persuade men, that they can be saved without it. The cry of fanaticism or enthusiasm, is raised. The uncharitableness is put in every odious colour, of saying, that all who are strangers to these high-flown notions, are dead to God. Every popular argument is used, to show how useful, how amiable, how much respected, a man may be, without this unaccountable inward change. No : “ Be a good neighbour—attend to the regular ordinances of religion—take care of your business, and mind your family—and it will be well with you ;” saith the father of lies—“ Thou shalt not surely die.”

But you, my brethren, will not believe the enemy, rather than the friend of your souls; Satan, rather than God. Will some of you, then, perhaps, enquire, How are we to know whether we ourselves have realized that change of nature, of which the Gospel speaks, and have passed from death unto life? To answer this fully, would lead me into too wide a field. But I shall desire your patience, while I rapidly notice a few marks, which appear to me plain indications in this case, and easy to be understood.

In examining yourselves, can you clearly perceive, that in religious matters, there is a marked and decided difference, between what you now are, and what you once were? I do not call on you to tell, precisely, at what period you passed the boundary line. But, nevertheless, has your life been marked by such a transition, as places your present, in clear and perceptible contrast with your former self? In some happy instances of those who were early pious, I will not deny, that this marked change cannot be looked for. That such instances may be frequent, in the times to come; that amongst those who hear me, there may be some little ones, destined to this blessed course, through time and through eternity; is my fervent desire and prayer. But let me add, for fear of misconception, that instances of this kind

have been, in my judgment, so unfrequent hitherto, that a large congregation of professing Christians, may, without uncharitableness, be supposed to afford, perhaps, not one insulated example. Can you, then, compared with your former selves, feel satisfied, that you are other men? Not merely, that your passions are grown tame, by years; not merely, that long experience has shown you the folly of many vices, and made you wise and prudent for this world; not merely, that, towards the decline of life, you think it right to begin some preparation for another world. All this is but according to the course of nature. The change which grace produces, is altogether different. Whether gradual, or more immediate, when it is wrought, the mind is conscious to itself, that it is not superficially improved, but radically changed; that it has new hopes, new affections, new desires; that it loves things which it hated before; and hates things which it loved before: in a word, that it was darkness, but is now light in the Lord; that old things are passed away, and all things are become new.

Another criterion of a renewed mind, is this: Do we love the Lord Jesus Christ? And do we love him, with that tender and peculiar attachment, which he alone is able to inspire? This question is answered at once; for it is an appeal to the

heart. If you are now obliged to examine, and seek for signs and evidences, within you, you have not that love. What person of feeling, who intimately loves a fellow creature—a parent—a husband—a wife—a child—a friend;—could answer such an enquiry, without a glow of tenderness; nay, I had almost said, without a burst of wounded sensibility, at even being asked the question? How is it, then, with you, when asked whether you love the Lord Jesus? Can you rise above all human testimony? Can you turn to that blessed Being, who knows your heart, better than you know it yourself, and say; “Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?”

Again: when you kneel down before the awful Majesty of Heaven, do you do so, merely as a conscientious duty; as a sacrifice offered to an unknown God? Or do you approach, with filial, though humble confidence, to the throne of grace? Brought nigh to God, and entering into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, do you feel the spirit of adoption, which cries, Abba, Father? And do you sometimes feel, that prayer like this, is none other than the house of God, and the gate of Heaven?

These are a few of the signs, which may mark, to yourselves, a real turning of your souls to God. But the time would fail me, to tell of all the fruits,

which hang down from the branches of the tree of life. "The fruit of the Spirit," says St. Paul, "is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "The wisdom that is from above," says St. James, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

My brethren, if there be any, if I address one here, who feels conscious to himself, that he is not the subject of this pure and undefiled religion, and yet desires, sincerely and earnestly, to become so: let me, in conclusion, beseech that person, as he values the happiness of his soul, to enter, this very evening, if he can, into some convenient retirement; and, in secret, to pour out his whole heart to God. You may experience some blessing from above, before you leave your knees. Or you may be denied your request, only that you may come again, and pray more earnestly. But persevere; and sooner or later, you will be blessed indeed. God will give you the request of your lips, and grant you your heart's desire. You will then prove all things. You will then understand the real character of those friends, who spoke peace to you in your sins; and whose counsels, if heard, would have robbed you of that, which you now value above ten thousand worlds. And when you feel the peace

of God, which passeth all understanding; when contentment and tranquillity dwell within your heart; and when, at times, the influences of religion seem to visit your soul, like the dew upon the tender herb, like some soft gale from heaven, or like the breath of God himself: then you will remember, also, how hard it was, if you have ever done so, to charge those with severity, whose advice, whose entreaties, and whose prayers, were all employed, to make you happy here, and to save your soul hereafter.

But if I address, as I trust in God I do, some who have the blessed witness in their own breasts, that they are the children of God, and have, already, tasted the powers of the world to come: to them also, I would add a few words of exhortation. If God has thus favoured you, be faithful to so high a trust; be good stewards of the true riches. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Consider how much may depend on you; and how many you may turn to righteousness, if your lives and tempers consistently exhibit the power of that grace, which is given to them that believe. Seek to be humble, as your meek and lowly Saviour was humble. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world. Cleanse your hearts, that they may become an altar of pure incense, and of acceptable prayer, unto God. And

let charity to all around you, show that you are truly partakers of a divine nature ; that you dwell in God, and God in you. Then will you obey your holy and heavenly calling. Then will you fulfil your high destination. Men will see your good works ; and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

SERMON VII.

PSALM l. 21.

“THESE THINGS HAST THOU DONE, AND I KEPT SILENCE; THOU THOUGHTEST THAT I WAS ALTOGETHER SUCH AN ONE AS THYSELF: BUT I WILL REPROVE THEE, AND SET THEM IN ORDER BEFORE THINE EYES.”

IT is by no means necessary, that we should have committed the precise sins enumerated in the preceding verses, in order to implicate us in the charge of guilt, which my text contains. It applies, in the full spirit of its meaning, to every unconverted child of Adam. And yet, tremendous as is the state of all, who have not, in penitence of heart, returned to God, no angry voice is heard, nor avenging arm stretched forth: all is still and motionless, as if none in heaven regarded. Sinners triumph, and iniquity abounds: but no palpable signs are given, that there is a witness on high, a God to whom vengeance belongeth. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.”

That which, to the filial heart, and awakened soul, causes sin to appear exceedingly sinful, and makes all departures from duty doubly painful, all inward reproaches of unfaithfulness, intolerable

and “sharper than a serpent’s tooth;”—I mean the long-suffering of God :—this is the very thing, I say, which hardens the children of this world, in their insensibility and crimes. Dead to every elevated and generous feeling, they pervert God’s best means of saving them, to their own destruction. They despise “the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth”—(that it is intended and calculated to lead them) “to repentance.” If it thundered out of heaven; if the Almighty were to cast forth his lightnings and tear them, to shoot out his arrows and consume them, when they committed open sin, or resisted the inward voice of conscience; they would be all submission, all zeal, all activity, all devotedness. If they could not love God, at all events they would fear him, and strive hard to love him, with every faculty and energy of their souls. But because he is patient, he is provoked every day: because he is gentle, mild, and slow to anger, his mercies are disregarded, and his omnipotence defied. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and” (what was the consequence of this forbearance?) “thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

“No man hath seen God at any time.” He does not show himself, in any outward manner, to

us. He does not openly or palpably concern himself, or declare how he feels disposed, respecting what is going on here. Even when the most heinous provocations are calling aloud to heaven ; God is still retired, withdrawn, secret, and invisible. Hence it arises, that men's notions of the Divine nature, are so infinitely various. No fixed standard is laid down : no common object is presented, by which their judgment can be brought to agree, upon this all-important point. The volume of Scripture is, to the unawakened mind, scarce less indefinite, than that of nature. In both, materials are supplied, from which each individual can form a combination for himself : and out of these, we are, instinctively, led to frame such a notion of God, as may best suit the peculiar temperament of our several characters of mind. Hence the justice of that charge, which lies against the wicked, in my text ; "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." And hence that universal law, by which a correspondence will be always found, between the worshipper and the object which he worships ; between what each individual discovers in himself, and what he thinks of God.

But how can they, to whom it is given, in a Scriptural sense, to know the Lord, presume that the Being, whom they have learned to worship in spirit and in truth, is such an one as themselves ?

The believer's God is the true God: and what correspondence can there be, between sinful dust, and infinite perfection? I admit that the same light, which reveals God to a soul, reveals that soul to itself; and presents the height, and holiness, and glory of the one, in overwhelming contrast with the degradation and vileness of the other. But, still, the Spirit of God can move upon the face of these dark waters. There is no limit to His power and goodness. No barriers can oppose Almighty love: and where sin abounds, grace can much more abound. There are no depths, which sovereign mercy cannot reach; no clouds of darkness, through which God cannot shine, and manifest himself to the soul. And it is a fundamental law of spiritual nature, that the soul which sees God, must be like him. To have the vision of God, and to bear his image, are things inseparable. They reciprocally produce each other: they are mutually, cause and effect. In proportion as God is manifested, his image is drawn upon the heart: and in proportion as that image grows, new visions of God delight the soul. Thus it is, that by resembling God, we know him; and that by knowing him, we resemble him. Which of these two, first begins the life-sustaining process in the soul, it may be more curious, than important, to inquire: possibly it is not given to

man to know. But every child of God, acutely as he feels his own depravity and vileness, sees, from the lowest depths of his self-abasement, some faint image of the Saviour whom he loves. He must infallibly see it, in the love which is shed abroad in his own heart ; for God is love. Thus it is, that the pure in heart see God. It is not that they have any open vision of the Almighty ; that they can grasp that boundless essence, which fills all space ; or soar into that inaccessible light, which veils the Creator from the creature. No : it is by another mode of apprehension. It is not by their ascent to God, but by God's descent to them, that they can truly know him. In the mirror of their own heart, they see him. By moral tact, and spiritual sympathy, they feel after him, and find him. By the streams which refresh their own souls, they have experimental proof what the fountain must be. By the light which visits them from above, they know that God is light : and he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shineth in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. However various the exhibitions of this great truth may be, the whole resolves itself into this simple principle, that if we would know God rightly, we must be partakers of a divine nature. The great original no man

hath seen or can see : and, therefore, if we bear not his image and superscription on our own hearts, we are living without God in the world. Thus does the correspondence which I have noticed, necessarily and invariably subsist, between the true believer and the living and true God.

But what shall we determine, respecting the fool who says in his heart, “ there is no God ? ” For how can it be said, that there is any correspondence there ? In answer to this, I would observe, that the atheism of which the Psalmist speaks, is not so much theoretical, as practical. It is not that he, who is so justly styled a fool, has reasoned out the point ; and that his understanding has brought in its verdict, against the Being of a supreme intelligence and cause. No : it is in his heart he says, “ there is no God.” God is not in all his thoughts. God enters into none of his calculations. He has no influential sense, no realizing conviction, that there is a God at all. And as he stands affected towards his Maker, so he stands affected towards himself.

Our bodies, with all those earthly interests we pursue, are not properly ourselves. A man may labour to make a fortune, and work for what is called his advancement in life, as if heaven and earth depended on it ; and yet, (such is the deep

delusion of a worldly mind,) be totally regardless of himself. The immortal spirit is the man. We shall lay down these bodies, in death; we shall change them, (nay, it is well known that we have, by insensible attrition, already changed them,) as the clothes we wear; and yet continue as much ourselves as ever. Our souls are not, then, merely a part of ourselves; nor are they, as some seem to imagine, expectants, who, like heirs, wait for our decease, that they may come forward, and take our place, and represent us in eternity. No: our souls are ourselves. Consequently, the men who are not mainly anxious for the welfare of their souls, exhibit, to the eye of awakened reason, and to the view of Heaven, a form of insanity, wild and eccentric, beyond all possibility of description. What would you think of one, who laid out all he had, in dressing up some senseless log, in gold and silver and gay apparel, while he denied his own body the common decencies and necessaries of life? Surely you would, at once, pronounce him mad. But what is all this, but the soberest discourse of reason, when compared with the fatuity of him, who spends every faculty and power, in making provision, not for himself, but for that earthly tabernacle, which he may be called upon to leave this night?—Who is a slave to that mortal body, which he has mistaken for himself, while for his

own his real self, he has no consideration, no concern, no pity?—Who trembles at the loss even of any part of the property of that body, (for wealth, riches, honors, titles, belong wholly to it—they have no connection with the soul;) while he stands, in vacant thoughtlessness, on the brink of eternity, and cares not whether heaven or hell is to be his portion; whether he is to gain an immortal crown of glory, or to lose his own soul—to be himself a cast-away, and to perish everlastingly? Men thus insensible to all that is primary, spiritual, and immortal, in themselves, are, in the same manner, insensible to God. It is not, that they think God “altogether such an one as themselves:” it is that they think neither of the one, nor of the other. Still, however, the correspondence is preserved: and those who live as if they had no souls, live, also, as if there were no God.

The truth is, that such persons are not spiritually awake, or spiritually alive. They have no converse, no communication, with the other world. They have a soul within them, and a God around them;—they hear of both, and they can talk of both, and think it a dream to fancy they can be known in any manner, different from that in which they know them. But, still, these things, in their true nature, are altogether hidden from their view: precisely in the same way, that all visible objects

are shut out from the blind. These objects of sight are all around, and just as near to the blind man, as they are to others. But the discerning faculty is wanting ; and nature is to him an universal blank. So it is, with the unregenerate man. He does not see the kingdom of God. He is, as St. Paul terms him, an atheist—not in theory, but, what is still more important, in practice. God is not in all his thoughts. He lives without God in the world. He wakes in the morning ; and his first thought is not of Him, who makes the sun to rise, and whose mercy watched over him in the night ; but of business, of some worldly perplexity, or, it may be, of some foul impurity. The Sabbath dawns ; and it is the only day on which he is not anxious to be punctual, in any of its appropriate employments and engagements. And why ? Simply because its employments concern the life to come, and its engagements have respect and reference to God, and not to man. But I need not enter into any more details. The whole life of such an one is of a piece. It is part of a general system :—a system into which many enter, without knowing it—a system to which all belong, who have not in good earnest turned to God ;—the system of the world ;—a covenant, into which all lovers of the world have virtually entered, to banish all thoughts of another life—to light up false tapers,

and to shut out the daylight of eternity—to give an imposing importance to all connected with the body, and to chain down the soul in captivity—to make religion a mere drudge to political and social purposes, a thing to be valued, only as giving solemnity to an oath, on which depends security of person and of property ;—to treat God as a cipher—something that it is odd to talk about—something that it is unfairly bringing a gloom on any company, to introduce the mention of ;—to make God an empty name, or, as some one has happily expressed it, “ an infinite nothing.”

But God does not willingly leave men in these delusions. “ I will reprove thee,” saith he, “ and set them in order before thine eyes.” If we are leading a sinful or a careless life, it is clear, beyond all controversy, that something must call us to consideration, or that we must be lost for ever. While, then, we continue in such a state, the greatest mercy which God can show us, is to arrest us in our course, to reprove us, and to open our eyes to our real situation. And this God can do, in what ways, and by what methods, he may please. But, generally, he brings us to reflection, by the chastisements of his hand. He dashes some bitter into the cup of life ; brings our spirits down by some affliction ; shows us the vanity of that world which was seducing us, by bringing us

into some trouble and misery, out of which the world cannot deliver us, and under which it has, God knows, no consolations to afford.

And, now, my brethren, I would anxiously desire to impress the following solemn consideration upon your minds. If any of you are not living near to God, and aiming to please him, as the great object of your life, you stand, even as respects temporal happiness, in a dangerous and critical position. The choicest blessing God could send you, would be some effective call, to change your habits, and amend your ways. And this call, as we have observed, is usually given, by chastisements and afflictions. What, then, is your life, but a constant petition to God, to visit you with some calamity? Every life is virtually a prayer. Give yours a voice; and at that voice both your ears would tingle. It would, in a word, be this: "O God, if thou hast any purpose of mercy towards me, and if I am not to be left alone, to perish in my sins; send some blight upon my substance, some misfortune to my family, some loathsome disease, or racking pains, to afflict my body, some secret sorrow to prey upon my heart." And, O my brethren, where God sees that "it is good for us to be in trouble," and that it is "for our profit" to be chastened, he can chasten and afflict indeed. He knows the tenderest point, and

every secret avenue by which it can be reached. He knows where our idols are; where our hearts are most vulnerable, and susceptible of the sorest wound; where misfortunes would lie with the most oppressive weight upon our spirits, or grief with keenest anguish pierce our bosoms. On this account, in addition to motives unspeakably more important, the dread of God's chastening hand, even in this life; the fear of those temporal miseries, which it is in his power to send; these have been often felt, by the most pious Christians, as an awful restraint—a constant remembrancer, that they should take heed unto their ways, and stand continually upon the watch.

May this suggestion be blessed, my brethren, to your advantage! If in anything you are doing violence to your conscience, make haste to amend your doings: for the arrow of mercy may be upon the wing—the chastening hand may be lifted up—the stroke may be descending—which will break up your domestic happiness, and lay every cheering earthly prospect in the dust; and you may yet, by a timely repentance, avert the calamity, and escape the blow.

But whether these severe chastisements be necessary, or not, God will, in bringing us to himself, “set” the things that we have done “in order before our eyes.”

The first work of real religion, upon the sinner, is to open the eyes of his understanding. As, on the first day of creation, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" so, in the new creation, the process is the same. When the Spirit of God moves upon the face of our natural corruption, light arises out of darkness, and shines upon the soul. In this true unerring light, we see, not only our own outward actions, but our inward principles and motives; not only what we are to the eyes of the world, but what we are to the eye of God. And truly may it be said, that till this day-star dawns, there is nothing on earth, to which a man is a more total stranger, than to what passes in his own breast. This is eminently the case of those, who, outwardly decent, and coming up fully to the standard of the world's correctness, are not spiritually alive to God. Man's opinion to them is everything: and being acquitted at that tribunal, their consciences are at rest. Nevertheless, such persons have been often brought to bear ample testimony against themselves. At the dawning of a higher light, than that of nature, they have seen the deep delusion in which they had been involved; the utter depravity of heart, the foul corruption of principle, the total alienation from the blessed God, which lay under the fair exterior of a decent life. When a man thus weighs himself in the balance

of the sanctuary, he forms an estimate of things, altogether different from what he did before. He stands accused, as a sinner against his own soul. He feels, for the first time, that he is an immortal being, that he was created in God's image, that he was redeemed by the blood of Christ, that he has been called, by Him that made him, to an angelic life on earth, and to glory, and honor, and immortality, in the life to come. He acknowledges this sublime and lofty destiny, to be his purchased inheritance, and his birthright. But he has sold his birthright, for a mess of pottage. He has cast away his crown, and trod his honor in the dust. He has abused the faculties, and betrayed the interests, of his soul. He has chained his affections down to earth. He has made no provision for eternity; no preparation to meet his God.

As it respects his duties to his neighbour, he once took pride in a certain vague and general notion, that he had never, intentionally, done harm or injury to any man. But he perceives, with new eyes, the mischief he has occasioned, the infection he has spread around. He sees that his tender mercies have been cruel, even to those he most loved on earth;—that whatever fondness he might have felt for the bodies of his own children, he had no pity on their souls. He is now aware, that what he had smiled at, as his venial errors, did

more harm, if possible, than grosser instances of transgression: because better fitted, by constant repetition, and daily recurrence, to undermine, without giving the alarm to conscience; and thus, insensibly, to draw off the hearts of those with whom he lived, from God. In short, he sees that his whole life was one continued course of injuring his neighbour, of scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, and saying, "Am I not in sport?" These things he has done: but this is not all. To God, his Creator, Father, Benefactor, and Judge, conscience now can tell him, what he has done, and what he has been. He has been living without concern, in the presence of insulted Omnipotence, and before that God who is a consuming fire. He has been trifling with that dreadful Majesty, which no man can see and live. He has been repaying goodness, which it is almost overwhelming to the mind to think of, with systematic and hardened ingratitude. Even his religion has been, strange to say, an instrument, which he has used, not for God, but against God. For in nothing does the worldly man so pointedly set himself in opposition to all that can lead the mind to God, as in the lifeless, spiritless forms, which he miscalls religion. "Not that he careth" for these forms—not that he is honest in his convictions, however erroneous or superstitious, that mere bodily exercise, or

empty ceremonies, can benefit, or, in any way, affect, the interests of the soul. No. He stickles for the forms, merely that he may set them up against the spirit of religion; that he may uplift a standard, around which the enemies of the gospel may rally, and collect their forces. He knows that men will have some religion; and that, if you would keep them from true religion, you must supply them with false religion. Hence, he magnifies the positive institutions of the Church, and all the external rites of formal worship, in order that he may prove how well religion may be kept up, without change of heart, or holiness of life; in order that he may substitute, for the spiritual worship of a spiritual God, empty sacrifices, offered to a name—abominations, placed before an idol of man's creating.

These are the discoveries which God can make, when he "reproves us, and sets them in order before" us;—when he lays the self-approving sinner open to himself, and convicts him at the tribunal of his own conscience. But no sooner is this effectually done,—no sooner is the soul brought to the knowledge of its own character, than it has eyes to see the character of God. All His goodness is then made to pass before it—His willingness to pardon, His patience under provocation—all the miracles of His love, and all the softest attri-

butes of His mercy, shining forth in the Gospel of His Son. Oh! my brethren, may the invitations of that Gospel reach your hearts! May they come home, with power, to the conscience of every sinner here present before God! You have been acting towards the Fountain of all goodness, in a manner, that, if treated so yourself, you would call the most detestable vileness and ingratitude;—in a manner in which you would not dare to act, towards any man one step above you, in the scale of earthly greatness. You have provoked Omnipotence. You have affronted the Majesty of Heaven. You have steeled your heart against the most generous kindness. You have lived on God's bounty, and never once made any return, but indifference, coldness, and aversion. All this you have done, in the face of a Being, on whose continued support the breath you breathe depends, and who could hurl you, at each moment, into the nethermost hell. And yet,—“hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,”—He beseeches you to be reconciled;—He invites you to his friendship;—He points to his well-beloved Son, bleeding for you upon the cross, and now calls upon you to accept of pardon in his blood;—to turn from all your sins, because they are your real miseries, to receive the blissful influences of his Holy Spirit, to be happy now, that you may be happy for ever.

Will you, then, refuse these calls of a Heavenly Father, these invitations of your all-gracious God, these wonders of mercy, these miracles of love? Oh! to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Resolve, this day, this hour, this moment, that you will cease from all your wanderings, in a world, where you never yet have had your hearts at ease, and return unto your rest, your happiness, and your God. Come unto Him, in a reliance solely upon your Saviour's merits. Enter into the true sanctuary of the soul, by the way now opened through the blood of Jesus:—and eternity only can unfold the treasures which you will make your own;—that eternity, into whose confines you will now enter, while angels celebrate another triumph of redeeming love—while the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, at the rescue and deliverance of one more immortal soul, from the hands of the enemy, and its glorious ascension, from the realms of darkness, into the regions of everlasting light.

SERMON VIII.

ST. MATTHEW, xxiii. 5.

“BUT ALL THEIR WORKS THEY DO, FOR TO BE SEEN OF MEN.”

SUCH is the severe and heavy charge, brought by our blessed Lord, against the Pharisees. And would to God, that the same charge did not lie now, in full force, against a fearfully large proportion, of those who call themselves Christians! But it is my painful duty, to say that it does so lie. And I am convinced that no man, who gives his full attention to the subject, could avoid agreeing with me, in this opinion. But here is the misfortune; that men are so rarely brought to give a calm and candid hearing, to any arguments delivered from the pulpit. When a jury are empannelled, to hear and determine on life or property, their whole minds are engaged; not a word, which the witnesses depose, or the counsel urge, is suffered to pass unheeded: because, here, the matter is felt to be of consequence. But, in the things that concern religion, we may speak, and the mouth of the Lord may speak: and those who should sit, not merely with the attention of the juryman, but with the trembling interest of the

prisoner at the bar,—these men will sit, and sit it out, because it is decent to do so : but they will be thinking of anything, but what we are saying ; and feel anxious, only, that the sermon may not be unreasonably long. But so it is, and will be, and ever must be, while men live to the world, and not to God ; and value their properties and their bodies, above their salvation and their souls. But this is anticipating what I intend as the main subject of my discourse. I have said thus much, merely in hopes of securing, what I beg leave now to entreat, a fair and attentive hearing.

It is quite plain, and beyond all controversy, that the Scriptures speak of the race of man, as fallen from their first estate ; as having all sinned and died in Adam ; as universally in a state of corruption and depravity, of alienation from, and enmity towards, God : that they speak, not of a few, or of many, having corrupted their way ; but assert, that the whole world,—excepting in the instance of those who are in Christ Jesus, and separated from the world, by the grace of the Gospel—that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and under the curse of God's broken law. For the truth of this, I refer you to your Bibles. Indeed no man, who reads the Scriptures, or who is a consistent member of the Church of England, can deny it.

Yet, clear as the doctrine of the universal depravity of our nature is, it does not appear so evident, when we come to look into the various characters of men—I mean of those who are, decidedly and avowedly, not under the influences of religion—it does not, I say, after such an examination, clearly appear, in what this depravity consists. If we say, that none but truly pious men, have any kindly, amiable, or honourable feeling; facts will at once disprove it. If we say, that the whole of society, who are regardless of religion, are one uniform mass of moral deformity, and that there is no distinction between man and man, except that of religious and irreligious; we take a ground, which it is impossible for us to maintain. Every one's experience can contradict us. I have myself known some, who laugh at all spiritual religion, and yet upon whose word I would, in any honorable transaction, place a strong reliance:—men who are of bland tempers in domestic life; who would scorn to take a paltry advantage; and who can shed the tears of tender sympathy, at a tale of misery. And are these exactly on a par, as to their moral level, with the selfish, hard, and brutish natures, who can yield no milk of human kindness, who grind the faces of the poor, who are without natural affection, and if a son ask bread, give him a stone, or if he ask a

fish, a serpent? No. You might as well, and even better, include all the inferior animals, in the same sweeping clause of condemnation; and put no difference between the fidelity of the dog, and the treachery of the tiger; between the cunning of the serpent, and the harmless simplicity of the dove.

If, then, plain facts and experience prove, that such vast varieties are to be found, in unregenerate men; and if the Scriptures, at the same time, describe them, as all the children of wrath, and included under sin; in what does that sin consist? What is that defect, or principle of corruption, or character of evil, or by whatever name we describe that root of bitterness, which constitutes man by nature—whatever modifications and shades that nature may be capable of—which constitutes him a sinner before God?

This question can be answered at once: for the master-mind of Chalmers has already set the whole at rest, in one word. It is ungodliness. It is separation, in heart and mind, from the Author of his being, and the principle of his spiritual life. It is living without God in the world.

Now, however worldly men may differ from each other, in a thousand various ways; they all agree in this, that they withhold from God, the things that are God's. As different in mind, as in the

outward expression of their faces, yet here they are all united. Against God's claims, they are firmly leagued, and of one heart and soul. As the Psalmist describes the nations who conspired against Israel; "They have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:—the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre. Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot." (Ps. lxxxiii. 5-8.) It is not (need I say?) that God is formally denied in name. No: but what I do most soberly mean, is, that God is acknowledged, by the world at large, in name alone. He is denied that place in men's habits of thinking, and feeling, and living, which is due to him, as God. And, consequently, all such are, virtually, and to every real purpose, and in the estimation of Heaven, Atheists. They may, perhaps, come to church, and prayers, and sacraments,—nay, and sometimes, from a double delusion, think they are doing all this from the purest motives—when their hearts are as much steeled against God, and they are as fully *determined* that no argument shall persuade them to come nearer to God, than the world around them do,—as much determined on this, as the holy angels are, on serving God with all their power,

and all their strength. And in this league against God's high supremacy, and all his tender claims upon the heart, I do say, that many are engaged, who live to the full satisfaction, and with the full approbation, of their acquaintances and friends. Many is the man, who rises every morning, and betakes himself diligently to his worldly calling; who pays his debts, and never falsifies his word in business, at least to any disreputable extent; who loves his family, and is kind to his neighbours; who, in short, has all the ingredients of a valued member of society; of whom, nevertheless, it may be said, that "all his works he does, for to be seen of men." It is not, that he is, and knows himself to be, what is commonly termed, a hypocrite. But it is, that, without knowing it, he lives altogether to man, and not to God. He respects every thing, in proportion as man is the object of it; and despises everything, exactly in proportion as it has regard or reference to God. He, consequently, knows what you mean, when you talk of justice, generosity, and liberal dealing: because these things promote the accommodations of society. But he does not know what you mean, if you speak of inward purity, or of the present salvation of the soul, or of faith in Christ, or love to God. Because these things bear upon a higher system, to which he is as dead, and as insensible, as the clod is, on which

he now treads, and under which his body will shortly lie, there to await a fearful resurrection. This man, I say, goes through the business of the day, and lays himself down to sleep at night, and breathes God's air, and lives on God's bounty, and is preserved by him in every danger, and all his provocations are passed over, with a patience which might, one would suppose, soften a rock of flint: and yet he lives, and moves, and has his being, with as little sense of God—that is, of God in his true nature, and in the fulness of his just claims upon the heart—as the beast that roams his pasture, and then perishes.

It may be said, that an honest person, though not religious, cannot act *merely* to be seen of men; because that often he will disdain to cheat, where there is no chance of his being detected. This is certainly true. But, still, I am convinced that all this honesty may have man, alone, for its object. If there were no future life at all, men might have such a sense of the necessity of fair dealing, to carry on the business of society, and such a conviction that honesty is the best policy; and might be so tremblingly alive to character; and feel such an indescribable horror of detection;—and this might be so taught, and wrought into them, by early education—that, without lifting an eye to heaven, they might scorn, even under any concealment, to

act against the established laws of society. I might go far into this particular point, and show how the honesty of the world respects man's opinion, rather than God's commandments;—how the same individual, who shudders, at what would disgrace him before man, will really act dishonestly, where he is borne out by prevalent example—will cheat, for instance, in selling a horse, or in paying his taxes, or anywhere, in short, where the pure principle is tried, without the control of man's opinion.

Such little things might often show us more of ourselves, than we had been aware of. If we would seek them, it is amazing what clear proofs would stare us in the face, that man, and not the Lord, is, in fact, the God of the multitude around us. Would not many that hear me, be more afraid, in a company of strangers, to talk of heaven, or of the Cross of Christ, than to take God's most holy name in vain? Would not many, if they had been entrapped into the crime of intoxication, feel much more shocked, at having exposed themselves in public, than at having given offence to God? Are there not crimes which many would commit, if they had secret opportunity?—crimes which they would not dare to commit, in the presence of any decent man, but which they would commit in God's presence? And is it not insulting his

dread Majesty, to speak of opportunity, and to feel that we have a clear stage for sinning, when we mean, thereby, simply that man is absent, and that God alone is witness? And does not this prove, to demonstration, that such persons set man above his Maker; and that they are flat idolaters, worshipping the creature, rather than the Creator? Are not six days allowed for worldly business, and one day set apart for religious exercises? How seldom does any man borrow part of the six days, because he thinks one day too short for God! And how continually is part of that one day given to business, because six days are considered too little for the world! If you tell men, in general, that their properties are in danger, are they not all bustle and activity? And if you tell them, nay, if God himself tells them, plainly, by his word, that their souls are in danger, what bustle, activity, or interest is excited? If you tell them, that some fellow creature has gone great lengths to serve them, do they not feel the liveliest gratitude? But when we declare, that the Lord of Glory came down from heaven, and bled upon the Cross to save them, where is the response of gratitude or love? How insignificant the laws of Scripture are, practically, held to be, and with what power and authority the world can lay down its laws, for

the regulation of our conduct,—take a simple instance*. The Scripture says, “Be not drunk with wine:” it declares also, “that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Well: this is allowed to be a very awful threatening. But if a young man of condition in life, should happen to be overtaken, and to expose himself in society, in this way, he can soon forget it, and think very little, the next morning, about it. But the world has a law upon this subject: and observe, how that law is attended to. The Scriptures make no distinction between men and women, as to this vice. But the world does. It pronounces drinking, in a man, to be a foolish, trivial offence. But, in a woman, it pronounces it to be a high crime and misdemeanor; in fact, high treason against good society. Now, suppose any young female, of respectability in life, was to find that, by any accident, she had appeared in a state of intoxication, in some mixed company, what would her feelings be? Would not confusion cover her face? Would she not wish the earth, almost, to swallow her up, the mountains to fall on her, and the hills to cover her shame, her misery, and her disgrace? Now,

* This thought has been suggested in a former Volume: but it is so connected with the whole chain of reasoning, in this and the two following discourses, that the Author trusts he will be pardoned for introducing it again.

whence would arise this great difference of feeling? Is it because young women of the world, hate sin, more than young men of the world? Not at all. The case is quite clear: it is because the young woman would feel, that she had sinned against the world: and the young man would feel, that he had sinned only against God.

Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! and witness the patience, the forbearance, and long-suffering of God! Is the sun clearer at noon-day, than the truth, which these instances bring to light,—that the children of this world have rejected the Lord from being their God; that they are all gone astray; that the general system is a league of darkness against light; that it is a combination, with the exception of a remnant, left in every age, of high and low, rich and poor, to “do all their works, for to be seen of men”—to place their own idols on the throne of the most High—and to make the world their God?

Who, then, amongst you, are engaged in this deep conspiracy against your Maker? If your hearts acquit you, if your hearts do not deceive you, if your hearts tell you, that you have “come out from among them, and are separate;” they can witness, far better than I can describe, the blessedness of the choice that you have made, and the joy which you see before you. But if your

hearts misgive you, and condemn you;—if this awful question can excite no interest in your breast, much more if you should meet it in an angry and a hostile spirit;—why, then, the more tenderly we feel for your souls, the more solemn must the call of duty be, to tell you, that you are of the world; and, if you will continue so, must partake of all her plagues, and must meet that destruction, which is coming down, to make you curse the hour that you were born, through the ages of a lost eternity. And oh! that the terrors of the Lord, not brandished by a weak arm of flesh, to affright, but revealed in the Scriptures of truth, to save you, might reach some careless soul now present here, and bring that soul to fly from these terrors, to the salvation, and the mercy of the Gospel! Oh! then, pierce the clouds which surround you; and, with an eye of faith, behold Jesus, at the right hand of God, still offering for all your sins, the blood which he shed for you upon the Cross. Look to this; and the sword of God's most righteous vengeance will be sheathed. Look to this; and all your sins will be laid on Him. Look to this; and you will hate the sins, which caused His sufferings and painful death. Gratitude and love will fill your souls. The Spirit of the Father and of the Son, will cleanse your hearts from all iniquity. You

will then know and feel that peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Freed from the chains of misery and iron, you will run, at liberty, the way of God's commandments. The night of restless dreams will be over; and the sober dawn of eternity open upon your souls. Passed from death to life, you will, in a measure, feel that your heaven is begun; that you have reached the borders of the Promised Land; that God is your happiness now, not less than your portion for ever. You will then feel life a real blessing; and thank God, with new emphasis, for having called you into being. Your works will not then be done, "to be seen of men." You will, indeed, be rich in good works; rich in every fruit of faith. Your daily and delightful task will be, to do good to men; but not to receive your reward from man. Your eye will be singly fixed on Him, who seeth in secret, and who will reward you openly.

SERMON IX.

ST. MATTHEW, xxiii, 5.

“BUT ALL THEIR WORKS THEY DO, FOR TO BE SEEN OF MEN.”

I SHOULD be truly sorry, that my choosing these words, a second time, for my text, could be construed into a desire to dwell, in undue proportion, upon the severities of religion. It is my firm persuasion, the nearest and dearest conviction of my soul, that Christianity is in its inmost nature, the opposite of severity; that it is peace, and gentleness, and joy, and love. I think I can appeal to the all-seeing God, that my heart's desire and prayer to God, is that you may all taste, and bring forth, the happiest fruits of this seed of God's own planting: and that, where I endeavor, with an unsparing hand, to tear the mask from those deceptions, by which an evil world would delude us in our search for happiness, and leave us, at last, a miserable wreck, upon the shores of an undone eternity, I do this, often, with greater pain, than I can well describe; fearing lest what I mean in real anxiety for your best interests, may be thought the effects, merely, of an unkind, unsocial, and gloomy temper-

ament.—But with this short preface, I proceed to the exercise of my duty.

The principle, which I endeavored, in my last discourse, to establish, is that there is a system fully understood, assented to, and acted on in the world, which virtually supersedes and sets aside the law of God ; and, in reality, puts man's opinion in the place of God. And this, I affirm, is not the practice of a few, stigmatized, wicked characters, but the prevailing and received principle of action ; and, consequently, that the words of my text apply not to some exceptions from, but to the average of society. “All their works they do, for to be seen of men.”

A charge like this can be proved, only by adducing instances. And the more familiar the instances are, the better they will be understood ; and the more easily their connexion with the principle laid down, will be traced. Let this, then, be my apology, if I appear to advert to topics, which some might think below the level of the pulpit.

Where the world makes a law, it is received with all that solemn reverence, and obeyed with that alacrity, which suits the commands of the Supreme God. And, on the other hand, where God propounds a law, it has just the force, which the authority of a weak and tottering government

has. The law is heard—it is not disputed : but it is not obeyed. One instance which I mentioned last Sunday, was the wide distinction which is made, between men and women, as to the sin of drunkenness. But it will be said, there is a material difference between the sexes, in point of delicacy, which, surely, should be taken into account. Whatever weight we may allow to this, yet, in the very sin of drinking, an instance could be shewn, where, respecting the same sex, the same complete triumph of man's authority, over God's authority, evidently appears. It might seem ludicrous, almost, to mention it gravely, were it not a part of an awfully important system. If, then, in worldly society, a man of the world appears, evening after evening, I will not say intoxicated, but evidently affected or changed, by what he has drank, it is thought a comparative trifle. But if, in the morning, the same symptoms appeared, is it not true, that a significant murmur, a mysterious whisper, would go round among his acquaintances, that he was a lost man? And if the habit continued, that he would gradually be avoided as infectious, and cast out of the pale of reputable society? Now why this broad, excessive, exaggerated distinction, between two crimes, surely not, in themselves, very far removed from each other? Has the Scripture, which reveals God's will, pro-

nounced it a deadly, unpardonable sin, to be drunk before dinner ; and a harmless levity, to be drunk after dinner ? No. How, then, is this to be accounted for ? In this way alone : in the former instance, the offence is considered, as being merely against God ; but in the latter, it is an offence against the majesty of man's opinion.

Here, again, however, it may be said, in extenuation, that the world's authority is on the right side, however disproportionately exercised. But this authority, I answer, can take the wrong side ; and be just as implicitly obeyed. For example ; it can make it a greater crime, not to pay a gambling debt, than an honest tradesman's bill. If a young, inexperienced man, loses a great part, nay, the whole of his property, at play, to a person whom, in his conscience, he thinks a villain, for entrapping him ; yet if he does not proceed instantly to sell all that he has,—to announce, perhaps, to a new-married wife, while her prospects are in all their bloom, that they both are ruined, and must forthwith bid adieu to home and every earthly comfort, to pay the wages of iniquity to a sharper ;—if he demur about this, he feels that the world will spurn him from its presence, and cast him forth, like Cain, as a fugitive and vagabond upon the earth. And yet the same man, perhaps, will send unpaid from his door, the poor, industrious

mechanic, who has laboured for him, in the sweat of his brow. He will send him home, day after day, to tell *his* wife and children, that he cannot get his honest earnings; that they must yet be satisfied with cold and hunger; and be contented with God's will. The man of honor may thus send the rightful claimant from his door,—nay more, if by any trick he can avoid paying him at all, he may do so, and be received in society, as well as ever. Such is the sound morality, the justice and mercy, of the world!

The truth is, that where the world does impose its pointed sanctions, it has no mercy on offenders. Its whole object being to support an animal system, or, in still plainer words, to uphold that part of our nature, which we hold in common with the brutes, above that which would connect us with the world of spirits;—this being its object, the laws which secure this object, are drawn with a pen of iron, and written in characters of blood. Courage, for instance, is a property, which seems to belong, more or less, to the male part of the various species of animals. And lest man should fail here, and should not sufficiently develope this male property, this principle which gives so much brilliancy to the animal existence,—here, I say, the world interposes the weight of her authority. And if a man shews weakness of nerve, when he

is opposed to his fellow-man,—I do say, that there is a cruel and barbarous combination, against that man, which bespeaks that the system, which could so oppress any being, is strangely opposed to God's merciful mind and nature. Far be it from me, to undervalue real courage, or ungratefully decry that principle, which has been, so often, our security and defence, in the illustrious achievements of the British arms. Yet I do repeat it, that the manner in which a coward is hunted out of all human society, is a proof, at once, of the immense power of the world's laws, and of the cruelty with which it is exerted.

Compare this, with the manner in which sins directly and impiously against God's law, are passed over, almost without observation. Observe how the world, thus without mercy to some offenders, can let the seducer and betrayer of innocence pass, without the least forfeiture of character. A man for instance, turns the talents and gifts, which God has committed to his trust, to the following purpose. He avails himself of the simplicity, the ignorance, and the helpless condition, in which Providence has placed some young female: and because, destitute of every thing else, there is something refined and interesting in her appearance, he sets himself to the task of seducing her. The first thing to be done, is to win her

affections, and engage her heart. This is, sometimes, speedily effected: because a poor wretch is easily dazzled with the brilliancy, which comparative wealth can give. The next step is to undermine her principles—to withdraw her from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. And though conscience may make a hard struggle, yet against those powers of persuasion, which a cultivated education enables the seducer to use, the poor and ignorant are not always proof. Besides, promises of marriage, and falsehoods without number, may be added; which seem to give a peculiar colour to the case, and which thus succeed. Then follows the wretched story, which so many could tell, if any ear but God's would hear it. The miserable victim is soon cast upon the world; thrown off by all her friends; and sent adrift, with a broken heart, to plunge, headlong, into all the horrors of anticipated hell. And yet I affirm, that the perpetrator of all this, does not forfeit his character in society. He may enter into all the gaieties of society; and it may be well known, that he has wrought this ruin in many instances: and neither man nor woman will frown upon him. And after this, he may (what the world calls) reform, and settle himself respectably in life, and become, in common estimation, a sober, good sort of man;—and quite forget, that the

wretch whom he robbed of early innocence, is still living, and still remembers him, and, in all her misery, perhaps, still loves him;—Or that she is dead—a lost spirit, and damned soul;—and is yet to meet him at the day of judgment, and charge him, before God and angels, with her destruction, and say: “But for you, I might be now one of those blessed spirits, who follow the Lamb, in green pastures, and wear the white robes of celestial purity and innocence.”

But the time would fail me, to recount the instances and proofs, that the world has established a system of principles, a scale of right and wrong, wholly opposed to the morality of the Gospel. One more particular I will mention; because here the law of God, and the law of opinion, completely clash; and individuals, as well as society, have a fair opportunity of ascertaining, on which side they range themselves, whether of the world, or of God. I allude to the practice of duelling. Now, if any man professes that he thinks duelling right, I do not mean, at present, to argue the principle with *him*, at all. But as far as my experience has gone, the general feeling seems to be this:—“Duelling is not right—it is against the law of God: but, God forgive us, such is the power of man’s opinion, and the horror we have of encountering the charge of cowardice, that, though we will do every thing

to avoid giving offence, yet, if called upon, we would fight." Now, I put it fairly to every man's understanding and conscience, whether such a mode of reasoning and resolving, is not a complete and practical preference of man's opinion to God's authority? I would add, that all those partake of this guilt, who approve of compliance with the practice. And this involves, I fear, a large proportion of those, who, by their sex, or their rank in life, cannot be principals in the crime.

Nor is it in this case only, that to approve a thing, involves us in all the guilt of committing it. And if the instances which I have mentioned, of false principle, and of principle and practice flatly opposed to the revealed will of God, and to the very letter of God's law;—if these instances be but symptoms of a latent and deadly disease, which constitutes the world's corruption;—if they be but a few overt acts of that wide-spread revolt, that dark and deep conspiracy, which places a lost and fallen world, out of God's blessed and paternal government, and makes this earth a wonder, a shame, and a blot, upon the map of God's vast empire:—What, I say, is the case of those, who live in the spirit of this system—who, though they avoid some of these outward scandals, yet have pleasure in them that do them—who, in spite of fair professions, present to God a traitor's heart—

who, really and practically, make common cause with, and court the friendship of, a world, which puts evil for good, which makes crime its law, and the prince of the devils its God ?

But how shall we know, whether we are of the world, or not ? whether we are of one heart and mind, and nature, with it ; and, consequently, will, if we continue so, sink, with the world, never to rise again ?

Some could answer this question at once. Ask them, whether they are of the world, and every sensibility of their soul, is ready with an answer :— “ Ask a virtuous woman, whether her affections are set on one who is not her husband ; and purity and religion, years of obligation and endeared affection—these brighten in her countenance, and, without a word spoken, repel the charge, and shew that her heart is still with him, whom she swore, before God’s altar, to love and honor, till death should part them.” So it is, with those that love God, and who have obeyed his call, and fled from the ruin that lay before them, to the city of refuge, to the blood of atonement, and to the mercies of a reconciled God. There is, in this case, a loyalty of heart to God, which they feel, but cannot adequately describe. They still deplore the remains of their sinful nature : but how can they be of the world, who feel themselves strangers upon earth,

as all their fathers were ;—who utterly abhor all false ways ; who follow him who was crucified by the world ; whose treasures are in heaven ; and whose ambition looks only to that crown of glory, which is beyond the grave ?

But with others, alas ! the case is not thus clear. And, in truth, it is wonderfully hard, in such circumstances, where the outward actions are not palpably notorious, to show men, as it were, to themselves—to show them what manner of spirit they are of : particularly, when they rather flinch from the touch, than feel anxious to let in the whole light of the truth, and to look at all their secret motives, in that mirror which will neither flatter nor deceive. One thing may be suggested, on this difficult subject. People, who will go to certain lengths in religion, are fond of repeating, as a golden rule, that good sense and prudence forbid our being singular. But, after all, if the whole world lieth in wickedness, and if, consequently, to linger there be death, and to fly from it the only road to life ; how can a man be saved without being singular ? If broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, how can a man be out of that way, without being singular ? If the generality be wrong, how can he be right, without being singular—or, in other words, being of that small number, whom the Lord hath chosen

out of the world, who are shining, as scattered lights, in the midst of surrounding darkness? But this singularity, (will it be said?) is all in the mind and heart. Yes—but “out of the heart are the issues of life”—and “by their fruits ye shall know them.” Besides, what do all these, and such like plain scriptures, mean? Surely, they must mean something. “Know ye not,” says the Apostle, “that the friendship of the world, is enmity with God?” “Blessed are ye,” says our Lord, “when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.” There may be a sort of improvement, of late years, in some of the habits of general society. But let us, as individuals, take care, if we resolve to move only with the main body, whether our share in this improvement, will in the least avail us. If, for instance, it became the fashion to go to church seven times a day, we might go to church seven times a day; and all might be done to man, without one atom of pure intention towards God. Well then;—if salvation is worth an effort, let us dare to be singular. Let us not be ashamed to confess Christ, before men; if we would not have him deny us, before his Father, and the holy angels.

But, still, I feel, that I am but dealing out general principles, and that the cases of individuals may differ, in such an endless variety of particulars, that I may leave them as much at sea as ever. Into these minute details, discourses from the pulpit cannot enter. Am I, then, placed amongst you, in the character of your minister, with all the fearful responsibilities, which attach to that charge, merely that I may officiate in public? Or do I wear this gown, merely that I may have a legal right to collect the tithes, and once a week deliver a formal harangue, and as the reward of my pains, hear that some of you say, “Indeed he seems very much in earnest”?—as if I was talking about any thing, rather than your souls—that bar of judgment, where I am to meet you—that heaven and hell, in one of which each of you must shortly be. No. I feel that I have far more important duties to perform, when any of you desire to afford me the opportunity. I am ready, then, to enter into the full discussion of every principle I lay down here, in private conversation, with every one of you. I am ready to see at my own house, or to go to the house of, any individual of this congregation, that we may examine the Scriptures together, to see whether these things be so; to take sweet counsel together; to enter into the peculiarities of every case; not presuming to

impose my judgment, as a law to any; but ready to devote my time, my anxieties, my thoughts and prayers, to help you forward, in the path to heaven. This offer I make, to every one that hears me; down from the highest to the lowest, in this parish and congregation.—And now I have done: and may the Lord dismiss you from this attendance, with peace and heavenly benediction!

SERMON X.

ST. MATTHEW, xxiii, 5.

“BUT ALL THEIR WORKS THEY DO, FOR TO BE SEEN OF MEN.”

A THIRD time do I recur to the same words. But is there not a cause? For if the charge, which I bring against the world, be fairly substantiated and made out, is it not a matter, which affects the life of those very souls, over which I am, by my office, the appointed overseer? If a physician is persuaded, that his patient labours under some capital and deep-seated disease, will any one blame him, and call it tiresome repetition, because, in every visit, he applies himself, over and over again, to the same thing; and never remits his vigilance, nor ceases to direct all the resources of his skill, to that point where life is threatened, and the latent poison lies? No one would say, that this physician should, in order to make himself more agreeable, amuse his patient, by talking of trifling symptoms, and flattering him by feeble palliatives, while a mortal distemper was preying upon his vitals; or by telling him how well he looked, while death was in his countenance. Let it, then, be my apology for all these repetitions, that the

spiritual disease, which my text describes, is mortal. For if, in the religious sense, that alone is life, which is a life to God; what can imply and constitute a state of death, if that law of opinion, and rule of action, do not, which dethrone the Almighty from his high supremacy;—which place the sceptre of authority in another hand;—and which, systematically, go to render God, really and practically, a cipher in his own creation?

Of the individuals who compose this phalanx of firm hostility to God, there are two sorts; those who lead, and those who follow. In most societies, and in most families, who go the way of the world, are to be found specimens of the two classes. Some really love the world, and actively oppose, and guard with ever-watchful vigilance against, the introduction of any attempt, to set up a domestic altar, and give to God the honor due unto his name. They may, it is true, give religion, in the general, a good word. But when it comes to particulars, and to bear on real life, it must be a religion sanctioned by the world; or, in plain terms, a religion which gives, not the first, but the second place, in everything, to God. All beyond this, they utterly dislike. They are eagle-eyed, and have a penetration, acute beyond description, in discovering the earliest encroachment,

the faintest dawning, of anything, that could be construed into what they call fanaticism. And on this point there is no dealing with them. Here they have no kind of patience. And though, in other respects, perhaps, bland and amiable, it is wonderful, how this kind of character can change its nature, and become severe and bitter, when any member of the same household, betrays a desire for something higher and deeper in religion, than the usual round of forms and ceremonies. No governor of a besieged fortress, can stifle treachery in the garrison with prompter vigilance, or with a higher hand, than they do the first symptoms of the religion of the heart, in any member of their private circle. These are, as it were, the leaders in the conspiracy, the rulers of the darkness of this present world. The other class do not so much love, as fear the world. They would be religious, if they were not too timid to be so. They are in a sort of captivity to the more active and fiercer spirits. They love their ease, and love their friends; and would fain love God,—but that their friends, whom they love better, will not let them. If their neighbourhood or relations would declare, in earnest, for God, they would gladly follow. But alas! they yield, just where the trial of their fidelity lies. They make themselves dependent on men. They refuse to take up their

cross. Nature is stronger, with them, than grace. They are prisoners: and though they sometimes sigh for deliverance, yet these faint wishes will not do. They purchase peace, by unfaithfulness to God. They are in the treason, and lend themselves to the confederacy of this fallen world, against its Maker, its rightful sovereign, its all-kind preserver.

In my former discourses, I gave, I think, plain proofs of the existence of such a confederacy—I mean a combination, and thorough understanding, in the world at large, that man is to be obeyed, rather than God; and that whoever refuses to submit himself to a system of legislation, founded, in all its branches, on this principle, shall forfeit the protection of society, and be outlawed from its pale. Every quarter to which we turn our eyes, teems with demonstration, that the children of this world “do all their works, for to be seen of men;” that every day, which leads them onward to eternity, is passed, in paying servile homage to an arm of flesh, and in pouring contempt on God’s authority. I could enumerate instances, just as palpable as those already mentioned, till I was tired of speaking, and you of hearing. One of them, and the only one I shall advert to, we shall, perhaps, see exhibited, before we leave this house of prayer. The Sacrament of the Lord’s

Supper, is this day offered to your acceptance: and, to judge from ordinary practice, I am to suppose that more than half this congregation, will leave the Church, as soon as I proceed to administer it. Now, you all know the authority, on which this solemn duty is founded; that Christ, in the last and darkest night of those sorrows, which, in his humiliation, he bore for you, said, when instituting this affecting sign and representation of his body broken, and his blood poured out upon the cross, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Now, if any one, from religious scruples, absents himself from the Sacrament, as we administer it, to this I have not, on the present occasion, a word to say. God forbid, that I should feel with unkindness, towards such, or doubt that those who unite under one head, and love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, will be accepted with him; whether their opinion leads them to receive the Sacrament, sitting or kneeling. But on what far different grounds do others act; and, according to their own principles, in what flat, open disobedience to Christ’s positive command! Some, because they are determined not to give up certain sins; others, because they have a sort of general, vague idea, that receiving the Sacrament at the great Festivals, seems just the kind of strictness which matches them—there is a regularity in it, and still it is not

going too far: others, I verily believe, simply because their habits are such, and their friends are such, that they would feel it awkward, and really be ashamed, to go up to that holy table. These are the kinds of motive, which influence many. Now, for such motives to influence us, in trifles, is not inconsistent. But for such motives to influence us, where the matter is a positive command of God; a matter in which our salvation is concerned, and eternity at stake:—to suffer mere trifles to outweigh all these, is nothing more nor less, than a part of that desperate infatuation, which has closed the eyes of a lost and fallen race, upon the light, the truth, and the reality of that higher system, which they are passing into, unthinking and unprepared.

All that I am saying, appears to some, as clear as the meridian sun; because they see things, with an eye of faith. And so it would, to every one of you that hear me, if the truths of religion were presented to your minds, with the vividness of real facts, and actual existences. But the world have turned their backs on God, and he has left them to their own blindness: and, consequently, they are as fearless of the horrors of the invisible world, as the blind man, of the pit into which he is about to fall.

For can it be said, that any man, who is living

in the spirit of the world, actually believes the plainest articles of that creed, which he stands up, on Sunday, to repeat? He thinks he believes them: but here lies, perhaps, the very heart's core of his delusion. For does he believe the first clause of the creed? Does he "believe in God, the Father Almighty?" Does he confess that awful, tender name? How is it, then, that he lives to the world, rather than to God? that where the laws of God and man conflict, he obeys the latter, and defies the thunder of Omnipotence? How is it, that his heart refuses the first call of universal nature, and is cold, in every movement, to that all-gracious, merciful, long-suffering Father? Or does he believe "in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?" that he "suffered" for us "under Pontius Pilate; was crucified" for us; was "dead and buried?" If he does, where are the fruits? where is the gratitude of heart, the loyalty of soul, which speaks in every action of the life? No; my brethren. The man who lives like the world around him, cannot believe in the great humiliation of the Son of God—that affecting, unspeakable condescension—that miracle of divine love. He is incapable of doing so; for no man, declares the Apostle, "can say," even "that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost"—by that faith which makes him a new creature, and which overcomes the world.

Would to God, that we could bring men, even so far as to believe, that they do not believe. They would then begin to have some idea what ministers are aiming at, when they faithfully deliver their message. Then the threatenings, which are denounced from this place, would not float, like distant thunder, in the air. Then would men perceive, that we have a definite, pointed meaning, in what we say—that they themselves form the cases, and are the very characters, we have in view, when we speak of an evil heart of unbelief; when we speak of those who “do all their works for to be seen of men.” They would then pay some serious attention, when we describe their own case, in language that fits it to the very life, and would shew them, that they are at enmity with Heaven, under the wrath, and under the curse of God’s broken law. Men who listened thus, would begin to feel the necessity of making up their minds, whether we are right, or whether we are wrong. If we are wrong, they would produce their strong reasons. If right, they might then cry out—Oh! may the Lord put it into their hearts to do so—“What must we do to be saved?”

When it comes to this point, and men make this inquiry, with that deep concern of soul, which alone is suitable; then the happiest part of our office, remains to be exercised. The most piercing

convictions which a sinner can feel, are far short, it is true, of what the case demands. Let him have been an open profligate, or a self-righteous formalist—it makes no matter—he has, if either, been abusing the most generous goodness; been selling a glorious immortality, for the lowest and filthiest trifles; he has been doing all in his power, to wear out God's long-suffering, and call down upon his head, the vengeance of insulted Omnipotence. But if he sees all this, and is now but willing to be pardoned, and to be saved; we can then assure him, on the infallible word of Scripture, that he has not worn out that patience, which is infinite; that God's thoughts have not been, as his thoughts; that while his thoughts were enmity towards God, God's thoughts were all of mercy towards him; that he so loved the world, though alienated from its Maker, so compassionated the case of every soul that would turn to him, however late, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that while we, like sheep, were going astray, and turning, every man, to his own way, the Lord laid on the Partner of his throne and bosom, the iniquities of us all, that the chastisement of our peace might be on him, and that with his stripes we might be healed. On this account, the Son of God became a man of sorrows,

and acquainted with grief; he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he made his soul an offering for sin; and for the transgressions of his people, was he stricken.

This, then, is the message which we have to deliver, to every soul that mourns for sin, and seeks God in true and heartfelt penitence. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." "Come unto him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest." And this, also, we can add, that those who thus lay hold upon the hope set before them, and draw nigh to God through the blood of Jesus,—that these not only build their future hopes, upon an immovable foundation, but that they will find the same salvation, present peace, and a present help in every trouble. True religion is true happiness. Such is the clear, unvarying testimony of all God's children. It is true, that a vain world, dazzled with false pleasure, may not think them happy. But what does that avail, if they feel, within, the sunshine of the breast, and know that they have found the pearl, while others are pursuing the mere counterfeits? It is true, the Christian's humble walk with God, may appear, to a proud and thoughtless generation, gloomy and insipid. But what avails their false estimate of

things, if he knows that he is happy; if he breathes new life, and feels new liberty; if he is conscious that his heart is at ease, and his mind in sweet tranquillity; if he can testify, from daily experience, that the ways of Religion are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace?

We do not, then, invite you to quit that slavery, in which you are reaping nothing but disappointment, that you may serve a hard master. We do not invite you to cease from doing all your works to be seen of men, that you may work for God, and receive no wages or reward. No: we call you from slavery, to perfect freedom. We call you to live and labor to God alone; because his favor is better than life itself. We call you, we invite you, we beseech you—by the mercies of God, and by all that his Son has done and suffered for you—that you will hear his voice, while it is called to-day, and before the night sets in; that you will seize the prize of your high calling—the prize of happiness, in time, and in eternity.

SERMON XI.

EXODUS, XX, 3.

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

No man hath seen God at any time. It is not, therefore, with our bodily eyes, or bodily senses, that we can hold intercourse with our Maker. Though God became flesh, yet we cannot now see him in the flesh, or hold any communion with him, in a palpable and external manner. In the Sacraments, and in the solemnities of public worship, we do, no doubt, perform some visible and bodily acts. But these are only outward emblems or significations, of inward homage, and spiritual devotion. The truth is, God can be approached only by the affections of the heart. He is a Spirit; and, consequently, must be spiritually known. God is love; and can reign, as God, in those souls alone, which dwell in love, and which are moulded into a frame, congenial to the divine nature.

When the Almighty proclaimed to Israel, "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other Gods before me:" those solemn words involved a principle, profound and spiritual, as God's own

nature. This fundamental law, comprehensive of all the rest, is fulfilled by love. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "This," says our Saviour, "is the first and great commandment." This is life eternal; solid, and substantial happiness; heaven opened in the soul. This, in a word, is the sum and essence of divine worship: and, consequently, whatever object we cleave to, with this deep devotion of the soul, is our God.

In such a view, our situation here is awful in the extreme. We are placed in the midst of dangers, and amongst Gods many, and Lords many, who would claim dominion over us. To one or two of these, I would now, in the way of warning, direct your notice: and if in these you clearly discern the character of false Gods, you can, for yourselves, apply the principle, to any other rivals of the true God, which may solicit the chief affections of your heart.

One idol which men set up, is worldly interest. A diligent attention to our temporal concerns, is, no doubt, a duty, which we owe to society, to ourselves, and to our families. Nor does the strictest punctuality, in such matters, forbid that the higher claims of eternal things, should be habitually re-

cognised and felt. But how utterly, alas! are these latter disregarded, by the thorough-paced man of the world. Such an one, I grant, is often friendly in his conduct, peaceable in his life, honest in his dealings. Where, then, does he err? He errs, I say, in the great point. He has rejected the Lord from being his God. His worldly interest is his idol. This, in heart and mind, he falls down before, and worships. On this he sacrilegiously bestows that inward homage, and that deep devotion of the soul, which are due to God. How, it will be said, does this appear? It appears in everything. Tell him, on the one hand, that his soul is in danger; tell him, on the other hand, that his property is in danger: and to which of these will he most attend? Tell him that God is angry with him; or that his patron, from whom he expects advancement, is angry with him: and which will he fear the most? Talk to him about the news of the day; talk to him about heaven: and which will engage his liveliest interest? Show him one man, who has risen, by his own talents and perseverance, to wealth and station; and show him another man, remarkable for piety, and for deadness to the world: and which of the two will he pronounce the wiser? Or, whatever his lips may coldly say, which will he secretly admire and really respect?

These things, my brethren, speak unequivocally. There is, in all such cases, idolatry of heart. God is acknowledged in words; but to the world is given all that is real, and essential, and substantial, in devotion. The man of the world is, then, a worshipper of the world, or of his interest, or of money; or by whatever name we may call the idol, which he has placed in the temple of God.

Another idol which men set up, is sinful pleasure. That sinful pleasure draws the heart from God, is beyond dispute. Those who grope in the fatal darkness of sin, may not, themselves, be conscious of this truth. God is veiled from their eyes. He is at an infinite distance from them. They may think that, if they do not rob, or steal, or oppress the poor, God is not so severe, as to punish them, for some indulgence of their passions. Thus they argue, because their minds are darkened. Could they but have a glimpse of God's holiness, his purity, his essential hostility to sin, they would then form a far different estimate.

For vice is not, merely, the breach of positive commandments. It is, in its own nature, opposed to God. It is opposed to him, in the same way that darkness is opposed to light; or that stormy and restless passions are, to the calmness and serenity of a well-ordered soul. In this view, vicious indulgences have an evil and a danger

in them, that men are not aware of. It is not, merely, that they provoke God to anger. They do, by their own operation, impair the soul, and render it incapable of knowing and enjoying God. As a man debilitated, and loaded with disease, clings to his sick room, and dreads to expose himself to the genial outward air, or to walk forth amid those scenes, which, to the healthful, are scarce less than “opening paradise;” so does the distempered soul feel, instinctively, averse from God, and prefer the chambers of death, to the brightness and purity of his presence. For God is, in reality, light, and expansion, and liberty, to the soul. When the pure in heart see God, they enjoy, in some sense, the foretaste of their eternity. The air they breathe, visits them from happier realms, and more genial climes, like

—————“odours from the spicy shore
“Of Araby the blest.”

There is, in fact, to the spiritual mind, a real, vital union with God. It is harmonized to his nature: and He who is the very fountain of the soul itself, touches the springs of life within it, and sends joy and gladness through all its regions.

It is on this account, that the Apostle declares, that to be spiritually minded, is life and peace; while to be carnally minded, is death—separation from the source of life, and enmity against God.

It is not, that the sinner is, in intention, opposed to God. It would be mere madness, to defy the Almighty, and challenge God to personal combat. No. This is not the kind of enmity, which subsists. It is an enmity to his nature; an opposition always deepest, where it is least perceived. But, in truth, if the slave of vicious pleasure, would soberly think, he might well know, how wide the breach is, between him and God. For his mind is opposed to purity, to virtue, to spirituality, to holiness. He has no sacred pleasure, in God's holy word. He calls not the Sabbath a delight. In the retirement of his closet, he is a stranger to the consolations, which flow from prayer. In the calm serenity of nature, he sees nothing to compose and purify his heart; and raise the eye of contemplation, to a new heaven, and a new earth. And why? Because the impurity of his pleasures, has vitiated his tastes; sullied the mirror of his soul; and removed him far from God.

For it is not with God, as he is in himself, retired within the incomprehensible and inaccessible light of his own essence, that we have to do. It is in his works, his word, his secret influences upon the heart, that God is made known to man. And if we feel not after him, and find him, there, we are without God in the world. We are at enmity with God, unless we see him in all around

us ; and find him, as a spring of happiness, within us. If we do not love those draughts and characters of God, which we have seen ; how can we love that God, whom we have not seen ? If we have no taste for the copy, on which his living nature is impressed ; how can we have any relish for the bright original ? No. Whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report, are the channels, through which the affections move towards God. They emanate from him, and flow back to him again. And he who loves God, is drawn, by a divine attraction, into those blessed paths, which lead us to his presence. Hence it is, that if we walk in darkness, we have no fellowship with the Father, and with the Son. The mind cannot move, or the heart be drawn, in opposite directions : and he who loves sinful pleasure, cannot love God. He is driven by an adverse current. His whole nature is opposed to the first and great commandment.

To all such persons, and to all the worshippers of those idols, which the world sets up ; to all these does the true God speak, in the solemn and gracious words before us.

It was when God had rescued his people, with a mighty hand ; had been their shield and their saviour, in every danger ; had covered them with his wings by day, and cheered them with his pre-

sence by night ;—it was at that season he gave this great commandment : “ I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The same gracious Being calls to us : but after a deliverance far greater than our fathers knew ; after mercies, of which their mercies were but the distant types and shadows. He who died, that we might live ; he who sowed in tears, that we might reap in joy ; he who bled upon the cross, to win our hearts, and save our souls ; he echoes to us the same eternal law ; “ Hear, O Israel. I am the Lord thy God : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.”

Nor is this commandment a severe duty imposed. It is the highest privilege that God can bestow, or that a creature can receive. It is a commandment enjoined, not for God’s sake, but for our own : because that the worship of false Gods, is essential misery ; and the service of the true God, the only happiness. In this view, the Father of mercies is grieved, for those that wilfully depart from him. “ My people ” saith he, “ have committed two evils : they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

If, my brethren, these affecting words, in any sense, apply to you, commune with your own hearts, and thus let conscience, for a moment, speak :—“ What is the end of all I am pursuing? Is wealth, or greatness, or prosperity in the world, the highest point to which my hopes aspire? Are, then, the rich, the great, the prosperous, happy? And if they are not happy, what avail their riches, and their greatness? Again, am I not, every day which passes, of this busy life, drawing nearer and nearer to its close? What fruit have years brought me, except that I am growing older? What is it, then, after all, that I am doing? I am hunting after shadows. Even if successful, I am heaping up riches, that my children perhaps may be injured by them, or that strangers may scatter them. I am rushing into eternity, with an earthly mind. I am throwing away my soul, and reaping nothing in return. I am preparing to meet my God, by devoting my days, my soul, and mind, and strength, to idols, which can neither profit nor deliver.”

These are reasonings, which we should all do well, seriously to address to our own hearts. We cannot be too watchful, that no idol defile that temple, which was formed for God. Oh! then, turn from all your idols; for it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Yield to him an undivided

service; and you will then know the peace, that keeps those souls, in which the Lord omnipotent reigneth. These are the souls, which form the Gospel kingdom. They have quitted the service of many masters; and now acknowledge but one master, which is in heaven. They have made the decisive choice. The conflict is over; the warfare is accomplished; they have found the peace of God; they have entered into the joys prepared for his faithful people.

Would you, then, be true and living members of Christ's spiritual kingdom? Would you thus enter into life? Keep, in all its fulness, its length, and breadth, and height, and depth, the first and great commandment; "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

To invite men to this unqualified dedication of themselves to the one true God, might only discourage them; were it not always impressed upon their minds, that there is a gracious Mediator, ever ready to present them before the throne of God. There is one way open to us all: one door of access to the Father, through which, alone, the holiest of the sons of men, can pass; and which is equally open to the most guilty, and the most lost, of the race of Adam. These latter have only to repent, and believe the Gospel. Though their sins have been red like crimson, and as the sand on the sea-shore innumerable;—

yet let them, even now, forsake their evil ways, and rest their hopes on the all-sufficient atonement of the Lord Jesus; and God is not slow to pardon. His promise is engaged. His heart is inclined to forgive. He will yet be their God; and they shall be reckoned among his people.

The great commandment of my text, is not, my brethren, the stern mandate of resistless power: it is the call of a heavenly Father, to leave the service of strangers and usurpers, and to become the children of his family, and the heirs of his rich possessions. The terrors of the Lord have power to awe, and to convince: but, if you would yield your hearts, think upon his mercies, and let his goodness pass before you.

I may be, at this moment, addressing some, who are slaves to sin, and in captivity to the world. And yet the time may not be far distant, when some affliction may soften your hearts; when disappointment may shew you the vanity of your idols; when the still small voice may penetrate your souls; when, as wax melteth before the sun, your stubborn enmity may dissolve, in showers of penitence, at the presence of that God of mercy, whom you now despise. But life is uncertain. No man can reckon on the future: and therefore, “to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

My brethren, the message on which, as a minister of the gospel, I am sent to you, is to offer full and free forgiveness, to every sinner in this place, who will turn from his sins, and live. And on this message, I am sent to each soul, individually, and apart from all the rest. You are now assembled, as one congregation, together: but, in the habitations of eternity, you may be further from each other, than the east is from the west, or than the heaven is high, in comparison of the earth. It is our part, to scatter the seed amongst you: but where it will strike root, and bring forth fruit to God, he alone can tell. It is our part, to bring God's gracious offers of reconciliation to your ears. But who will reject the counsel of God against themselves; or who will eat of the tree of life, and live for ever; we may never know, till we see you standing, some upon Christ's right hand, and, if any of you will reject the mercies which are freely offered you, others upon his left hand, in the day of judgment.

To conclude. While many among you may have heard me, this day, with careless unconcern; there may be others, who, though hitherto regardless, have heard the voice, which commands them to take the Lord for their God, not merely with their outward ears, but in the secret chambers of the heart. In a word, whether young or old,

rich or poor ; does conscience seem to call to *you* ? Does the sure approach of death—the certainty of a judgment to come—the awful prospect of shortly passing into the unknown region of spirits, into the eternal world, and into the presence of your God ;—do these vast interests seem to rise, in all their immeasurable importance, before your view ? Have these suggestions broken in upon the darkness of your minds, like beams of light from some brighter world ; and caused you to see, whether willing or unwilling, the madness of sin, the reality and glory of the life to be revealed ? Moments like these, if rightly used, are of more value, than the treasures of the whole earth. Such a moment may be the crisis of your everlasting destiny : and now may be the accepted time—now the day of your salvation.

Let, then, the language of your heart and conscience be, “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Attend to that voice ; for it is thy life. It is the voice of him, who says to you, in all the height and depth of its spiritual meaning, “ I am the Lord thy God : thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

SERMON XII.

LEVITICUS, xix. 2.

“YE SHALL BE HOLY: FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD AM HOLY.”

IT was the noble sentiment of a heathen, that the highest summit of religion, is to imitate that being whom we worship. This is a truth, unchangeable as God himself; and as extensive as the wide range of intellectual being. This principle, however perverted, may be traced, in the most degraded corruptions of religion. And though, as the Psalmist informs us, the gods of the heathen were but idols, yet between the worshippers, and the object of their worship, the correspondence and resemblance were still apparent. “They that make them, are like unto them; and so are all such as put their trust in them.”

In the same manner, it may be affirmed, in every instance, and without exception, that every man, in his tastes and character, resembles the god he worships. For whatever a man mainly cleaves to, and loves; whatever is his first object, is, in spite of names and professions, his god. If he lives in pleasure; pleasure is his god. If he lives in the spirit of the world; the world is his god. If

he lives in sin; sin is his god. Such men are idolaters of the worst kind; inasmuch as to bow down to impurity and vice, is a still deeper debasement of the human nature, than to fall down before the stock of a tree, or a carved image. But, however this may be, men are, by an immutable law, like the god they worship: and, consequently, he alone who bears upon his soul, the impress of the Divine nature, is, in reality, a worshipper of the living and true God.

If, then, religion consists in copying from the great original; of what infinite importance is it, that we form right notions of God; that we study well the blessed characters and attributes of his revealed nature! Of one of these, only, my text speaks. While all the surrounding nations were adoring their own vain imaginations, under the titles of lords many, and gods many; “the Lord spake unto Moses, saying; Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” I feel this subject to be one of great importance. For I am deeply impressed with the conviction, that the *holiness* of God is that peculiar attribute of his high nature, the knowledge of which has power to convert the soul, and quicken it into spiritual life. Or rather, shall I say, it is the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him: for, in proportion as God is

apprehended as a holy God, the mind is enlightened from above ; and enabled to pierce the clouds, which separate between our natural corruption, and the invisible world.

Certain it is, that men can go far in religion, and still not reach that point, which weans their hearts from earthly things. They can come near the kingdom of God, and stand at its very threshold, without entering into it. You see them, at every moment, coming to the birth ; and, yet, there is not strength to bring forth. You see them just passing the line of demarcation ; but still, they do not pass it. Year after year, they continue *almost*, but not *altogether* Christians. I have often asked myself, why is this ? What is it, that prevents persons, who seem anxious to do all that is right, from at once ascending the hill of the Lord ? What is it, when the whole burnt-offering is ready, which keeps the celestial fire from descending upon the altar ? The solution of the matter, I believe, is this. While God's other attributes are known to the class of minds or persons I have alluded to, his holiness is veiled from their eyes.

The simplest meaning of the word holy, is separate, distinct, or kept apart from common uses. Holiness, in the creature, denotes peculiar dedication ; a consecration from all other services

to that of God alone. Thus God's people are called *saints*, or *holy ones*; his solemn day is called the *holy Sabbath*; the divine record of his will is called the *holy Bible*; his sacraments, his ministers, his ordinances, his house of prayer, and all his dedicated things, are called *holy*—that is hallowed, sacred, distinct from all that is profane or common. When this term is applied to God himself, it follows that it must be taken in some peculiar and transcendent sense. God's holiness is his brightest essence, his inaccessible light, his incommunicable glory. It is that by which the Deity is high uplifted, above all that is not God. It is the immeasurable distance of the Creator from the creature. It is, above all, God's infinite separation from sin.

The Old Testament often exhibits the Divine Majesty, in these awful characters. "Draw not nigh hither," said God to Moses: "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest, is holy ground." In still more dazzling brightness, and still severer colouring, does this holiness appear, when Sinai, the mount of God's presence, "burned with fire, unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness." With no less solemnity and terror, is God exhibited, in the tenth chapter of the book of Leviticus, when there went out fire from the

Lord, and devoured Nahab and Abihu ; because they had offered strange fire before the Lord ; and refused to hear that voice, which said, “ I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.”

In the New Testament, God’s holiness shines forth, with all its lustre, in the stupendous means which he devised, for the recovery of a lost world. Here was not an act of mere benevolence, freely moving, without the control of any other attribute. It was not, that God pardoned sin, as some venial act, which his kindness overlooked, and which he was too indulgent to mark severely. No : in this divinest plan of our redemption, while tender, infinite compassion is shown to sinners ; God’s holy hatred of sin, no less pointedly and illustriously appears :—compassion, which could embrace enemies and rebels, in its arms ; but holiness, so unsullied and unchangeable, as to fix upon transgression, the penalty of eternal death. It was this which required an all-sufficient substitute for the guilty ; and demanded an infinite ransom for our sins. It was this, which called down the Son of God, from the mansions of blessedness ; and placed the Saviour, as an expiatory victim, upon the cross ;—that God “ might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus ;” that

“mercy and truth might meet together;” “righteousness and peace embrace each other.”

Such, then, is the character of God: such the contrariety and repugnance of his mind, to sin. Such, in a word, is that essential holiness of God; that peculiar attribute, which, I have said, the natural mind of man does not, and cannot, apprehend; and in virtue of that ignorance, it is, I conceive, so much withdrawn from the sanctifying influences of Heaven.

All men can form some notion, whether fainter, or more clear, of God's justice, mercy, wisdom, power: because of these some traces remain, in our present fallen state. But the image of God's *holiness*, is no longer impressed upon man's nature: and he has, therefore, no elements or materials within himself, wherefrom to form the idea of holiness, as ascribed to God. This knowledge is the peculiar characteristic of the renewed mind; and gives, to the weakest of God's children, to the feeblest babe in Christ, a spiritual wisdom and elevation, which no natural powers of mind, no dazzling heights of intellect, no splendid attainments of mere human virtue, could ever reach. It is this, which convinces the mind of sin. It was this, which brought down Job, after all his efforts to assert and vindicate his own righteous-

ness,—which brought him down upon his knees, in penitence and deep contrition ; “ I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Thus it often is, that the man, who, in the eyes of his fellow-mortals, and of himself, is upright, and free from any positive sin ; when God causes his holiness to pass before him, sees, at once, that all his boasted righteousness was false and hollow ; that his goodness was but as the morning' cloud, a thin covering over selfishness, uncleanness, worldly-mindedness, and pride. Compared with the spotless sanctity of God's nature, and God's law, the exceeding sinfulness of all our secret sins, appears. Conscious that we lie open to those eyes, which are too pure to behold iniquity ; our guilt, with all the horrors of retribution, stands revealed before us. Then, and not till then, we are prepared to embrace the Gospel. We then feel that we are sinners, and that sinners need a Saviour.

Thus does the same light, which manifests the holiness of God, lead us to that blood, which can expiate our guilt, and cleanse the soul from sin. But more than this:—on the principle laid down already, that we shall always resemble the God we really worship, those alone will be holy in

their lives and hearts, who contemplate God, as a holy God.

Christians are too often satisfied, to look no higher than to mere heathen virtues. If they are honest and benevolent, and if, on a principle of self-respect, they scorn to defile themselves with base pollutions, all, they think, is well. But, in such a course of life, what do Christians more than others? What, in all this, do they evince, of their peculiar character? What is there, in all this, of the Scripture marks of discipleship—of coming out from the world, and being separate—of dying to the world—of being crucified to the world—of being conformed to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ—of living, by faith, on a crucified and invisible Saviour? What cross do we take up for Christ? To keep down the violence of our passions, is not to take up the cross; for heathens could do this. To bear our afflictions patiently, is not to take up the cross; for our afflictions we cannot help. No: to take up our cross, must imply something that we suffer, for Christ's sake. And this every one will do, in some shape or other, who, in heart and mind, is separate from the world.

It is not, by any means, that the Christian's duty, is to relinquish his providential station in society. Far from it. The hardest cross, often, is to remain

faithful to God, amidst the trials and difficulties of the post which he assigns us. When the cross is really taken up, and when the enmity to sin, which this implies, is brought, practically, to bear upon the details of life; new fields of trial are opened to the faithful Christian. The man whose religion can, in some measure, square with the tastes and feelings of the world, can live at ease, amidst the pursuits and conversation of its children. He is admired by them, for his compliance and good-nature; and for so benevolently indulging in others, what, perhaps, from strictness, he may think it right to deny himself. Not so, with the man, who lives in the view of a holy God. His warfare is against all sin: and often, in this sacred cause, will it be his lot, to encounter unpopularity, in its most trying form; to be thought unkind and severe, by those whom he would fain make happy; to appear wanting in affection, to those whose souls are dear to him, as the apple of his eye, and for whom his prayers are daily ascending to the throne of grace.

But the Christian's part is that of patient perseverance, in the midst of present discouragements and trials. And often has that perseverance, even in this life, been signally rewarded. Often have showers of blessings, though for a time withheld, descended upon a whole circle of friends and rela-

tions, in answer to the prayers of one lover of immortal souls. At all events, however he may be judged by, or succeed with, others; the man who knows and loves a holy God, has an evidence within him, brighter than the day, that he is renewed in the spirit of his mind; and that what is holy here, will be happy hereafter. This temper of the soul, will outlive the ruins of time. It will flourish beyond the grave; for "holiness becometh God's house for ever."

Such, my brethren, is the frame of soul which leads to, because it prepares for, heaven. Such is our high privilege. For the call is to every one, who professes his belief in the living and true God; "Ye shall be holy: for I, the Lord your God, am holy." You are invited to become partakers of the divine nature; to feed on food congenial to the soul; to drink of the fountain of spiritual life—of pure and substantial happiness. And all this is offered to you, freely, without money, and without price.

For other riches, men often pass their days in toil, and their nights in restless, sleepless care; and reap no fruit, but disappointment. Yes; all earthly happiness will deceive you in the possession, or make to itself wings, and flee away. But the treasures of eternity endure for ever: and, behold, that bright inheritance is yours. The land

of Canaan lies before you, in goodly prospect; and each of you is invited, after a few more years of trouble are over, to go forth amidst its pleasant pastures, to repose beside its still waters, and to taste of its immortal fruits.

My brethren, the freeness of this salvation, cannot be too much impressed upon you. For, let your past lives have been what they may; however long and inveterate your habits of sin; however you may have offended against the advice of others, and the light of your own conscience; however alienated you may have been, in heart, and mind, and nature—in the whole bent and current of all the most intimate affections of your soul—from God; however you may have hated his purity, and turned your feet from his most blessed paths;—yet, if I address any such here, you, I say, *you* are not yet excluded. You have had a long-suffering God, to deal with. You have a Saviour, who still liveth, to make intercession for you. Repent; and all your iniquities are atoned for: and that God, whose mercies are past finding out, will cleanse all the sins, whereby you have provoked him to anger, in the blood of his own Son. Behold, then, the everlasting gates lift up their heads: behold, the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers. Enter in, come boldly to the throne of grace: and you will then taste and see what God

hath prepared, for those who seek for him in holiness.

It is said, that all men would become religious, if they really saw what religion was. And such is my belief. For religion, holiness, and happiness, are one and the same thing. It is not that religion implies the leading what men, in general, would call a happy life. Nay, on the contrary, the mind, which contains within it the seeds of endless blessedness, may be exposed to the roughest waves, and hardest trials, of this uncertain life. This, I grant, may appear strange to many. But let us keep in mind, that man contains, within himself, the principles of two natures; one of which is of this perishable earth, while its companion is the offspring and native of the skies. It is only when we live to this latter—only when we sow to the Spirit—only when we set our affections on things above—that we can know how immutably it is fixed, in the eternal constitution of things, and by the irreversible decree of God, that holiness and happiness are the same for ever. Yes: these streams may be separated for a time;—they may be often divided from one another, while passing through the desert of this troublesome world: but holiness and happiness *must*, at last, unite; and flow, in one tide of glory, throughout eternity. To know this, is part of man's immortal nature: and

he who feels it, has passed from death unto life. He can see the end of all things under the sun approaching, not only without dismay, but with exceeding joy. He can rejoice in tribulation. While all abroad is dark and lowering, he can enjoy a clear sunshine, in his own breast. While storms are sweeping, and tempests are hurling devastation around him ; within he can experience that peace of God, which passeth all understanding. He stands unmoved, while every earthly blessing—health, reputation, fortune, all that bound him to the world—go down in one scale : for in the other scale, his hopes are all ascending to those celestial mansions, whither his Saviour and fore-runner is gone before.

These, my brethren, are the true riches of the soul. These graces are the tokens of God's covenant. These are the laurels which adorn the brows, of those who fight and conquer, in the battles of the cross. These are the treasures of the gospel. These are the triumphs of the pure in heart ; their joy, and peace, in believing. O my beloved brethren, make these blessings yours. Be ye holy : for the Lord your God is holy.

SERMON XIII.

ST. LUKE, xxii. 19.

"THIS DO, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

FROM my selection of these words, you will, at once, perceive, that I mean to occupy your attention, with some observations on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But into any general reflections on the history and peculiar nature of this institution, I do not propose to enter. My present object is, in few words, and very plainly, to notice some of the causes, which lead professing Christians to absent themselves from the holy table.

But before I proceed, it may be well to make two brief remarks.

I. That through the entire of this discourse, I wholly exclude the case of those who, from any peculiar opinions, or theoretical scruples, withdraw from the holy communion. I address myself to those alone, who profess themselves regular members of the Established Church. And of such, I will take occasion to say, that I never knew one who, on becoming sincerely religious, did not also become a constant communicant.

II. That I consider the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to be, in a remarkable manner, an outward and visible sign, not only of the body and blood of Christ, but of Christianity altogether; and, consequently, that as a man stands affected towards the one, he will stand affected towards the other. I should wish this thought to be kept in view, without a distinct recurrence to it, in all the following observations; that so it may serve as a pulse or touch-stone, by which our spiritual condition may be ascertained.

One impediment to a regular attendance at the Lord's table, is, I fear, that some, though I trust but few, are living in known and wilful sin. Are there, then, any now here present, who stand in so awful a predicament? any open violators of the Divine Law? any in overt rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven? If any such be here, assuredly you are right, in not approaching the memorials of a Saviour's love. But why should I say right? For everything must be wrong, in a course of sin. It is not, I grant, at all inconsistent or unaccountable, that a man who is at variance with his God, should turn away from that sacred ordinance; nor that he should do this, from a superstitious notion, that under its mysterious veil, his great enemy might lie in ambush.

But sin, in all its doubles and contrivances, is but complicated infatuation. For does the sinner, who thus blindly venerates the Sacrament, and lives in mad defiance of its author and its institutor, think that rite holier than God? Or does he imagine that He, whose dying love is set forth in those memorials, so hovers round the holy table, as to be located to the spot, and withdrawn from every other? When, in flat disobedience to Christ's commands, he takes his invitation to communicate as the signal for departure, does he remember that the place on which he measures every step, is holy ground? Does he not know that, when he turns his back upon the Sacrament, his face is still towards God; that God's presence is around him, and his eye upon him?

But he will say, perhaps, "It would be but adding hypocrisy to my other crimes, if I performed an act, which pledges me to the renunciation of sins, to which I intend to cleave." I answer: You are pledged already—you are not at liberty to choose; neither are you your own master. Willing or unwilling, you are within the bonds of the covenant. You swore allegiance at your baptism. You are, in every sense that implies accountability, a Christian: and from you much will be required.

Think not, then, that the Sacrament would bind you to one responsibility, to which you were not bound before.

But your apology, perhaps, will be : “ Bad as I am, I should still be worse, if, leading the life I do, I profaned the holy table by my presence.” This, I reply, is merely trifling with conscience. It is, in the strictest sense, to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. For sacraments were made for man, and not man for sacraments ; and you defile that soul, for whose use, alone, the sacraments were instituted. You desecrate the temple of the Holy Ghost. You trample under foot the blood of the Covenant. You crucify the Son of God afresh. You profane the sanctity, and violate the sanctuary of God’s presence. But in further answer to your plea—“ Bad as I am, I would not be still worse”—I say ; if you now intend to commit sin, consider the position in which you stand. For all past sins, though deep as hell, though red like crimson, and in number as the countless sand, there is full and free forgiveness, if you repent, and believe the Gospel. But if you look forward to some future, perhaps some distant day, and say within yourself, “ It is my intention, on that day, to violate God’s commandment ;” what becomes of your plea ? For what can make you worse than that does ? Survey, for a moment,

the ground on which you place yourself. You know that it is God who continues you in life. You know that every faculty you possess, and every breath you breathe, are derived from Him. And yet you resolve that, on some foreseen occasion, you will commit sin. On whom, then, do you depend, for life, or health, or ability, to put that intention into practice? All things have a voice that cries to God. Our actions, wants, intentions, wishes, are vocal in his ears. And we have no better mode of ascertaining the real character of these, than by turning them into prayer. What, then, is, virtually, your prayer? It is this—"O God, preserve my life;—guard me from every danger; watch over me in the helpless hours of sleep; feed me with food convenient for me; keep me in health, in safety, and in the enjoyment of my liberty; continue these blessings, till the looked-for day arrives;—and I will then pierce the hand that holds me, and repay thy mercies, with ingratitude, insult, and defiance." In such a case as this, there is but one course, which it is not utter madness for you to pursue. It is to break off thy sins by repentance: if thy right hand offend thee, to cut it off;—if thy right eye offend thee, to pluck it out. It is to fly back from the brink of the precipice on which you stand. It is first to be reconciled to thy God, and

then to come and offer thy gift—the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which God will not despise.

The next impediment to due attendance on the Holy Sacrament, to which I shall allude, is, strange as it may appear, mere thoughtless indifference to the subject. When we consider the unparalleled obligations, which we owe to that Being who said, “This do in remembrance of me,” as well as the transcendent dignity of His person; it might well appear surprising, that, amongst all the motives to disobedience, careless unconcern could find a place. But there is no arguing against experience: and we are not now dealing with theories, but with facts.

On these I would ground the charge, which I now desire to bring home to the consciences of those whom it may more particularly concern. Are there, then, any of you, my brethren, who, though you may be occasional, yet are not regular partakers of these holy mysteries? Allow me, then, to propose to you a few simple questions, as the best means of ascertaining, whether you are, or are not, fairly chargeable with indifference. But first of all, consider that the ordinance in question is no light nor trivial thing. It is a command of the most peremptory kind, given by Christ himself. It is the memorial of his death and passion. And, though it is a very serious

thing to partake of it unworthily, it is also a very serious thing to turn your backs upon it. Do you, then, adopt this latter line of conduct; do you take this bold and decisive step, in consequence of a judgment formed, and a mind made up, on a calm and deliberate review? Have you given it the consideration, which, assuredly, you would give to any matter, which you felt to be of real and deep importance? Did you ever—sincerely, and with an anxious wish to be directed—pray to God, to guide you in this particular? Did you ever, with the same view, consult the Scriptures, or any other pious books, and weigh, with the whole power of your understanding, what they said? Did you ever call upon any godly minister, or serious fellow Christian, for the purpose of consulting him on the subject? And to your own candour I submit it, whether all this would be doing more than is suitable to the importance of the matter? If, at this moment, instead of hearing a minister of religion, discoursing upon the subject of the Sacrament, you were listening to a lawyer, who was commenting on some will in which you were interested, or pointing out to you some mode of securing your properties from hazard; would you not give him a very different kind of attention, from what you are now giving me—nay, from what you would give, though you believed, in your

hearts, that I was one of the most distinguished divines, that ever edified the Church of Christ? I plainly tell you, that I consider it your bounden duty, so to live and walk with God, that you never should willingly turn your backs on the holy Sacrament. And am I singular in this doctrine? Could any minister have the face to say, or would you yourselves think him justified in saying, "I do not expect or advise you to receive the Sacrament, at the monthly communions; it is quite enough to partake of this means of grace, on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday?" If, then, we are right in pressing this duty, and if it is on you, as the party concerned, that we are pressing it, and if it is about a matter which relates to your salvation that we are speaking;—why are we listened to, as if we were beating the air? Is it that any of you really believe that Christianity is not true? Or that we are hired, to keep up a mere deception; and stand here to say what, in our consciences, we deem false? No—it is my firm persuasion, that not one of you can harbour such a thought. But if this is not, indeed, your opinion, why do you act, as if it were so? You would listen, with attention, as I said before, to a lawyer, who talked to you about your properties; or to a physician, who talked to you about your diseases; or to the humblest man, who talked

to you about your worldly business. Why should it be, that when the preacher talks to you about your souls, there is a kind of spell over you, and over all he says, as if, somehow, his words had no reality, life, nor substance? Surely, the reason is but too evident. It is because religion, whatever it may be in theory, is not, practically, held to be a subject of importance: and this Sacrament must, of course, rise or fall in estimation, with the general system of which, I have already said, it is the representative, or sign.

This, then, is one of the causes which lead persons to absent themselves from the holy table. Many, I am convinced, who refuse a punctual attendance, would feel, if they once calmly entered on the examination, that they really have no solid reasons to produce; that it is part of a careless habit, resulting from the mind never having yet taken religion, in any of its branches, into serious consideration. But can I dismiss this topic, without one word of counsel and entreaty?—God grant that it may be a word in season—to the thoughtless neglecters of this duty! When you go out from the memorials of a Saviour's love, and thus venture on an act of positive disobedience to his command, it might, at least, be thought, that you would depart with pensive steps, with a burdened heart, and with a reproaching conscience. But alas! I fear it

is not so with you. You leave the church, perhaps, gay and unconcerned ; with all the ease and flippancy of a trifling spirit ; and ready, before you have well escaped its sacred walls, to enter, with keen relish, into the business or gossip of the day ; to anticipate the pleasures, or plan the dissipations of to-morrow. Do then, I beseech you, grant me this one request, that the next time you are tempted thus to act, you will pause, and let conscience do the work, for which God has placed it in your bosom. Hear it ; and it will ask you some such questions as these. Is this trifling with God a safe state to live or die in ? Have you not a soul to be saved ; and will trifling save it ? Is there not an eternity before you ; and is your weal or woe in that eternity, a matter of slight importance ? Is there doubtless a God that judgeth the earth, a just God, and a terrible ; and is it prudence, nay is it not madness, to treat him with disregard ? Is your soul of such value, in the sight of God, that he has paid no less a price for it, than the blood of his eternal Son ; and will you carelessly throw it away, or barter it for trifles — for vanity — for nothing ? These are serious and awful inquiries. For the truth is, that to be careless about God, and unconcerned about the soul, is not that negative thing, that mild character of offence, and venial

error, which it is only harshness to brand severely. Indifference to divine things, is the mystery and essence of our fall from God—of our death in Adam—of the depravity of our nature—of man's apostacy from his Maker.

It is not, then, to bring such persons to attend on a mere form, which they had hitherto neglected, that I thus address them on the subject of the Sacrament. It is that this one instance may convince them of their lost estate. It is that this one symptom may show them the plague of their own hearts. It is that, self-accused, self-convicted, and self-condemned, they may yet believe, that indifference however cold, neglect however contemptuous, ingratitude however insulting, have not worn out the patience of a long-suffering God; that there will yet be joy in Heaven, if they will repent; that the everlasting arms are ready to receive them, if they will arise, and go to their Father.

I have but one more head to touch on now; for I find that the subject cannot be concluded in the present discourse. I have been endeavouring to prove, that many neglecters of the holy Sacrament, are rendered so, simply in virtue of a general disregard of all religious considerations. Let me suppose, then, any of these to be convinced that they have been blameable in this particular; to take

the subject into serious examination; and to feel that it is their duty to obey so positive a command, as my text contains. Another impediment might then present itself; and I am persuaded that there are persons, of the description I have been now alluding to, who would find it a stumbling-block in their way, and be ashamed to follow, in this respect, the dictates of their conscience. I do not say, that very many are thus circumstanced: but I am convinced that some are; and it is my duty to point out every snare, which besets the Christian in his path through life. I think, for instance, that members of large families and connexions, where the habit is, not to attend the monthly communions, and who, till now, have thought and acted with the rest; would, if conscience pleaded with them against that habit, feel more awkwardness than they had at all anticipated, and more fear of being charged with righteousness over much, were they to act with decision, and to take a higher ground, in this respect, than those around them.

And this would, I imagine, be more particularly the case with *young men*. Nor can I speak of these, without a deep and painful sense of the peculiar dangers which everywhere beset them. If we consider that the divine law, in all its awful

purity—that that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, is binding, equally, upon every condition, age, and sex ; it is really melancholy to see how that portion of mankind, who are, by the natural strength of passion, more subject to temptation than any other, are left unprotected by the law of opinion, and by the checks which the prejudices of society can so powerfully oppose to the assaults of vice. Against their becoming religious, there is, as it were, a general combination. From young women, from children, and from old persons of both sexes, even the world requires some exterior of correctness ; and in them, the most vicious approve, nay look for, some outward practice of religion. But alas ! among all but the people of God, let young men be ever so abandoned, and they are received into society. Virtuous young women will like their company ; and grave fathers and mothers will give their daughters to them in marriage. It is thought quite in character, if their business is confined to idle, coarse, and cruel sports ; if their pleasures are only varieties of vice ; and their conversation as remote from manly sense, as it is from every recognition of the fear of God. I do not speak of all—God forbid. I know that there are many bright exceptions ; far more, perhaps, than at any former period : and I

trust that some who now hear me, belong to that happy number. But I do repeat it, that it is melancholy to see a corrupt and sinful world laying snares, without mercy, for young men, so fine a part of God's creation. I may appear to speak severely : but I do so, because I deeply feel the subject. I am myself a parent, and the father of young men. I am, by my office, the spiritual pastor of all the young men around me. And on these accounts, it is my painful duty, to declare, that they are, of all the human race, the most cruelly and unfairly dealt with. Folly seems marked out for them, as if it were their peculiar sphere, and natural element. So much so, that I will venture to say, that the avowal of a really virtuous sentiment, or the performance of any pious duty, which attracted notice, would require far greater fortitude in a young man, than in an old man, a woman, or a child. For the truth of this, I would appeal to any one, who has the least acquaintance with the world. And I would ask them, whether it is not notorious, that many young men, who are well disposed, would be ashamed to perform any religious duty, not sanctioned by universal custom ; simply because they feel, that it would be more remarkable in them, than in any other persons? But to come to the matter in hand. If a young man's conscience told

him to receive the sacrament every month, I have no doubt he would, in some instances, be afraid to do so ; lest he should give visible proof, to his acquaintances, and to the world, that he meant to lead a pure and virtuous life. Whether I am mistaken in this, or not, I leave to the consciences of some that hear me.

But I must now conclude this head, with one word of advice to the interesting portion of my hearers, whose case I have been last considering. If young men are surrounded with peculiar dangers, they are gifted, also, with peculiar talents. They have an energy, and power of mind, which, with the grace of God assisting, fit them to be the choicest instruments of bringing glory to God—of regenerating the world—and sending through the mass of society, the living waters of pure and undefiled religion. Which of you, then, will engage in so glorious an undertaking ? Which of you will start for the prize of an incorruptible crown ? Which of you will spurn the captivity of degrading passions ? Which of you will dare to encounter the fear of man ? Which of you will grapple with this monster, and bring this giant to the ground ; saying, with the youthful David, “ Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God ? ” In this spirit proceed, and all good men will bless you ; and God will give his angels

charge concerning you ; and you shall be his, in that day, when he maketh up his jewels. In this spirit, approach the table of the Lord ; and there gird on your armour for the battle ; and there renew your strength, to run your course rejoicing, and to go forth conquering, and to conquer.

SERMON XIV.

ST. LUKE, xxii. 19.

"THIS DO, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

IN my former discourse, I considered the case of those, who were prevented from attendance on the Lord's Table, first of all, by wilful and intentional sin; secondly, by careless indifference; and thirdly, by the fear of man. I shall now proceed to the examination of another very general motive for withdrawing, on ordinary occasions, from the holy Sacrament—a motive which, in my opinion, involves a principle, more formidably opposed to the very life and soul of religion amongst us, than any other: I mean a fear of going too far, in devotional concerns; a jealousy of becoming righteous over-much; a notion that religion, beyond a certain point, runs to seed, and becomes unmanageable.

And here, perhaps, more than in any other instance, we may perceive the truth of what I before advanced; namely, that the Sacrament stands as a sign of religion in general. One of its great uses, is to serve as a touchstone or criterion, how we stand affected towards God; and, consequently,

where reluctance as to the constant and comfortable reception of this means of grace, is felt, there will be a correspondent disinclination to a free, and close, and filial approach to its great institutor and end.

The individuals to whom I allude, have never, perhaps, taken into serious consideration, whether the nature of the Sacrament is, or is not such, that it is right to receive it, only upon rare and solemn occasions, and not with that frequency which is observed by some. But there is a general principle, on which the former is thought preferable to the latter. Many persons have, in fact, a notion, that there are two kinds of religious profession:— that one is a steady, sober, rational system, which keeps everything in its proper place; that, while it forbids whatever is positively sinful, it still keeps matters fair and even with the world; and thus secures us from being marked, or from giving offence, by anything singular or eccentric.

The other kind of religion, they doubt not, is often well meant: but they think, that like many other things, where the intention may be good, it passes the bounds of moderation; and that there is no telling where it may stop. They suspect that aiming too high, it shoots its arrows into the air; that it substitutes high profession, and abstract notions, for the sober realities of duty; and that,

by a vain effort to anticipate a world to come, it leads to a neglect of the charities, the proprieties, and the responsibilities of the world in which we are.

Now, I do not say that this opinion is the result of much thought or reasoning; for I really do not believe that the class I have in view, think or reason much, on these matters, at all. But, still, they are guided, in feeling and in practice, by a kind of floating notion, and general conviction, that religion is not a thing to be gone too far with. And being, as the mass of mankind are, much more influenced by the example of a few leading characters, than by anything which they make out for themselves, they are strengthened in this prejudice, by observing the conduct of those, whom they consider the wise and prudent of the world;—particularly, if these are their superiors in rank and station. They say, “These persons do not do so and so, and why should we? We might be argued, in these points, out of our senses; and, therefore, we will not argue, but we will act. And we are sure we cannot take a safer road, than that which is trodden by those, whom every body must respect.”

Now, that all this bears upon the neglect of frequent communion, I believe. To the thing itself, indeed—taken merely by itself—there would

be, probably, no great objection. If sanctioned by authority, and by general practice, receiving the Sacrament every month or week, would soon be adopted, as a form to be gone through, like any other. But here is the obstacle, with the class of persons which I am now considering. They have been accustomed to receive, only at particular seasons: why, then, are they to alter in this instance? Religion is not to be gone too far with: why, then, not make their stand here, as well as after yielding so much ground? If they parley with the claims which religion would make upon them, in this particular, it will be encouraged to make some further claims: and, by admitting so much, they would only call in question the very grounds, on which resistance must be made at last, if they do not intend to go to every length.

And here, I trust, I shall be excused for a short digression. I would ask those, who are fearful of a more devoted spirit of religion, as unfriendly to social order, and who are for keeping to, what they would fain think, the good old system of moderation—I would ask them, how it has succeeded, in promoting the happiness of society. Certainly, the mass of us have not erred, if there could be such an error, in an over zeal for God. And in what sort of state, has worldly wisdom

left the country? Are the abominations which deluge the land, the fruits of a too scrupulous piety, or puritanical strictness, in those who might be examples to the nation? Are these the deranging influences, which have descended and broken out, in every form of vice—in drunkenness, sabbath breakings, daily massacres, and midnight conflagrations? Or can any man doubt, that if the members of the Established Church, comprising almost all the wealth, and station, and intelligence of the country, had been glorifying God in their lives, and walking in the light of his word, and crowding to the table of the Lord, as to a feast of love, from which they would rather want their daily bread, than be excluded—can any one doubt, that, at this moment, the light of the Reformation would have reached the dark corners of the land; that now we might lie down upon our beds in safety; that our Jerusalem would be in great prosperity—peace within her walls—plenteousness within her palaces—contentment, and every substantial comfort, in the humble dwellings of the poor? Oh! when will men see their own true interests; and set themselves to act, as if they believed Christianity to be true? When will they, in good earnest, call in the aid of Him, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth?

When will they let God arise, that his enemies may be scattered, and that they also that hate him, may flee before him ?

But to return—The man who resists the first encroachments of religion, on the supposition that it would urge further and still further claims, is quite consistent. He reasons rightly, though on a wrong principle ; on a principle which is the foundation and root of all error. For religion, or rather God's claims upon us, have no limit. He demands the sacrifice of our whole heart ; of all we have, and all we are ; of body, soul, and spirit. We are entirely his, by nature and by creation. We are his again, by a still stronger and more endearing tie : we are the purchase of a Saviour's blood. We are not our own, for we are bought with a price. The man who receives religion into an honest and good heart, plants his foot on this conviction. First of all, he surrenders, totally, and without stipulation, to God ;—and then, he is ready to hear his terms. But it is his fixed resolve, that God's terms, whatever they are, shall be complied with. His heart and soul cry out, " Not my will, but thine be done." I wish that this was well understood : for if it were, it might convince many, that they always enter on the subject of religion, in a perverted spirit. Their minds are made up the wrong way. They set out with a

determination, that their worldly interests must be guaranteed. They demand that a case must be made out for religion, which will not militate against their temporal advantage: or they reject it, at the very threshold, as a thing out of the question, and not to be treated with.

Now, if this arose from men having deeply studied the Scripture, and having seen that it is of the very essence of religion, to promote our interests, even here; this jealousy might be accounted for, on some good principle. But the fact is far different, in the case before us. It is not value for the Scripture, but mere love of the world, which causes the jealousy of which I speak. "Godliness" has, I allow, the "promise of the life that now is," no less than "of that which is to come." But there is an undue stress sometimes laid on this and other kindred passages, which shows, too clearly, that the heart is not right with God. How necessary is it, when you talk to some men of their souls' salvation, to guard every word, lest it might appear, that you want to rob them of their earthly idols! And how ready are they always to throw in the caution, "Oh! but surely religion does not forbid us to perform our ordinary duties; or call us out of our several stations; or interfere with the order of society!" It is not the belief of this truth, (for nothing can be more certain) but it is the

guarding of this truth, as the apple of the eye, which shews where the tender point lies, and where our treasure is. To illustrate this more fully, I will just suppose a case. There are some, and not a few, expressions, in our Lord's discourses, which *seem* (I think *only* seem) to demand a positive relinquishment of all our earthly blessings: such, for instance, as St. Mark, x. 21. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven." St. Luke, xiv. 33. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Now, deep and pregnant as is the meaning of these and similar passages, I need scarcely say, that they are not to be taken in a literal sense. But suppose I thought otherwise, and conceived that these directions were to be followed, with the most positive and punctual exactness, I can well anticipate the manner, in which two kinds of persons would listen to the arguments which I proposed: nor could I better exhibit, than in such an instance, what I mean by a wrong or right position of the mind, towards God. The one, however disposed to doubt them, would patiently hear, and calmly weigh the proofs and reasonings, which I endeavoured to suggest. It would be apparent, that his anxiety was to find out the truth, and to know the will of God, that he might do it; and, however painful

the sacrifice, that he was determined to look to Him, for grace and strength, to follow whithersoever his duty called him. The other would be, at once, in arms against the very thought, as an infringement of rights, which he would not surrender. It would, at once, come in the shape of an interference with that which he had stipulated for, in all his dealings with God, namely, to hold the world in fast possession.

Such, then, is the state of those, whose case we are now considering. Not to speak of higher attainments, there can be no sincerity in religion, where the mind, on system, refuses to go to the utmost length of its demands. From infirmities and temptations, to which our corrupt and sinful natures are exposed, we may fail in many duties. But no wilful withdrawing of the heart, is a state of safety to the soul. It is not the condition of allegiance to Heaven, nor within the covenant of the gospel. And if, on any vague notions that, by receiving the sacrament on all occasions offered, we pledge ourselves to greater strictness than we really intend, or pass any supposed limits, within which we would bound our love, and loyalty, and devotedness to God—if, on any such notions, we absent ourselves from that holy ordinance, we are acting on unsound and dangerous principles; and, whatever other motives may be excusable, we are

neglecting that means of grace, to our sure and certain condemnation.

Let such persons also consider, whether their occasional attendance be not liable to still severer condemnation, than their absence. Our communion service, you are all aware, contains a most solemn warning; and that derived from express warrant of Scripture. "So is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily: for then we are guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour; we eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord's body." These solemn expressions have, indeed, often made the heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad. Many meek and contrite spirits have said, "who is unworthy, if we are not unworthy?" and have feared to approach the memorials of Him whom, though unseen, they have loved; lest they should bring upon themselves, a curse, and not a blessing. Painful scruples have thus been felt—and felt almost in proportion to the degree, in which these humble souls were out of the contemplation of the awful warning in question. To whom, then, it will be asked, does it apply? To none, I answer, more pointedly, than to those, who approach the holy table, in a spirit of cold calculation, on the measure and degree in which they will devote themselves unto the Lord.

Now let us look to the case of a communicant, who comes at Christmas, Easter, and other festivals; but who will come on none but those occasions, simply from the fear of being righteous over-much. Let us suppose him drawing nigh, on one of those memorable days, and just upon the point of kneeling down, that he may receive the memorials of a Saviour's death and passion. Let us suppose his own conscience, at such an instant, to interrogate him, and to say, "Do you intend to obey that voice which says, 'This do in remembrance of me,' upon the next monthly communion, as well as now? And if you do not intend it, on what grounds will you refuse?" This is no moment for trifling, nor for self-deception either. And yet, what can be the reply? It must be this: "I do not intend it; and my reason is this, that though I am ready to go through my religious duties, in what I consider a decent, sober, moderate way, I utterly renounce the thought of giving my whole heart to God." Now, compare this resolution, with the service on which this communicant has entered, and the pledges which he has voluntarily come forward to give. Compare it with his deep-toned confession: "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable." Compare it with

the almost seraphic praises which he offers : “ It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should, at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God. Therefore, with angels and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name ; evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory : Glory be to thee, O Lord most High.” Compare it with the profound devotion of the prayer he makes : “ Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us.” Compare it with this unreserved and uncompromising dedication of himself : “ And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.” Now, contrast these glaring professions, and ardent declarations of devotedness, loyalty, and love, with the state of that man’s mind, who presumes, not in words, but in much more than words, to say to his Creator, “ Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther ;” who draws nigh unto God with his lips, while his heart

is far from him ; who intends, the next time that he is invited to partake of the tender and affecting memorials of those sufferings which a Saviour underwent for *him*, to refuse compliance, and to disobey his positive command. Put all these things together, and then pronounce, whether such a communicant does, or does not, receive unworthily ; or whether a man in such a frame of mind, can offer a sacrifice, acceptable to God, through Christ.

But before I take my leave of the neglecters of the sacred duty which my text enjoins, I would desire to place before them this solemn thought. And I consider it equally important, whether the impediment be that of wilful and premeditated sin, of careless indifference, or of a heart which seeks not God with its “ whole desire.” I call upon all, to whom these charges severally apply, to try and examine themselves, by the test I now propose ; leaving it to your own consciences to determine, whether it be, or be not, a fair and just one.

You know that the Lord Jesus Christ was once an inhabitant of this world, and tabernacled in our flesh ; that he went in and out amongst us, and freely conversed with the sons of men. It is, therefore, no irreverence to his Divine Majesty, to place him, by an effort of our imagination, before our eyes, in all the apprehensible linea-

ments of our nature, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Let us suppose him, then, to show himself openly, as in the days of his incarnation, and to appear standing at that door, when all of you were crowding towards it, as is your custom, when the sacred mysteries commence. Suppose him to meet you at such a moment ; to enter, as he did with the disciples on their way to Emmaus, into familiar conversation ; and, veiling his omniscience, which he was wont to do, to inquire into the particulars of the whole scene, which the church and congregation then presented. Amongst other questions, he would naturally ask the following : “ What solemn service is now to be performed ? Why do some members of this congregation still retain their seats, and wait, as if in solemn expectation of some further blessing ? And why do others, and *you* among the rest, press to this door, as if hastening to depart ? ” To the first inquiry, you would answer ; “ The service now commencing, is the commemoration of your atonement, and death upon the cross. ” To the second inquiry, you would answer (for there is no deceiving God) ; “ These remain, because in the same night that you were betrayed, you took bread, and brake it, and said, ‘ This do in remembrance of me : ’ and likewise, after supper, you took the cup, and said, ‘ Drink ye all of this ;

for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins : Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.'” But to the last inquiry, what would be your reply? Alas! you would all, with one consent, begin to make excuse. One would say; “I am going, because I live in sin, and intend to live in sin—because my impure and imperious passions, are the masters whom I serve, and will serve; and therefore I depart, for I am, and will continue to be, a sinful man, O Lord.” Another would answer; “I am leaving the memorials of thy death, and can assign no reason, except it be that I care for none of these things. They belong to concerns, in which I feel no interest: for I live as if there were no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; as if the gospel were a cunningly devised fable; as if there were no hell for the wicked, nor reward for the righteous; no God that judgeth the earth.” Another would reply; “I am departing, because I know that thou wert despised and rejected of men: and, since the servant is not above his master, I fear that if I appeared faithful, among the faithless, and true to the allegiance which I owe to thee, I might bear the reproach, and be a sharer in the offence, of the cross; and come in for my portion of that scorn and contumely, which a proud and infatu-

ated world never ceases to pour upon Him who died to save it." And, lastly, another would say; "I am going, because moderation in religious concerns, is my great maxim;—because the claims of God upon my services and my heart, if not resisted somewhere, would proceed, and still advance, till they left me nothing that I could call my own, or that would enable me to secure the favour and friendship of the world. On this principle, then, I regulate my conduct, as it respects the holy sacrament. If I never attended it, I should give too little; but if I always attended it, I should give too much, to God."

Now, though all this is but an imaginary picture, it is, I affirm, true to the life. It brings down to the stage of this visible world, scenes which are exhibited, in reality and substance, before the face of heaven, and in the sight of God. That Christ is present, not only in virtue of his ubiquity, but in fulfilment of his own specific promises, when you thus turn your backs upon his ordinance, you all know. And that the answers, which I have put into your mouths, are the actual responses of your lives, and hearts, and actions, you cannot but confess. All that I have done, then, is to give familiar form, and tangible substance, to the invisible realities of your case. I have done so, with the hope, and not, I will add,

without the fervent prayer, that the truth, thus exhibited, may reach your consciences, and come home, with living conviction, to your hearts.

But I must now, before I conclude, turn to a far different class of persons; namely, to those who absent themselves from the sacrament, on the principle that they are unworthy to be partakers of those holy mysteries. To such I would say, if this feeling be genuine, if it be not lightly urged, or adopted as a ready excuse, when there is some other, and some secret cause;—if the notion that you are unworthy, be really a strong conviction of your minds, and a deep experience of your hearts, then, not only are you fit to present yourselves at the table of the Lord, but you, alone, are in a state to do so.

“The cup of blessing which we bless,” inquires the Apostle, “is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” When we partake, then, in a right spirit, of that most heavenly banquet, we approach it, as the representative of Christ offered, as our atonement, upon the cross—as the pledge of his love—a means which he has himself ordained, whereby all true believers become one with Christ, and Christ with them. Whatever qualifications, therefore, are suitable for him who comes to Christ, are pre-

cisely those, which constitute the right preparatives for the holy sacrament. And, surely, it is not those who feel that they are worthy, who draw near with acceptance to the divine Saviour. No. It is the humble, and the contrite—it is those who know the plague of their own hearts—who mourn for the sins of their past lives—who plead guilty and self-accused, before the bar of justice :—these, and these alone, can lay hold upon the promises of the gospel, or receive the consolations which flow from Christ. These, and these alone, can, with sincerity, unite in those deep confessions of unworthiness, and of sin, which our sacramental service requires of all communicants. “ We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty ; provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.” “ We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.”

Which of you can, sincerely, before the searcher of hearts, take this pregnant language into his mouth ? Talk not, then, of your unworthiness, as an impediment in your way : but rather hear—for

to the contrite, and to the humble, and to them alone, do they apply—"Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith, unto all that truly turn to him.

‘Come unto me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.’

‘So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

Hear, also, what Saint Paul saith.

‘This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received. That Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners.’

Hear, also, what Saint John saith.

‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.’”

SERMON XV.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 20.

"FOR OUR CONVERSATION IS IN HEAVEN."

THE word which is here translated "conversation," may be rendered *citizenship*. The meaning of the passage, thus translated, would be, that all Christians should feel towards heaven, as if it were their own country.

It was customary amongst the ancient Romans, to extend the rights of citizenship, beyond the pale of their own territory. So that the inhabitants of towns, far distant from Rome, were ranked amongst the number of its citizens. And this was the case of Tarsus, that city of Cilicia, to which Paul himself belonged. In virtue of this, the apostle was a Roman citizen: and we find him, in the 22nd chapter of the Acts, both referring to, and asserting the privileges of that character.

St. Paul may be considered, then, as having in view, this right of Roman citizenship, when he uses the expression of my text. And the force of the comparison seems to be, that as one ever so far removed from the capital of that great empire, might, nevertheless, feel himself, in interest, in

immunities, in character, a member of the Roman state : so should every subject of Christ's kingdom, though, at present, far separated from that higher heaven, in which the king of saints holds his more immediate court ;—yet should he never lose sight of his high calling, as a member of Christ's mystical body, as a freeman of the Jerusalem above, as one whose birthright is heaven, and whose country is eternity.

Such a consideration opens to our view, many profitable subjects of reflection. Are we citizens of heaven ? Then this is not our home. We are sojourners, in a foreign land ; pilgrims, and strangers upon the earth, as all our fathers were.

To some minds, this persuasion is melancholy and depressing : because they are of the world, and love the world ; and do not like to think, that even now it should be renounced in affection, and soon must be parted with for ever. Not so, when “our conversation is in heaven.” Satisfied to continue here below, as long as it is the will of God ; and convinced that we are bound faithfully to act the part assigned us, and with alacrity and conscientious care, to perform all our allotted duties well ;—yet the mind, whose treasures are laid up in heaven, can derive unspeakable comfort from the constant recollection, that this is not its rest, and that it has no abiding city here. Is sorrow,

is poverty, is pain or adversity, our portion here? How cheering the reflection to the child of God, that all this will soon be over! That in that house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, there is no pain, nor sorrow, nor crying; that tears are there wiped from all faces; that no mourners go about the streets; that there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest!

But persons not thus visited with affliction, have their trials, their perplexities, and exercises of patience. The man who appears prosperous to the world, often feels, how little the many around him know the doubts, the disappointments, the cares, that weigh upon his mind, by day, and hover round his bed, at night. Let one trouble be laid at rest; and other troubles will rise upon his imagination, and press upon his heart. We may see our way out of one difficulty; but that removed, new difficulties will start up in its place. Such, my brethren, is the life of man. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. And, on this point, take the counsel of one who has thought, and who has felt, not a little, on the subject. If you have an anxious mind, you never will be relieved, by seeing your way through the difficulties of life. You never will be able to sit down, and see all matters so arranged, as that you can say, "now my perplexities are at an end."

You may wait for such an hour, as the man did, who stood at the river's brink, and waited for the stopping of the water : but that hour of rest will never come, beneath the sun. Look around you ; and to whatever point you turn your eye, the horizon will be dark, with clouds of anxiety, perplexity, and care. There is but one relief : and that is, to look up to the clear heavens above you ; to give over the fruitless task, of finding rest in things below ; and to seek your rest, in calmer regions, and in milder air. Let us remember that we are citizens of heaven ; that this is not our country ; and that our treasures are not on earth : and these convictions will assuage the troubled waters of the soul. Then perplexities will not dishearten us ; discouragements will not unnerve us, and unman us : because we counted the cost, and looked for our reward in heaven. We knew that the roads were rugged, and the ways uneven, by which we travel onward, to that city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.

Even as it respects those temporal blessings, which God has given for our solace here ; the sense that we are denizens of a better country, will not damp, but rather heighten, our enjoyment of them. There is no object in this uncertain world, on which the mind of man *can* repose its entire,

unlimited affections. These profounder sensibilities of the soul, these boundless and vast desires, are the instinctive appetites of man's immortal nature, for infinite and unallayed enjoyment; the native tendency of the celestial principle, to God, its centre, and its fountain; its full felicity, and its all-sufficient good. But if we strive to rest the heart, with its whole weight, on anything but God, it will bring keen disappointment, and pierce it through with many sorrows. To seek our happiness in any earthly object, is to struggle against the fundamental laws of nature: and every effort to love the creature, with the affection due to the Creator, will recoil upon itself, and lacerate the soul. Whatever, then, may be the objects, which yield us most enjoyment here, or which cling the closest to the heart; nothing can give us solid satisfaction, even in these, but the having our conversation in heaven. Let things below be ever so cherished, or so dear, yet they must be torn, sooner or later, from our embraces. What, then, can support the sinking heart, when the tenderest cords of nature are torn asunder, but the prospect of a better world;—but the belief that we have there a more enduring substance;—but the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, laid up for us in heaven;—but the joyful assurance, that our departed friends were fellow

travellers to that happy region, where no separation divides, where no parting tears are shed, where no sorrowing lips can utter the word, farewell?

To become citizens of heaven, with privileges so high, with prospects so cheering, with an enfranchisement so glorious, is not, like other blessings, held out as the purchase of long, and arduous, and doubtful toil. "With a great sum obtained I this freedom," said the chief captain, as recorded in the 22nd chapter of the Acts: but Paul answered, "I was free born." In words like these, may every soul, whose conversation is in heaven, express the fulness, the freeness of that charter, which constitutes us of the household of God, and fellow citizens with the saints. It is not, that the kingdom of heaven has been opened to believers, without a price: but because an infinite price alone could open it, we have no share in the purchase. The whole has been undertaken for us. Christ has, by the sacrifice of himself, broken the bars, and burst the gates. And our part is, without money, and without price, to enter in, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

It is astonishing that these offers should be freely made—made on the assurances of God himself—made in those Scriptures, which we all

receive, as a message from heaven ; and yet be thrown aside, neglected and unheeded. It is astonishing, that rest should be thus offered to the heavy laden ; that fountains of water should be opened to the thirsty ; that happiness, commensurate with the loftiest aspirations, and deep as the profoundest longings, of the immortal soul, should be brought home to the doors of those, who hunt, with breathless chase, after every fleeting pleasure ;—and yet that man should despise these miracles of mercy. And, assuredly, you do despise them, unless you can say, with the Apostle, my “ conversation is in heaven”—the concerns and interests of that society above, engage my mind, and lie nearest to my heart—I feel naturalized to the spiritual world ; and, though sojourning here below, am, by the grace of God, a citizen of heaven.

You are all invited to become so. Nor is any past neglect, or past unworthiness, nor are the sins of a whole life, an impediment to your full admission to so desirable, so blessed a condition. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance : he came to seek, and to save, that which was lost.

In my own apprehension, the heart of man cannot frame to itself, a picture of more solid joy, and lively transport, than, amidst the entangle

ments of this troublous world, the mists that obscure, and the clouds that overhang, its prospects, to feel a calm and settled assurance in the soul, that we have an interest in a higher system ; that our inheritance is in a city, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise ;—to ascend, on the wings of faith, to that heavenly fortress ; to mark well her bulwarks, and to count her towers, and then to say, “ that celestial city is my habitation, and my home, prepared for me, before the foundation of the world.” It is, I say, with the conviction, that a state of mind like this, is happiness here, as well as the sure earnest of future glory, that I would press the attainment of it, on every soul that hears me. If you saw one parched with feverish thirst, and beheld close to his lips, though hidden from his view, a cup of living water, pure and sparkling, from the fountain ; would the sympathies of a common nature, allow you to desist from repeating, to such a man, with loud and earnest calls, that, if he would believe it, relief was just at hand ? Or, if you saw a parent sorrowing for a child, whom, in his own apprehension, he had lost for ever, and knew an infallible method, by which that treasure could be restored ; could you cease to implore that parent, if incredulous, no longer to disregard those counsels, which could give him back the desire of his eyes, and

stop the bleeding of his heart? So would I desire to speak to those, who, like the world at large, are seeking for happiness, but alas! flying from the very object, which they would fain pursue.

I cannot know the private and peculiar features, which mark the individual case of each person, who is now amongst my hearers. But each must know, for himself, that the things of this life cannot satisfy man's active, anxious soul. You have, all, your troubles; and every heart knoweth its own bitterness. Poverty is, perhaps, the peculiar trial of some. Others, though not in actual want, struggle hard, amidst the cares of fluctuating business, to preserve some creditable appearance; while God best knows the secret of their hearts' discomfort. Others have wept in solitary places, for the loss of friends, with whom every earthly hope has been buried in the silent tomb. Others have been pierced with the keen arrows of ingratitude; have been treated with unkindness, where they were least prepared to meet it; and have lived to see how vain it is, to trust in any child of man. To others, languor, and disease, and wearisome nights are appointed: or they feel the torments of a wounded spirit: or they have reached those years, when the appetite for life is gone; and

when they say of the things they once enjoyed, "there is no pleasure in them."

To all such—to all, in a word, who labour under any affliction of mind, body, or estate—does the language of my text hold out the richest consolation. The troubles of this mortal life, will, indeed, be felt; and chastisements will, for the present, appear not joyous, but grievous. But if we feel that we are citizens of heaven, amidst the severest trials, comforts will refresh the soul. These visible heavens may be dark and clouded: but faith will pierce the veil; and lo! new heavens and a new earth appear. The vessel may be tossed, amidst the tempests of life's voyage: but the Christian's hope will still fix its steadfast anchor, upon the land of everlasting life.

My brethren, in that great and decisive day, which every hour brings nearer, and which the death of every man will, in substance, realize to him; when the awful judge of quick, and dead, shall summon all that inhabit these mortal bodies, to appear before him; when that register is opened, in which the name of every citizen of the new Jerusalem, is written;—with what trembling anxiety will you listen, that you may know whether your name is entered in that book of life! Surely you all believe, that that decisive moment is

approaching : and is it not your wisdom—is it not your only important business, to stand prepared? Is prosperity in life—is the favourable opinion, or fleeting smile, of those who are perishing around you—is the whole world—more than the small dust in the balance, when compared with the soul ;—that soul which must stand at the bar of God, and go forward through eternity? Ah! how little will all that many of you now take comfort in, and all that supports you now, and that you place your confidence in now, avail you, when heaven and hell are in the balance ; when your trembling soul stands forth, to hear the sentence of endless happiness, or endless misery !

And considering these things, have not we that preach to you, important business on our hands? These sermons which we deliver to you, are not mere senseless forms. They are solemn messages from heaven. They are an ambassage from God. They are a proclamation from the great king—calls to separate his subjects, and his children, from the ruin of a lost world ; to gather the citizens of heaven, from their dispersion amongst the enemies of God ; and to redeem them, from the east, and from the west, out of the captivity of the mystical Babylon. All that we can do, is to deliver the message on which we are sent. With God, and with yourselves, it rests, who will hear,

or who will shut their ears. But oh! if conscience whispers in the breasts of any of you, that to be a citizen of heaven, is more than all the treasures of the world; if that secret witness pleads, in the hidden chambers of your souls, and places the hopes and fears of eternity before you:—remember, that it is God's vicegerent you hear. Whatever it commands, or whatever it forbids, you must, at your peril, obey. If you disregard its admonitions, you are lost. If you are obedient to the heavenly calling, your salvation is built upon the assurances of God himself; and your happiness will be as lasting, as the days of eternity.

SERMON XVI.

ST. MATTHEW, xiii. 45, 46.

“THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO A MERCHANT-MAN, SEEKING GOODLY PEARLS: WHO, WHEN HE HAD FOUND ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE, WENT AND SOLD ALL THAT HE HAD, AND BOUGHT IT.”

IN the New Testament, the kingdom of heaven does not always, or even generally, signify the life to come, or the state of blessedness in the other world. In my text, as in many other parts of Scripture, it denotes the Gospel dispensation upon earth; and it is called the kingdom of heaven, because its great end and purpose is the conformity of the soul to the laws of righteousness, whereby it pays a willing obedience unto Christ, and becomes a real subject of his invisible authority, and spiritual reign. Thus, every soul which is born again, enters into the kingdom of heaven.

To visit that new region, implies not that we traverse seas, or pass over tracts of mountains, such as fix the bounds of earthly territories. No;—such is the nature of the spiritual world, that the soul can, in the secret depths of its own tranquillity, sometimes in a moment, in the twinkling

of an eye, undergo a transition far wider than that of him who circumnavigates the globe. It can cross the line of demarcation, between the two great hemispheres, into which the universe is divided. It can pass from darkness into light—I do not speak of material light, and darkness; these are but fleeting images of their invisible counterparts—but I mean light inextinguishable, celestial, and eternal; and darkness, in comparison of which, darkness that may be felt in this world, is clear as the meridian day. The kingdom of heaven, then, in this, and kindred passages, signifies, not a future, but a present life to God: if, perhaps, it may not be the juster view, that between these two states no line of intervention passes; that the kingdoms are one; that grace is glory in its dawn; that the church below, and the church above, are parts of the same communion of saints; and that the soul which turns to God, commences, thereby, its everlasting course, and enters into the vestibule of the palace of eternity.

This “kingdom of heaven,” my text declares, is like “a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls.” In all ages of the world, rare and precious stones have been estimated at high value. By the Jews they were particularly prized; and are made frequent mention of, in their Scriptures, as holding the same rank, in the material system, which the

richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge hold, in that sublimer scheme of things, to which these latter appertain.

Amongst the many admirable sayings of Solomon, on this point, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of repeating one: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her. Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life, unto them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." (Prov. iii. 13—18.) Such is the pearl of great price, of which the merchantman, in my text, was the happy finder. For what can this long-sought treasure denote, but that of which we are instinctively in search; some satisfying good, commensurable to the capacities of the soul; some food, to fill its boundless appetites; some object, gift, or boon, which can render an endless life, an endless blessing?

There is, in every soul, an inextinguishable thirst for happiness; because the soul was formed for God, the source and centre of all bliss. This

call of the spiritual nature after God, is universal and unchangeable : nor can it cease, even where the soul has wandered widest from its great original. Nay, all its restlessness, and all its misery, proceed from this, that it is still in search of what it can never find. It has, in this view, been well observed, that the votaries of sinful pleasure, pay, in their very vices, a blind, unconscious homage to the sovereign good. And though, as the Apostle speaks, “ they change the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image,” made like unto whatever their vilest affections may shape to themselves, as happiness ; still, in all this, God is, in some sense, ignorantly worshipped. And as the moth, by a strange fatuity of instinct, hovers round the fatal flame, and eludes every effort to preserve it ;—not because it is bent on its own destruction ; but because it mistakes the midnight glare, for the dawning splendours of the day : so does the unhappy sinner lie prostrate before his idols, and defile himself with impurities ;—not because he desires to perish ; but because he takes each false appearance, for the reality of enjoyment, and is seeking, through the wide waste of the world, what alone can be found in God.

But the merchantman in my text, was doubtless, meant to represent, not the miserable slave of sensuality and vice, but one who sought for happi-

ness, upon a more elevated field of exercise : who sought for it, like the philosophers of old, in the pursuit of knowledge ; in the due balance of the mind ; in contempt of the world's ambition ; in superiority to the motions of the flesh, and to the vicissitudes of fortune. These were goodly pearls, and far above the husks, on which many who name the name of Christ, are feeding. But, still, they were but phantoms of felicity. They were fair to look upon, and fine theories to talk about. But airy speculations cannot give the heart repose : glowing pictures of virtue unrealized and unattained, can serve for nothing, but to tantalize the soul. And such was the constant testimony of those, who gave the fairest trial, to all that unassisted human nature can accomplish. Such was the unanimous verdict of those, who sought for goodly pearls, before the pearl of great price had visited the world. They all complained, that something was wanting to their happiness, which they sought in vain. They all confessed, that clouds of uncertainty hung over their prospects. They were all disposed to ask, with the Apostle, though none, like him, could answer the inquiry ; “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

The Gospel, then, is the discovery of that object, to which all man's native aspirations tend, and all

his inbred wishes point. It reveals to him that God, whom he had ignorantly worshipped. It proclaims him, as the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation; as, "in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It points to him, as the Saviour, the shield, and the exceeding great reward, of them that believe in the message of his free and unmerited forgiveness, and that fly for refuge, to that cross, on which he crucified the partner of his bosom and of his throne; on which he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, that dying, the just for the unjust, he might bring lost sinners unto God. Yes, my brethren; "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners." This is the joyful sound, which, sooner or later, comes, with sweet persuasion, and almighty power, to the ears of all Christ's sheep; which follows after, and finds them, wandering in the wilderness, and stumbling on the dark mountains of this world, and constrains them to return to the true Shepherd, and to his living pastures. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said,

out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Such are the soul-cheering invitations and declarations, with which the word of everlasting life abounds; invitations and declarations, which prove that he from whom they came, assumed to himself the high prerogatives of God; that he could satisfy the empty soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness; that he could heal its distempers, calm its perturbations, and fill those boundless capacities, which were formed for God.

Such is the "pearl of great price;" the power of God unto salvation; the kingdom of heaven within us. But lest these high views should discourage any humble soul, let us remember, that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Many a child of God, and faithful soldier of the cross, has languid hours, and days of mourning, appointed him; often feels misgivings of heart, and labours under sore distress: and whether these trials arise from the weakness of his faith, the remainders of sin within him, or from the misfortunes of the world, let not such an one doubt, that, though all is not bright sunshine in his soul, he may, nevertheless, be in safe possession of the priceless pearl. If, in seriousness of spirit, and earnestness of heart, he throws himself upon the atonement of his Saviour, and hungers and thirsts after righteousness and true holiness, he has the substance of salvation

in him. And, though many a cloud beset his path in life, and follow him even to the borders of the grave, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, and he will have cloudless skies, and eternal sunshine, in the world to come.

But how are we, like the merchantman, to sell all that we have? Does this imply, that we should part with every cherished object, and bid farewell to all that we have loved before? Assuredly not. Christianity, it may be boldly asserted, demands the relinquishment of nothing worth preserving. All that it calls on us to renounce, may be summed up in three particulars; namely, our own righteousness, our sins, and our idols.

We must, first, renounce our own righteousness. When the soul attains a realizing conviction, that it must, one day, stand before the judgment-seat of God; when, in a deep feeling of the poet's language, it exclaims,

“ When, rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelmed with grief and fear,
I see my Maker, face to face,
Oh how shall I appear ?”—

it then is no longer a point of speculative theory, to inquire, “ what must I do to be saved ?” Then, and then alone, it is, that the consideration comes

fairly before the mind—by what means, or resting on what merits, can I be justified before God? Shall I present this depraved and treacherous heart, as an offering well pleasing unto the Lord? Shall I challenge the scrutiny of his all-seeing eye? Shall I invite a holy, and a jealous God, to travel back with me, through the review of such a life as I have passed, and to pronounce of that wide waste of duties neglected, and sins committed, as he did of the first creation, in its untarnished glory, that all was “very good?”—that all was in conformity with a law of spotless purity, which denounces the curse of death, on every the least declension from the perfect rule of everlasting righteousness? Oh, no; every conscience shudders at the thought. What, then, I ask, can bring more glad deliverance to the soul, than to be assured, that our dependence is not upon our own deservings, but upon a Saviour, who has fulfilled all righteousness?—that, if we look to him in faith, God will look to him in judgment, and pronounce upon our merits, not according to what we are in ourselves, but according to what we are in him, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person?

We must, secondly, renounce our sins; for, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

But neither is this a hard saying, nor a com-

mandment grievous to be borne. For what is sin, but another name for misery? "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Ask the slave of sin, whether he is leading a happy life, and whether all his efforts can please the many masters whom he serves. Ask him, whether his nights are peaceful, and his slumbers sweet; when envy, and hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, rankle in his bosom. Or ask the tyrant of his family, when he has given full licence to his tempers, and spread discomfort all around, whether he experiences, that making others unhappy, is the true secret of finding happiness himself. Or ask the man of pleasure, whether the deepest draughts of sensuality, can wholly drown the soul, or stifle the still small voice, which says, "know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment." Or ask those for whom I am to plead this day,* and who, I trust, have returned to a better mind, whether, when they forsook the guide of their youth, and renounced the covenant of their God, they found that the ways of sin were ways of pleasantness, and all her paths were peace. Oh! my friends, sin is its own punishment: the sinner's bosom is his own hell. To seek for happiness, to

* Preached for the Magdalen Asylum, Leeson Street, Dublin.

attain the "pearl of great price," while we cherish the seeds of misery within us, is to go against the unchangeable decrees of God; against the nature and constitution of things. Hear, then, and obey, that voice which issues from the throne of mercy; "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

We must, thirdly, renounce our idols. By these I mean, not sins, for these have been already spoken of; but objects, lawful in themselves, and which become dangerous, and injurious to our peace, only when prized beyond their value. It is not, therefore, the *object* which is to be renounced, but that *excessive attachment*, by which it becomes an idol. The tender ties of kindred, and sacred bonds of friendship, are not, God be thanked, forbidden by that gracious being, whose parting injunction to his disciples was, to love one another, even as he had loved them. "Love" the apostle tells us, "is of God;" and to love our fellow-creature, with that pure affection, which none but the pure in heart can feel, is one of the Scripture evidences, that we are "born again," and have "passed from death unto life." Even when our first parent walked with his Creator, amidst the

flowers of paradise, and held daily converse with the Sovereign Good, God pronounced, that it was not good for man to be alone. By this he doubtless intimated, that it was necessary to his perfection and full felicity, not only that he should place his supreme affection upon God, but that he should have some object which he could meet on equal terms, and touch at all the points of sympathy; which he could love, as his own soul, and as the counterpart of himself. Such are the grounds of human attachment. They began in paradise; and they will be renewed, and last for ever, in the paradise above. But strong and tender as these attachments are, they must be in strict subordination to the first and great commandment. If we suffer the full tide of the affections to flow in any earthly channel, or seek to rest the heart, with the full weight of its sensibilities, on any earthly object, we sin against that law; and need no monitor, but our own experience, to teach us, that "they that run after another god, shall have great trouble." Half the misery of the world, proceeds from this inordinate affection. The creature cannot yield, what this idolatry demands. "The bed," as the prophet speaks, "is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." The stream is too shallow, for the soul to find its depth. The

object, whatever it may be, if over-loved, becomes, by a just judgment, or rather by a signal mercy, the source, not of pleasure, but of ceaseless pain; of jealousies, heart-burnings, anxieties, and fears. I would say, then, in the affectionate language of the apostle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Parents, partners, children, relatives, and friends, cease to be blessings, if loved with that love, which is due to God alone. They are the sweetest of earthly solaces to the heart; they are the flowers of the field of life: but flowers, if pressed too closely, lose their freshness; if smelt too strongly, they yield no fragrance. Besides that we often endanger those whom we overprize; and even put the lives of idols into peril. For God is a jealous God. He is jealous of our love, because he is anxious for our happiness. So that, at last, it may be brought to this point, either that God will say, as he did of Ephraim, "they are joined to idols, let them alone;" or will, in mercy, remove those idols from before our eyes. Leave, then, these broken cisterns, and return to the fountain of living water. "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

Of the last expression in my text, namely, that

the merchantman "bought" this pearl, little need be said. A parable is not to be so understood, as if an important meaning were attached to every subordinate member. It has, generally, one main sense, or moral: and whatever is irrelevant to that, may be considered as merely expletive. Such, I believe, is the nature of the clause in question. But, if any one will argue from these words, that we must, in some way or another, buy the pearl of salvation, he may learn the terms of the purchase, from the prophet Isaiah; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

To all, then, who have laid hold on these freely-offered mercies, I would say, "freely ye have received, freely give." Long before the birth of many who now hear me, I have been the humble advocate of this asylum. In the year 1811, I first pleaded for its inmates; and often since that, have I taxed every resource and faculty of my mind, and had, at least, the satisfaction of doing my best, to obtain for them that consideration and compassion, of which they stood, alas! so much in need.

The frequency of these appeals, cannot, however, but have exhausted the most obvious topics,

on which it would be natural for me to address you. One subject of suitable reflection, this very difficulty, may, nevertheless, suggest. Let us look back, and consider how large a proportion of those for whom I pleaded, and of those before whom that plea was laid, are now numbered with the dead; or, rather, are now living amidst the invisible realities of eternity.

Such is the vagueness, and the want of definite impression, with which the things of another world are often viewed, that, because our entrance into it is future, the object itself is, in some confused way, contemplated as future also. And thus, the solemn and awakening impression does not reach the mind, that all around these prison walls of flesh, the bright sun of eternity is shining, and its glorious prospects are outspread: so that if the finer materialism of celestial substances, could act upon our gross organs, we should have a sensible apprehension of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. But faith can, in some measure, penetrate the veil. Let faith, then, realize to us this truth, that while we are here assembled—that while I am now addressing you—those high and glorious objects, which the Scripture reveals, are in actual existence, life, and motion; that now the Lord God omnipotent is reigning, and heaven is

full of the majesty of his glory ; that now Christ is standing at his right hand, and pleading the sacrifice of his own blood for sinners ; that now “ all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein”—that now “ cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” In these delightful services, how many of those once dear to us in the flesh, are now uniting ! How many of those, who, not long since, occupied the places, in which you are now sitting ! And, just in passing, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of testifying, how often I have known this thought to cheer the mourning heart. I mean simply the sense, brought vividly, and with waking certainty, to the mind, that departed friends are now living, though above, and in brighter day : so that, whenever we ascend, in prayer, to the mercy-seat on high, we visit, in spirit, the blessed scenes in which they dwell, and behold, through the glass of faith, the same God, whom it is their high privilege to see, with naked eye, and face to face.

But the Christian’s sympathies are not narrowed, within the circle of personal friends and kindred. And many, you will be rejoiced to hear, of those, for whom I have been so long pleading, have, some in this house, and others, after their removal from it, died in the faith of Jesus ; have wiped away

their last tears, bid farewell to all their sorrows, entered into the joy of their Lord, and inherited the kingdom prepared for them, from the foundation of the world. And can imagination picture a state of more consummate blessedness, than that of one such penitent, who has left all her sufferings and sorrows behind, and who now follows the Lamb, in scenes of innocence and glory: when she surveys the paradise around her, the verdure of its fields, and the streams that fertilize the celestial soil; and contrasts this inviolable peace, and spotless purity, with the abodes of horror, and haunts of pollution, which were once her only refuge, the only resting-place, where she could lay her throbbing, aching head;—when, in the bosom of that calm and eternal sabbath, in which all heaven gives praise, before the throne of God and of the Lamb, this brand, plucked out of the burning, remembers her desecrated sabbaths upon earth—those days of peculiar darkness, on which still viler abandonment, and louder blasphemies, drowned the cries of a yet lingering conscience, and trampled on every decency, which had, even then, an advocate in her heart:—but, above all, when such a monument of Almighty grace and goodness, calls to mind, in the land of her inheritance, the decisiv, and never-to-be-forgotten day, when she presented herself at the door of this

asylum;—when, like the prodigal in the Gospel, she had come to herself—when her mind, no longer rendered dizzy by her fall from the heights of innocence, had time to look around, and survey the ruin which a few months, or perhaps days, had hurried forward to so sad a crisis—when she saw that all was lost—the prospects of her early youth blighted and destroyed—the pearl of woman, and honor of her sex, trampled in the dust—the ties which, from her infancy, were bound around her heart, all snapt asunder—no shelter from this storm—no refuge from this misery, in the sanctuary of home,—no sympathy to be looked for, in brothers and sisters—no protection from her father, no compassion from her mother;—and when, thus denied all earthly consolation, her own heart condemned her, and her awakening conscience told her, that, if she continued in her present courses, all these sufferings were but the beginnings of sorrows—that the terrors of God were in array against her—and, nevertheless, if refused admittance here, she had no retreat, but back again into the abodes of sin, and into the hands of the destroyer:—when, I say, one of those souls in heaven calls to mind that day, and remembers that the crisis was favourable; that it was the day of her release; that, from the moment of her admission, she set out upon that path, that led to the land of

everlasting life.—Now, my brethren, I do not ask you, what degrees of happiness spirits in glory are capable of feeling, in such reviews of mercy: but I do ask you, nay implore you, when such extremes of appalling misery, and of consummate blessedness, have been placed before you, to contribute, as God may give you means, to an institution, whose object is, to rescue unhappy sinners from the one, and to instate them in the everlasting possession of the other.

I have described, (but oh! how faint must all description be!) the emotions which, from the nature of her circumstances, must be felt; the tide of agonies which must rush upon the penitent's heart, while presenting herself as a candidate for admission here. Her desire to be received, proves, observe, her sincere anxiety for deliverance. And, surely, the thing speaks for itself: for what can exceed the wretchedness of her, who is forced to make a trade of sins which she abhors; and, with a burdened conscience, and a bleeding heart, to rush into the midst of coarse frivolity, and brutal mirth, of mad excitement, and all that can prepare a soul for hell? Surely, then, you will make some exertion, to save the souls and bodies of young and friendless females, from misery so entire, from ruin so beyond all hope. Oh! I would, in consideration of their youth, not far

removed from childhood,—I would call for sympathy, from the younger members of this congregation. The average time of life, of those who fly for refuge to this place, is not above from sixteen to seventeen years, at the most. What an age is this, when they implore some shelter from the pitiless storm, some compassion for their souls, to drive them off, and virtually to say; “You cannot return;—it is vain for you to think of ever being restored to virtue, to happiness, and to God;—between you and them there is a great gulph fixed—they are lost to you for ever—you have sinned beyond redemption!” O my youthful friends, living, as you are, under the sheltering wing of parents, who would not that the winds of heaven should visit your face too roughly—you who have all the blessings, which care and love imply, strewed, with an unsparing hand, around you—you, (and, oh! may there be many such here!) who, in addition to, and above all the blessings of this life, can render thanks to God, that you were early taught to know, and love, and fear him:—Who, I say, made you to differ? Who set his love upon you, and called you by his grace? Who gave his angels charge concerning you, to keep you in all your ways? Oh! then, you will not say, because these young creatures have sinned against Heaven, and against those laws which you hold

dearer than life, that they are excluded from all share in your compassion, and from that sympathy, which I trust misery will be sure to find, in hearts like yours. Think of him, who came down from the true holy of holies, to seek and to save lost and unhappy sinners. Think of him, who was purer than the streams that flow from Paradise, and who said to the woman taken in adultery; "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Remember him, who forgave you what you could not pay; and then have compassion on your fellow servant, even as he had pity on thee. Remember that those for whom I plead, are destitute of all you most prize in life. Home, and all the recollections which that magic name calls forth—the haunts of innocence—the friends and companions of their childhood—all these are to them, as if they had never been; or, rather, I should say, they cannot but remember, that such things were. And will not you, whose hearts now glow with the warmth of youth, feel for those whose morning of life is thus uncheered, thus wrapped in darkness, clouds, and thick darkness? You may not, from your age, have the command of money for such occasions: but can your parents refuse, if you beseech them by that love they bear to you, and by the love they bear to him who gave himself for you and them, to have pity upon the destitutes, who stand

implored at these gates of mercy? Oh! one look from you, might do more, than all the arguments and exhortations I could use.

And to you, who are parents, I would say,—while you are daily blessed with those olive branches around your table, show your gratitude to God, by imitating his compassion. Think of parents less happy than yourselves. Think of those, whose children have wounded them in the tenderest point, and upon whom God has laid the greatest, perhaps, of all afflictions. Nor judge too harshly, as if the fault was theirs. Alas! “the race is not” always “to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” And, perhaps, while I am interceding with you, for these daughters of affliction, I am interceding, in some instances, for the child of many prayers. Though banished, by a necessary severity, from a father’s house, she is not forgotten there. She is not forgotten, at the morning and evening sacrifice. When the little flock are assembled at the family altar, the one lost and straying sheep, is remembered, in supplication, before the Lord. He is implored still to watch over her, in that far country in which she wanders: nay, perhaps, this very sabbath, a prayer has been offered, that God would guide her footsteps to some house of refuge, and provide her a shelter and a sanctuary, there. Oh! may that

prayer be heard—may it pierce the clouds—may it move the hand that moves the world, and that can touch the springs of compassion in your breast! Oh! may it appear, this day, to all, and may angels report the news in heaven, that this assembly has manifested itself to be a Christian congregation; not only the worshippers, but the followers of him who came “to heal the broken-hearted—to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind—to set at liberty them that are bruised—to preach the acceptable year of the Lord!”

SERMON XVII.

GALATIANS, vi. 14.

“GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY, SAVE IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM THE WORLD IS CRUCIFIED UNTO ME, AND I UNTO THE WORLD.”

SUCH a declaration comes with full force from St. Paul; because he was, perhaps, as highly gifted, and as eminently distinguished, as any mere man that ever lived. And of this he was himself quite conscious. “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh,” saith he, “I more:—of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews.” But these envied distinctions—all his labors as an Apostle—his abundant revelations—his ascent above the bounds of nature, into the third heavens;—all these he counted as less than nothing, yea, even as dung and dross, in comparison with the cross of Christ.

How, then, could St. Paul glory in a thing so vile; in a thing, which to the eye of flesh and blood appeared so humiliating, and so dishonorable to his blessed Master?

In the first place, he gloried in the cross of

Christ, as the field where God had triumphantly defeated the powers of darkness. If a general desire to gain a complete and decisive victory, he endeavours, by every stratagem, to bring his enemy into the open plain: and, to effect this often makes a show of weakness, and counterfeits a retreat. It was, then, by the humiliation of the cross, that all the malignity of sin, and all the legions of hell, were called forth into the field. Hatred of God, and enmity at his sovereignty, form and constitute the state of devils. Our Lord was not concealed, by his incarnation, from Satan's penetrating eye. He knew, at once, the Son of the most High God. He watched and assailed him, during all his painful pilgrimage through life. And when, at last, the blessed Jesus fell into the hands of wicked men, and was placed, without resistance, upon the cross; then it was, that infernal infatuation came up to its full measure. Then was their hour, and the power of darkness. God, in his mysterious union with the man Jesus Christ, seemed to be in the power of his enemies, and, for a moment, unable to defend himself. The long-wished-for, but long-despaired-of, moment, had arrived. And Satan, in the strength of this delusion, was encouraged, (in subservience to the designs of Heaven,) to bring forth all his legions: that all the malice of in-

fernal spirits, all the venom and fury of hell, might be let loose at once, upon the meek and unresisting Lamb of God.

Here, then, was the crisis of Satan's empire upon earth. For when Jesus bowed his head upon the cross, the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, and Satan fell, like lightning, out of heaven. Here it was, that the captain of our salvation spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.

Another particular which, in St. Paul's view, cast a lustre upon the cross, was that it afforded the most transcendent display of God's goodness,—or, in other terms, of his essential glory. For the highest Majesty never appears so truly great, as when it condescends and stoops, to do the deeds of mercy.

Even in earthly greatness, we all can feel this truth. Suppose some illustrious prince, (I need scarcely tell you, that the substance of this thought, is borrowed from the justly celebrated Dr. Chalmers,) suppose some illustrious prince, placed in the very centre of fame, of brilliant achievements, and far extended empire—surrounded by all that can give splendour to a crown, or magnificence to royal state—by all the lustre of the arts—by the love and devoted fidelity, of a

great and powerful people :—suppose this prince, in progress through his dominions, were to hear, from some poor and comfortless habitation, the cry of misery and distress ; to stop, in the midst of all the imposing display of military pomp and royal splendour, that he might listen, in patience, to this tale of sorrow ; and, induced by some peculiar and uncommon train of circumstances, were to dismiss state affairs, and attendants, and retinue, altogether ; were to enter into that lowly dwelling of affliction,—to remain there, even for one day, administering to its wants, conforming to its habits, and labouring in its meanest offices :—who, I say, would hesitate in pronouncing, that at no period of his glorious reign, did that prince appear so truly great, or so illustrious, as when he laid aside his royal character, condescended to the low estate of the poor, sympathized in their sorrows, and shared in their distresses ? We all can make the application. The disparity is, indeed, infinite : but the thought cannot but remind us of our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who, being in the form of God, and equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant ; who left the calm heaven of his Father's bosom, that he might bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows ; who came not to be ministered unto,

but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Another ground, on which St. Paul could glory in the cross of Christ, was that he beheld in that, the great instrument of salvation and deliverance, to a lost world.

This redemption had been promised from the beginning; had been figured by types, and shadows, and sacrificial offerings; had been foretold by prophets, and anticipated by the faith of all the seed of Abraham. But it was upon the cross, that all was consummated and finished. It was by the atoning sacrifice, the infinitely meritorious blood, then shed and offered, that the curse of the law was reversed; that the debt to the Divine justice was paid; that our peace was made with God; that the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers; that everlasting righteousness was brought in,—the reign of pardon, and peace, and holiness, and happiness, in every bosom, that will receive that great salvation.

It was, my brethren, the wonderful contrivance of God's wisdom, that the same means, which holds out to the soul, the loftiest and most triumphant hopes, should effectually teach it the lessons of meekness, gentleness, and humility. But so it is. The cross can bring down all

human pride, and subdue the most rebellious passions of our nature. And thanks be to God, that it can do so. For this softened and humbled temper of the mind, is essentially necessary, not only to our present peace, but to our future happiness. It is, we are assured, the poor in spirit, those who are converted, and become as little children, and those alone, that shall, or can, enter into the kingdom of heaven. Such is the constitution of that blessed society; so unlike is it to this coarse, this tumultuous, and this unfeeling world; so mild is its atmosphere—so innocent its pleasures—so peaceful its pursuits—so sweet and gentle a tranquillity reigns in those mansions of the blessed;—that it would be confounding the most discordant elements, and hostile essences, in nature;—it would be but bringing hell into heaven, the restless works of darkness, into God's eternal sabbath;—it would injure the happiness of God's children, and be altogether fruitless as to themselves, to introduce worldly minds, and wicked spirits, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They could not enjoy it, or understand what its pleasures meant. To talk of heaven, for such souls as these, is a flat contradiction, not only to Scripture, but to common sense. It is to suppose a man rewarded by pains and penalties; and happy in the very things he instinctively abhors. You

might, in fact, as well mock the blind, with the enchantments of the landscape. You might as well call to the lifeless stone, to stand up, and sing the high praises of God. You might as well go forth, to meet the lion roaring after his prey, and tame his fury, by the charmer's wisdom, or the still small voice: as present the living waters of religion, to the depraved and the impure; or the invisible glories of a spiritual world, to hearts, every imagination of which is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

If, then, we would go to heaven, we must become heavenly in our affections; we must be, not superficially improved, but radically changed from our natural state. For so say the Scriptures, in every variety of term, that best implies the necessity, and the entireness of this change: such as a new man, a new birth, a new creation, a passing from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light, from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God.

But how shall this change be effected? How shall we be disentangled from the pollutions of this present world, and fitted for a better? St. Paul has told us, in the text. It was by the cross of Christ, that the "world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world."

There is something in the very mode of expres-

sion here, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," which shows that the heart of this Apostle was thoroughly engaged. It is not common language. It is the language of warm attachment: the deep-toned accents of strong sensibility. If it is right to use such comparisons, this is the kind of expression, one might hear from a man of ardent feeling, who called to mind the spot, on which an honoured and venerated friend, had by some extraordinary turn of circumstances, fallen in his defence. Or it is like, shall we say, the still tenderer accents of a widow indeed, in the tomb of whose beloved husband is buried every affection, by which the world had bound her heart?

I am perfectly aware, that these illustrations are most inadequate;—indeed, in many respects, entirely unsuitable. The sacred sensibilities of religion cannot be too entirely divested, in our thoughts, of gloom and melancholy: and I am sure that great caution should be used, in calling in any mere human feelings, to explain the movements of the mind towards God. But, still, I am persuaded, that any person who takes the four gospels, without prejudice, into his hand;—who reads them with fixed attention, and, I must add, with the best prayer he is capable of offering up;—who keeps in mind the transcendent

glory from which our Lord descended, and the errand on which he came;—who witnesses, in these records, his spotless innocence, his gentle patience, his unaffected dignity, his ceaseless labours for the good of others;—who sees the ingratitude, the oppression, the wanton insult, and unfeeling cruelty, with which this model of all excellence was treated in return, and the invincible meekness with which he bore it all;—who sees those whom he came to seek and to save, calling out for his blood, and leading him, as a lamb, to the slaughter—to the shame and agony of the cross:—I do say, that any one who reads all this, and remembers that it was willingly endured for him, would, on common principles of human nature, be likely, at the foot of that cross, to renounce the world, (not the duties of the world, but the spirit of the world,) for ever; to bid its vanities, its allurements, its interests, an eternal farewell; to resolve that no power should tear one affection of his soul, from his blessed Master, or seduce him again into those polluted arms, which were stained with his most precious blood.

Such, I say, would be the natural effect of generous human feeling. When the mind, then, is led by the spirit of God, with the eye of a supernatural faith, to contemplate the mystery of

the Cross ; all that is ardent and tender in this sentiment, is retained : but it is softened, spiritualized, raised. A divine energy begins to work. While we are drawn by every human sympathy, to Christ's suffering humanity ; his divinity begins to mingle with, and impregnate the whole process ; to breathe through every organ of the soul, and to act omnipotently on the heart. The mind feels a transforming power. It is in contact with an object, which can captivate it, purify it, convert it, save it. Before the awful sanctity, and beloved remembrance, of Christ thus set forth crucified, and now dwelling in the heart by faith,—sin flies from the soul, now a temple of the living God,—flies to the moles, and to the bats, and to the darkness of its native hell. The gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation—victory over the world—the gate of everlasting life.

Would you know, by what mode of operation, Christ's death can "kill all vices in us," bring it to the test of actual experiment. The next time you are tempted to any sin, whether of deceit, or violence, or impurity ; before you put that sin into act,—pause for a moment. Let the form of your meek and dying Saviour rise, in imagination, before you. Remember that it was sin that swelled the sorrows of his heart, and sharpened all his pains. Then ask yourself this question, How

shall I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God? Shall I crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?

Thus does the cross of Christ assimilate the soul to itself,—plant it in the likeness of Christ's death, that it may pass from thence, into the likeness of his resurrection. For the soul, once purified from sin, rises to spiritual life; regains its native level; feels health and active power, in every faculty; hungers again for its celestial food; and satisfies with their proper objects, those vast desires, which breathe, in its inmost essence, after wisdom, happiness, and God.

The religion of the gospel is not an airy speculation, on the one hand; or an empty title, on the other. It is God's image in the heart, and substantial virtue in the soul. In prosperity, it is moderation, gratitude to God, true humility, and unaffected superiority to the world: and in adversity, it is a calm submission, a cheerful resignation to the will of God, which passeth all understanding. It is, in short, a principle, which can stay the mind, at those decisive moments, when all is trembling on the balance; and which can enter with it into the practical details of every hour, softening the cares, calming the anxieties, tranquillizing the current, and cheering the bosom of domestic life. This is Christ's religion. These

are the still waters, the blissful scenes, and the unfading paradise, to which he leads his faithful followers ; into which they enter, by him, the true and living way, and go in and out, and find pasture.

Philosophy may reason highly, and soar upwards, upon the wings of doubtful speculation : but the faith of Christ, alone, can give solid comfort in affliction, or confidence at the hour of death. Let men theorise as they please, in days of sunshine, and sport as they please, upon the surface of life's ocean, when it is calm and placid ; yet, when the tempest rages, and the waves are towering to the clouds, all then look for solid ground, something firm and palpable,—some point within reach, where they can safely cast their anchor. So it is, at the hour of death. Nothing then will sustain, but the religion of the Scripture : nothing can effectually prop the sinking soul, or cheer the desolated heart, but calmly reposing in the blood of Jesus. At that moment, we feel the value of having an Advocate with the Father, an high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; nay, of having in authority over the whole household of God, and over the wide regions of immensity, One who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

The Patriarchs, when strangers in Egypt, and when ushered into the presence of the ruler of the land, found, to their inexpressible surprise and joy, in the person of the lord of that strange country, their own brother, Joseph. So may we, in some measure, picture to our imagination, the consolations, which a soul, just passing into eternity, may derive, from beholding the human nature of the Redeemer, upon the right hand of God, and tracing in him, whom angels and archangels worship, all the characters and lineaments of man. Yes: we may conceive the condescending Saviour, gently approaching the timid spirit, as it enters amidst those glories, which are, at first, too bright and dazzling for its spiritual vision; and saying, almost in the very words of Joseph to his brethren, "I am the once lowly Jesus, whom your sins sold and crucified. But be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. It was not you that sent me hither, but God. And God did send me before you, to preserve life."

Behold, my brethren, the kingdom of heaven; righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; the reign of true religion in the soul! Happy are the people that are in such a case! yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God! Stedfast in faith, joyful through

hope, and rooted in charity, they pass the waves of this troublesome world. Such are the graces which adorn their souls, such the links which bind them to everlasting life,—even faith, hope, and charity: but the greatest of these is charity.

Of faith and hope, very excellent things are spoken: but charity is the image and the life of God, in the soul of man. Charity is a real and vital participation of the Divine nature: for “God is love.” It was love, which brought a Saviour down from heaven. It was love, that, while we were yet enemies, reconciled us to God, by the death of his Son. It was love, (oh! that this personal application may belong to very many here,) it was love that followed you into that far country, where you once were as sheep gone astray, and brought you home to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.

Have you, then, received of this fulness? Have you drawn from this boundless ocean of charity? Has God shed this love abroad in your hearts, by the power of the holy Ghost? If so, I shall have good success this day.* “Him that cometh to me,” says the blessed Jesus, “I will in no wise cast out.” Be ye, then, followers of him. Imitate him, where he can be imitated. You cannot give sight to

* Preached for the Dorset Institution, Dublin.

the blind: you cannot command the winds and the waves; or cause the dead to hear your voice, and to come forth. But you can, like that Saviour, turn to the prayer of the poor destitute, and despise not their desire.

The institution for which I plead, is too well known, to require any lengthened description. Its object is to provide employment for females of good character, who have no means of earning their bread, but by needle-work; and to secure to them such wages, as are sufficient to support them, and those who are dependent on them, with moderate comfort; to instruct them in the word of God, and in the principles of true religion; and, also to train up their children in early habits of industry, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such are the general outlines of the plan. I shall now proceed to the point, on which I would desire to lay the main stress of my application to you this day.

The Dorset Institution, like most things which turn out well, had its commencement in much weakness. The whole originated in a letter, sent about twenty years ago, by a poor uneducated female, to a Christian lady, of high rank and station, well known as the friend of the friendless, and the benefactress of the poor. This letter I have read: and it is, in truth, a marvellous composition. The

writer is now dead ; and, therefore, it can flatter no vanity, to say, that it seems to have been penned by a wisdom not her own. The attention of this child of poverty, and child of God, (two titles which often go together,) was first drawn to the subject of which she treats, by seeing, in some public paper, the prospectus of a new asylum, to be opened for the reception of unhappy females, now seeking a refuge from a life of sin. The declaration embodied in this document, that vice and abandonment were advancing, in this city, with fearful strides, deeply impressed her mind. She paused, and considered, and fell into the following train of reflection. "There must be some cause—something to account for effects so decisive, and so lamentable—some fountain must feed these streams of bitterness: and, surely, in such a case, prevention is better than cure; even were not the attempt at cure, so often hopeless and unavailing. What, then, is the condition of a large portion of females, in this city? Have they any choice, but between the extremes of poverty, on the one hand, and vice on the other?"

That such is the only alternative with many, is not matter of doubtful conjecture. The point has been ascertained, with mathematical precision. Hundreds—nay, I believe, in the increased population of this great city, thousands of females, have

no means of support, but what their needle can earn. I shall not trouble you with details, which have been accurately inquired into, by the conductors of this Institution. It is enough for you, I make no doubt, to be informed, on their authority, that the prices usually paid for that species of work, are not sufficient to provide food, (lodging, clothing, firing, and everything else being left out of the question,) for a single individual; even supposing her to obtain constant employment, and to use her utmost diligence. What, then, is she to do? Reduced, as many applicants to this Institution have been, from a state of decency and comfort;—deprived, perhaps, but lately, of the guides of her childhood, or separated from the husband of her youth, and thrown at once upon such a world as this;—I repeat it, what is she to do? I am not calling for your sympathy, towards one, who, in such trying circumstances, would abandon herself to hopeless sorrow, however heavily that sorrow may press upon her heart. I call upon you, only to give fair consideration to the case of a young female, who bears such sore bereavement with patient fortitude, and does all that the most rigid exacter of duty could demand. Well then: allow that, deprived of those whose presence was all the charm of life to her, she yields to no tenderness of her sex, and listens to no soft pleadings of

nature; but, with trembling hands, and weeping eyes, and bleeding heart, she betakes herself to her tasks, her daily tasks;—what I contend for is, that she cannot, by any exertion, by any working, or overworking of her utmost strength, I do not say, maintain herself in decency—for that is altogether out of the question—but that she cannot keep herself above the most abject state of poverty, above hunger, cold, and nakedness.

“The cause which I knew not,” says Job, “I searched out.” You will not, then, refuse to follow me, while I would lead you, in thought, to the abode of wretchedness, in which one of those females, whom it is the object of this admirable Charity to relieve, is now living. There, as one of the governesses described to me, “sitting up a great part of the night, with bad light, and, in consequence, injured eyes, and with hands stiff with cold, for want of fire;”—with all efforts, she cannot provide, for herself alone, the means of sustenance. If she has continued single, she may have, perhaps, a helpless parent; or if a young widow, one or more infant children: and for these she may feel, far more than for herself. Her spirit may sustain her own privations: but a spirit wounded by the miseries of those she loves, by the complaints of comfortless old age, and by the cries

of her little ones for food, when she has none to give them;—such trials it is hard for flesh and blood to bear.

It is true, that if she be a conscious heir of immortality, and strong in faith, she can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth her; that God, who is her high defence, is greater than all; and that none can pluck her out of her heavenly Father's hand. But oh! my brethren, how perilous is the condition of a female, whose armour is not of celestial temper, when beset by misfortune, deserted by all that is good and virtuous in society; and when her mind, bowed down and prostrate, has become passive to the assaults of fierce temptation! If possessed of personal attractions, and cursed, as, in her case, I may surely call it, with personal beauty, quickly as these frail flowers wither, and droop, and die, under the chill blasts of want and poverty; yet, while their short day lasts, she has agents of evil enough, to whisper to her, that out of all her misery there is a short and ready path—a path which, they omit to tell her, will shortly lead to depths still lower than the lowest she has ever trod, and from these depths in time, to depths unfathomable in eternity. No: the secret is kept back, till her ruin is accomplished. And in the mean time, all she sees are promises of

present ease, and gaiety and pleasure. Burthened with a load of misery, and solicited by strong temptation, may we not conceive the struggle of her soul to vent itself, in some such thoughts and reasonings as these? “Wherefore is light given to her that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul? Surely, however kind and merciful God may be to others, he has forgotten to be gracious unto me; or he would not have cast out my feeble prayer, and laid upon me more than I am able to bear. And oh! what can religion be? Or what can that profession of it be, which everywhere abounds, when such wretchedness as mine, can go unpitied—when no man careth for my soul—no hand of mercy is stretched out, to still the throbbing of my heart, or to deal forth bread to my fatherless infants? Oh! how gladly would I, for those little ones’ sake, devote my days and nights to incessant toil;—give no rest to these hands, or slumber to these eyes, if I could at least stop my children’s cries for food! But it is in vain—I have not power or strength to do so. And will God be severe to mark what I have done amiss, if I turn in this last extremity, to those who alone will give me that protection and support, which his own Providence has denied me, in every other quarter?”

False and infatuated as such reflections are, can we wonder, that the woman who thus deliberates, should be lost? Surely it requires no prophet, to divine how reasonings like these will end; or to foretell that she, whose feet are stumbling on the brink of such a precipice, will lose her balance, and come down; that her reason will totter, and let go the helm; and that, when she wakes from her delirium, she will find herself in the hands of those, whose triumph is in the fall of innocence, in the surrenders of conscience, and in the last expiring struggles of the soul. Yes: such are the men of pleasure—the men of honor—the men whose falsehoods no man dares to give the lie to—the men who are favorites, in what is called good society in this world! But their day is coming. They will soon awake to shame and everlasting contempt—they will soon be expelled from what is called good society, in the world to come—they will soon be driven from the assembly of the righteous, and congregation of the blessed, and punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

But that day has not yet arrived. The Church is still militant here on earth. The warfare is still going on, and, to human eyes, with doubtful issue,

between the powers of darkness, and the ministers of light—between the destroyers, and the rescuers, of immortal souls. Nor will it, I believe, know truce or intermission, till the present order of things, and dispensation of the world, are brought utterly to a close for ever; till that bright day dawns, when the Captain of our salvation will unfurl the standard of his triumphant cross, amidst the clouds of heaven, and proclaim, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ.

In the mean time, the battle is still fighting; and in no part of the habitable globe, perhaps, with fiercer onset than in this city, and in the matter of the very souls for whom I plead. Friendless, destitute, and hemmed in on every side, but two doors of escape are open;—the one, into the dark and slippery path which leads to ruin; the other, into the strait and narrow way which leads to God. Tossed upon a troublous sea, unable to buffet with its waves, or to outride the storm, some haven, friendly or unfriendly, they are compelled to seek. On the one hand, the world holds out its treacherous lights and signals, that these frail barks may strike upon the rocks, and go down for ever. On the other hand, the Dorset Institution

erects her faithful beacons, and sends out her life-boats, to rescue as many as she can. But she cannot rescue them all: she has not the means. Will you supply her? Will you aid her, in fitting out more life-boats of salvation? Nay, will you enable her to prepare an ark, capacious as her wishes? and she will bring them all to land. And oh! if celestial sounds could reach our ears, what shouts of angels, what a salute from the batteries of heaven, should we hear, while the vessel rode majestically through the waves, and, under the gale of the blessing of God, was calmly entering the haven!

It is my painful duty, in conclusion, to inform you, that this Institution has, within a short period, lost some of its best supporters. Three have, lately, been called to their reward: two, whose annual contributions were so large, as to form a considerable proportion of the whole funds; and one* whose tender offices, and labours of love, can never be forgotten, and were above all praise. Many in this assembly, can bear witness to this truth. Nay, do I not address some, who when they call to mind her high endowments, her deep humility, the consistent piety of her life, and the triumphs of her

* Miss Kiernan.

death,—would be inclined to say, that, “take” her “for all in all,” they “shall not look upon” her “like again.”

To this Institution, the object of her constant solicitude, and, which was of still more consequence, her ceaseless prayers, she was a loss, great, indeed, beyond calculation ; but I will indulge the hope, not irreparable. For I trust I see around me visible and living proofs, that her supplications have not been unanswered. I trust the result of this important day, will send consolation to many a cheerless dwelling, and comfort to many a burthened heart. Such is the nature of this establishment, that its resources can always be turned to immediate account. And before many hours are over, there will be great joy amongst the poor of this city, if God puts it into your hearts to give abundantly. Mothers will clasp their children to their bosoms, and tell them how you have sent them bread to eat, and raiment to cover them from the cold. Daughters will hasten with the glad tidings, to their aged parents, that you have at last compassionated them, and that God has not given them over in their grey hairs. And many a female will draw back, from the precipice which was before her, and testify, in the face of Heaven, that it was you who delivered her soul from death, her eyes from tears, and her

feet from falling. What can money purchase, equal to the consciousness of having ministered in such God-like acts as these? Give, then, from the abundance of your hearts: and may the blessing of those that were ready to perish, come upon you!

SERMON XVIII.

GALATIANS, vi. 15.

“FOR IN CHRIST JESUS, NEITHER CIRCUMCISION AVAILETH ANY THING, NOR UNCIRCUMCISION, BUT A NEW CREATURE.”

IT has too generally been the wish of men, to find out a convenient religion, which would leave them in possession of what gratified their inclination here, and, at the same time, ensure some safe provision for the future state. And such a security, they have always been willing to purchase, provided the terms be not too high. Hence the willingness, with which the Israelites offered the most costly sacrifices; the zeal with which they drew near unto Jehovah, with their lips, when their heart was far from him. Hence the punctuality, with which the Pharisees paid tithe, of mint, and anise, and cummin; their scrupulous anxiety, to cleanse the outside of the cup, and of the platter; to make broad their phylacteries, and to enlarge the hem of their garments; while their inward part was full of excess, extortion, and all uncleanness. Hence, even among professing Christians, the wish to substitute, some, a zealous attachment

to their own religious party; others, a constant attendance on outward ordinances; others, a painful endurance of periodical fastings, and rigid austerities. Hence, in a word, the general desire, and the various consequent contrivances, to find out some substitute for the religion of the heart; for the faith that works by love; for that kingdom of God formed within us, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The words of my text require no long explanation. They merely lay down the doctrine, which I shall now endeavour to enforce, that, in Christ Jesus, that is, according to the Gospel of truth, no outward observance, or external profession of religion, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything:" unless the mind be reconciled to God; unless the heart be purified in its inclinations; and the whole man transformed, as the Apostle here expresses it, into "a new creature."

I shall now proceed to consider some of those things, which are frequently mistaken for religion, but in which, nevertheless, religion does not principally consist; and afterward investigate, to the best of my power, in what religion does consist, and what are its leading fruits.

In the first place, religion does not consist in opinions, however right or orthodox. To inform

our understanding in these matters, as far as opportunity is afforded, is, no doubt, the duty of every Christian. Yet opinions neither constitute, nor imply, the real possession of the religious principle. We may subscribe, without hesitation, to every article of the Creed: yet what can this avail us, if in practice we deny them? Nay, so little can the divine spirit and life of religion, be embodied in any system of mere head knowledge, that we boldly assert, as matter, not of conjecture, but of melancholy experience, in all ages of the church, that the most critical acquaintance with the abstract questions of divinity, the deepest learning in all subtleties and nice distinctions of theology—that all these may be associated with an utter ignorance of God; that all this elaborate furniture, may leave the mind in the profoundest darkness, as to the things which belong unto its everlasting peace. And, thus, we may have an acquaintance with “all mysteries and all knowledge,” and be devoid of that “charity, without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.”

Neither, again, does religion properly consist in the performance of outward duties. That true religion will, and must, extend its blessed influence, to the whole of our deportment, cannot be denied. But still, though the fulfilment of ex-

ternal duties, be a necessary effect of religion ; yet, it by no means follows, that it is the same as religion. In proof of this, we can very well conceive actions, in themselves good, to flow from principles, the very opposite to Christian sentiments.

Thus, for instance, liberality to the poor, which, when flowing from its genuine source, descends like the gentle dew from heaven, upon the place beneath, twice blest, to him that gives, and him that takes ; yet, if this liberality be practised from motives of ostentation ; if it be considered as any merit, which we plead with God, or offer as a part of the price of our salvation ; if it be considered as a commutation with Heaven, for the weightier matters of the law ; and if its practical usefulness be invidiously contrasted with higher graces, with living faith, inward purity, and the love of God ; it then is so far from partaking of the nature of religion, that it passes over to, and takes its stand upon, the side of sin and darkness.

Nor, further, does religion consist in the mere performance, however exact, of any of what are termed religious exercises ; such as repeating prayers, reading the Scriptures, attending public worship, or receiving the holy sacrament. These are all important privileges, invaluable means of religion. But, if we allow that they are means at all,

we need no other argument, that they are distinguishable from the principle and essence of religion itself; inasmuch as the means and end, cannot possibly be the same. And yet, alas! how prone are professing Christians, to rest in these means, and to lose sight of their real use and intention! How strange this delusion! How great is that darkness! As if the wise and beneficent God had suspended the happiness of immortal spirits, upon such mere offerings of the lips, upon unmeaning and lifeless ceremonies!

But, it may be said, if none of these things, which I have enumerated, constitute religion, in what, then, does it consist? It consists, according to my text, in being "a new creature."

When man was first created, he came forth, spotless and without blemish, from his Maker's hands; so that God's unerring judgment pronounced him "very good."

Upon man, thus highly favoured, he impressed his own image, and contemplated, in him, the living copy of his own perfections. Man, partaking of the Divine nature, was upright, innocent, and happy. Upon the inmost tablet of his heart, was inscribed, "holiness unto the Lord;" and the paradise which he saw around him, but faintly shadowed forth the far happier paradise of his own breast. Man, thus the principal link in that

golden chain of order, which descended from the Supreme Essence, to the lowest creature, was at unity with himself. His superior faculties possessed an undisputed mastery, over his inferior appetites. His soul was like that pure heaven, into which nothing defiled can enter. No sinful desires, no discordant passions, no undue affections, disturbed the serenity of his mind. And, thus, all within him being duly ordered, he breathed, at every moment, the incense of a pure devotion to God. His immortal principle as naturally ascended to the pure fountain of all good, as the sparks fly upwards. Amidst all these rich and varied blessings, the giver, and not the gift, was the supreme source of all his happiness. It was God that gave its highest sweetness, to all he saw, and all he heard, and all he tasted. And, while he walked with God on earth, he contemplated no change; unless, perhaps, that, by some gentle transition, he should, in God's good time, pass to still milder regions, and to a still brighter paradise, in the celestial kingdom.

But man continued not, alas! in this state of happiness. He disobeyed the commands of his Maker: he threw away his own blessings; trampled his own honor in the dust; and defaced the image of God within him. Despoiled of his robe of innocence, he was ashamed, and hid himself

from those eyes, which are too pure to behold iniquity. When he “heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden, in the cool of the day”—that voice, which had been his delight, his glory, and his chiefest joy; he “hid himself from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden.”

And what is the history of mankind, from that eventful day, to the present hour, but the history of a fallen and degraded race? What does man present to the reflecting eye, but the appearance of a majestic ruin; the whole order of his nature inverted, his reason dethroned, and his immortal spirit become the slave of brutal appetites; and he himself an insulated being, dislodged, in the general system, from the very principle and centre of being? What, in fact, is the world at large, down from the courts of princes, to the very dregs of savage life, but one great field of crime and violence, of misery and tears?

What, then, is Christianity, but the deliverance of all that obey its call, out of this abyss of misery, into which man has fallen; and their restoration to a state more exalted, than that which, in their uprightness, their first parents enjoyed?

Into this, which may be termed the happy condition of the children of God, there is but one entrance, one door,—even through Him who is the

way, the truth, and the life; by whom we have received the Atonement. No man can pass from beneath those clouds, which overhang and depress the soul, while alienated from God, by unbelief and sin;—no man can pass from this, his natural darkness, into the cheering light of Divine favour;—no man can come unto the Father, but by Him. The way is now opened into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. And the invitation is freely given, to all that will lay hold upon its gracious offers. Not that they should, with painful, fruitless toil, build up a righteousness of their own; but that they should believe on Him who justifieth the ungodly; that they should receive entire forgiveness of all their sins, full and free salvation, not for their own sakes, or for works of righteousness which they have done, but for his sake, who lived and died, to save sinners.

But, my brethren, the Gospel not only proclaims pardon to the guilty; but it gives rest to all that travail, and are heavy laden. To be a new creature in Christ Jesus, is, in some sense, to be like God: for it is to bear the image of Him that created us, and to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

The time would fail me, to mention all the fruits, which grow upon this tree of God's own

planting ; those blessed fruits, which constitute the elements of true happiness in the soul. But three of them I will just notice : because they are, as it were, parent principles, out of which branch forth all those graces, which adorn the Gospel, and beautify the soul. The three principles are, humility, purity, and love.

By humility, I mean a calm repose of mind, when all the storms of ambition, all the conflicting passions of the proud, have been hushed to silence, and fled for ever, from that peaceful bosom. Humility is not meanness of spirit : it is, in reality, as near as anything, in our fallen state, can be, to true greatness of soul. The proud are anxious to appear happy, and often conceal, under that vain show, wounds that fester in the heart ; while the humble, sometimes pitied and despised, as poor-spirited and dejected, are refreshed in secret with the abundance of peace, and with the consolation of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. The miseries of the proud, are best known to those who feel them. But, assuredly, there is, in such unhappy persons, a deep depression of the soul, when the world neglects them ; when they feel themselves undervalued, and passed by ; when their equals are raised above them ; when they feel that they are sinking in the vale of years, and no longer what

they were, or able to engage the interest which they once excited. In these cases, there is a keen sense of misery, a hopeless melancholy, which no voice can heal or dissipate, but that which says, "Come unto me, all that travail, and are heavy laden." Humility descends upon this wounded spirit, like the showers, upon the grass. For to be humble, is to be fairly out of the rivalships and mortifications of this heart-rending world. Its poisoned arrows cannot fix, where there is no pride to wound; where our minds are taught really to esteem others better than ourselves; to take the lowest room; if in high station, to consider these outward distinctions, as mere momentary trifles; if in low station, to esteem the meanest fortune, as far better than we deserve. This softened state of the soul, cannot grow on nature's stock. It flows from the cross of Christ. It is the first link, which raises the soul from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed" also "are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Next to humility, comes, in the order of the divine life, purity. Purity is the health and liberty of the soul. Well might the Psalmist say, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" when we contain within these gross vehicles of

flesh, a spirit of celestial temper, formed in the image of God's wisdom, his goodness, his eternity; born to a deathless life, and imperishable in its essence. Lodged, for its trial, during this short life, in an earthen vessel, and subjugated, by the fall, to the dominion of the lowest animal desires; the soul, while unconverted to God, is like the banished prodigal, far from his father's house, chained down to an ignominious slavery, groaning in misery and iron. Thus does the mind of man, separated from all intercourse with its native heaven, by sin, strive to be at ease, strive to satisfy its feverish thirst, and impatient, boundless appetite, with the husks on which the swine are fed. But alas! it cannot. It reaps shame, and disappointment, and bitter remorse. In short, sensuality is misery to the soul. It may, indeed, steep the senses of an immortal being, for a while, in sleep: but it is a short and restless sleep, of feverish tossings, and unhappy dreams. Purity, then, is the emancipation of the spirit, from this base thralldom. It clears the understanding, and scatters the mists which lay upon the mind. A new world stands revealed, to the pure in heart. The face of nature throws aside her veil. The wonders of God's law stand revealed before them; and God, who causes the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the pure heart, to give the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

But the end and crown of all God's gifts and graces, is love. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "Religion," says one who drank deep into its spirit, "is summed up in one word, and that a short and sweet word—love." Even between fellow-creatures, when this principle is pure and genuine, it casts a magic charm on all around. But, where the powerful affections of the soul, where the deep sensibilities of the heart, are all at rest, in the bosom of God, then our salvation is begun. We may rest at peace, upon the waves of this troublesome world. Our sails are then set, and have caught the breeze, which will waft us straight to heaven. If we love God, we know that he has loved us. Nor can we, if we love him that begat, withhold our love from him that is begotten of him. The world will be but one wide field for our benevolence. Every child of man will have a share in our regard. The sinful and depraved, will have our pity, and our prayers. Our bitterest enemies will have our free forgiveness. And the children of God, the heirs with us of the same promise, will be loved, with that sacred and peculiar affection, which is, itself, one of the surest marks that we are new creatures, and have passed from death unto life.

Such, my brethren, is the religion of the Gospel. Behold her, as, unadulterated with human mixtures, she shines forth in Scripture, in all her native loveliness; the wisdom from above, the light of the world, and the image of the invisible God. “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.” Here is what you are all in search of: here is the secret of making life a blessing: here is satisfying good, and substantial happiness. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to these waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.”

Oh! my brethren, if you had accepted, or if you would now accept, this great salvation freely offered you, how doubly delightful would be my office;* how sure would be my success, this day! My weakness would be made perfect, in the strength of an Almighty Advocate. For were I gifted with the eloquence of one † who was wont, in former days, to plead, from this pulpit, the cause which has now fallen, alas! to far different hands;—nay, though I could speak with the tongue of angels, I could only present the outward object to your view. But God can touch

* Preached for the Female Orphan House, Dublin.

† The late celebrated Dean Kirwan.

the springs of tenderness within. He can mould the heart, into the similitude of his own compassion; and pour the charities of his blessed nature, into the soul itself. May he do so, this day! Nor should I need, in that case, to trespass long upon your patience. Can I, my friends, say more than that the objects for whom I plead, are poor and needy, and that they have no helper; that they are children, thrown defenceless upon the world—that they are females, without a hiding-place from the destroyer, or shelter for their innocence—that they are orphans, cut off, by the double stroke of an afflicting Providence, from a father's protection, and a mother's tenderness?

The foundling, exposed in infancy, and deserted from its birth, has afterwards, when reason dawns, one alleviation of its sorrows; namely, that it can remember no happier days. But many of the children, for whom I plead, can look back on scenes, (they may wish to forget them, but they cannot,) scenes which memory paints, in sad and overwhelming contrast, with the destitution, which is now their portion. A few short months, perhaps, have scarcely passed, since these little ones were led by a father's hand, and lay upon a mother's bosom; since they heard, from parents' lips, the morning salutation, and the evening blessing; since they played around their knees, or, in any

transient sorrow, ran to them instinctively, as if a parent had an infallible remedy for every pain. These are the recollections, which rush upon their hearts. They may be thought, at so young an age, incapable of such strong emotions: but, believe me, they are not so. It is true, that children in affliction, will quickly smile through their tears: for they are rapid and volatile, in every movement. But the orphan's tears will, ere long, have cause to flow again. The child who has been deprived of one parent, has felt a bereavement, which, I trust in God, your children may long be spared. But when one is left, the destitution is not entire. The father can, however imperfectly, supply the mother's vacant place, and perform her gentler offices. On the other hand, the widow can mingle her tears with the tears of her fatherless children, and for their sake, and for the sake of him from whom she is parted but for a little while, can forget the weakness of her sex, and buffet with all the storms of this selfish and unfeeling world. But these children have no parent. God has taken both their father, and their mother, from them; and their only hope, under heaven, is in your compassion.

My brethren, when I look upon that band of young and helpless females, and think what, in all human probability, must await them, if not con-

tinued in this house of mercy ; can I but feel, that I have an anxious task in hand ? Yes : without a large contribution from you this day, some of these little ones must seek another shelter ; or, rather, I would say, for them shelter there is none. It is of great importance for you to bear in mind, that, if there should be a failure in this day's collection, that failure will be met by a corresponding reduction of the parliamentary grant : while, on the other hand, every additional pound you give, will secure an increase of the government allowance, to the same amount. It is this which makes the charity sermon, of such peculiar importance to this establishment. May, then, the result of to-day cheer many an orphan's heart ! May it enable the conductors of this blessed asylum to say to its present inmates, " Fear not, little flock : for God has touched the hearts of your benefactors ; and you have still a home, and a refuge from the storm ! "

But oh ! may it enable them to do more than this ! May it enable them to admit many, who are now, of necessity, excluded ; and who plead, in vain, that they are, in childhood, wanderers upon the world ; that no one listens to their complaints and no man careth for their souls ; that no one stops to hear them, when they ask, what they must

do to be saved, or how they may find the road which will lead them to God, and to meet their father and mother again in heaven!

Oh! my Christian friends, on your individual contribution, the fate of one of these little ones, may depend. God acts by means: and your contribution may open a door, not only of temporal deliverance, but of eternal salvation, to some lamb of the flock, now wandering amongst wolves; but destined, through your instrumentality, to join the band of innocents above, and to rest in the arms of the great Shepherd of the sheep. If you are now doubting, how much you ought to give, lean to the side of mercy; let compassion for the fatherless turn the scale. If you are hesitating between two sums, think of your own children; and remember how you would feel, if called upon to leave them, without your care, upon the world. Can you take a means, more likely to draw down the Divine blessing upon them, and secure your continuance with them, than to hear the orphan's prayers, and wipe away the orphan's tears?

Believe me that, if you give, this day, something more than you intended, on coming here, you will never repent it. You will lay out your money on good security. What you bestow in faith, what you give for Christ's sake, will be abundantly repaid; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The Lord will deliver you in the time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen you upon the bed of languishing, and make all your bed in your sickness. The Lord will recompense you, at the resurrection of the just. And oh! when, through the merits of Him who died, the just, for the unjust, we reach that happy country, where there is no death, neither sorrow, nor crying, what joyful re-unions shall we see! Parents and children, friends and relations, all that were one in Jesus, and soldiers of the cross, will meet again. Yes, my brethren; win souls to God, and your reward will be, to behold them in glory. Provide the means, by which these little ones may be brought to their Saviour; and they will arise before an assembled world, and call you blessed. Their parents, if numbered with the Lord's people, will stand up in the assembly of the saints, and say; "Behold the man, who saved our child from temporal and eternal misery." Their angels, who always behold the face of God, will descend from their thrones, to meet you, and to claim your everlasting friendship. Their Saviour, whom all the angels worship, will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." Yes, he will call you up, to sit among the princes and nobles of his kingdom. He will

distinguish you by a name, far above all ranks and orders of this world below. Amongst the high aristocracy of heaven, your style and title shall be, "The father of the fatherless, and the orphan's friend."

SERMON XIX.

REVELATIONS, vii. 14.

“THESE ARE THEY WHICH CAME OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION, AND HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES, AND MADE THEM WHITE, IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.”

No man who reads the Scripture, can deny that it is his duty, and no man who reads the Scripture to advantage, can doubt that it is his happiness, to set the Lord always before him, to meditate on him continually, to remember him upon his bed, and to think of him when he is waking. Nor can the human understanding, thus employed upon so vast an object, fail to exult in the immensity of its prospects, and give full range to its capacities and powers, upon so various and boundless a field of exercise. And though the light of revelation, alone, can guide our footsteps safely, through the trackless space; and though to be wise above what is written, is but to grope in the darkness of our own presumption; yet it is the nature of that truth which shines from heaven, to set us free: and, therefore, to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to deduce from plain principles of Scripture, such general notions of the divine character, as

may vindicate the ways of God to man, is but to give him that tribute of the mind and understanding, which is, in truth, a part of the first and great commandment.

It is clearly revealed, then, that God is love. It is clearly revealed, that he delights in the happiness of his creatures. It is clearly revealed, that man has been, not a loser, but a gainer by his fall in Adam. From a comparison, then, of these truths together, can we, if asked, in the words of the Psalmist, "what is man?"—can we feel any reluctance in answering; Man is a creature formed for happiness; and that happiness to spring from his loss in Adam, and his redemption from sin and sorrow, through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ?

And, here, I would invite your footsteps, into a field, which we should, assuredly, tread with awe and reverence; but which we may tread, I trust, without presumption. If, then, the nature of God be love, and if the true element of love, be the communication of happiness; can we conceive a more suitable or amiable exercise of the mind of a beneficent Creator, than that of planning means and instruments, by which He may send forth streams, from the fountain of that bosom which is the fulness of joy; and thus scatter, far and wide, around him, some portion of his own essential

blessedness? In the boundless range of God's creation, of which this earth is but a speck, what can the eye of reason or of faith discern, but a wide and wondrous field of happiness, to various orders of intellectual natures? Walk abroad upon some clear and starlight night, and lift up your eyes, and behold the canopy of these lower heavens, beset with bright and countless worlds, all the work of infinite love, and of almighty power: and then say, what anthems of gratulation, and what bursts of joy, may fill that circle, in the centre of which the God and Father of all presides! And if one star differs from another star in glory; if these worlds of light, and the sons of God who inhabit them, are varied and diversified by the same great law, which, here below, forbids, that two human faces, or two human voices, should, amidst the swarming myriads of men, be identically the same; if the Scriptures, sparing as they are, in their discoveries of the unseen state, tell us of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers,—all implying ranks and varieties in these higher natures—can we doubt that the Divine mind is inventive of new modes of happiness, and is employed in calling new forms of rational life into existence, in pouring the streams of his own blessedness through varied channels, and surrounding

his throne with diversified images and reflections of his own glory? What then is man—man so lately formed, and at whose creation the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? May we not reasonably conclude, that man was made, to form a new order of happy beings, in God's creation; to taste of the pleasures which flow from God's right hand, and exhibit the wisdom and goodness of his Creator, in some mode and manner, distinct from all other ranks of intelligent beings?

Amongst all the orders of happy creatures, there was none, perhaps, whose enjoyment was of the peculiar cast and character, which is derived from contrast with some former state: none whose blessedness grew out of, and was enhanced by, the remembrance of antecedent misery. Such a mode of happiness, we may conceive presenting itself to the supreme mind; and the Almighty, in consequence, resolving to give existence to a race, who were to be the subjects of this gracious scheme, and on whom this divine experiment was to be tried.

But there was another particular, in which this new race was to stand distinguished from every other. As love to God is the root and source of all true blessedness; all the higher modes of happiness to the creature, are but varied exhi-

bitions of God to his apprehension, by which his affections may be engaged. In what infinite forms of goodness and of perfect beauty, God may have been manifested to the several orders of his rational creatures, it is for none, but God himself, to know. But this we know, and deeply feel, that there is no call to love and gratitude, so tender and so deep, as the assurance, that a benefactor has encountered sufferings, and drunk the cup of sorrow and affliction, for our sakes. We are all sensible of this; because it is our nature so to feel. God has formed us thus. And for this very purpose, (may we not conjecture?) has God so planned and framed the constitution of our souls, that our love to God, or, in other words, the peculiar kind and character of our happiness, should flow from a sense, that the Son of God was humbled and afflicted for our sakes; that he, as the Captain of our Salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons of the fallen race of Adam unto glory.

All this, observe, I place before you, not as a doctrine which I call on you to believe, but as, a theory maintainable, I think, on fair arguments, both of reason and of Scripture; and which seems, satisfactorily, to account for the creation of man, displaying in the most amiable colours, the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God.

With this theory, then, let us compare the revealed truths, which stand connected with the words now before us. "These are they which came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb." In this chapter, we are presented with a glorious prospect, both of the angelic hosts, and of the redeemed from amongst men, ascribing "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might," unto God that liveth for ever and ever. In this celestial act of praise, the whole human race, who are saved, seem to be included: as would appear from the comprehensive form of the ninth verse in this chapter. "After this, I beheld," says the Apostle, "and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Expressions so general, cannot, I conceive, signify, as some have supposed, any peculiar portion of the redeemed; but the whole Church triumphant. When, therefore, the elder is represented as asking St. John in vision, "What are these, which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" I consider the questions, not as applicable to one class of the redeemed, as distinguished from the rest; but as applicable to the whole glorified

human race, as distinguished from other orders of celestial natures. If so, the answer, which the elder returns to his own questions in the following verse, gives the peculiar and appropriate character, not of a part, but of the whole triumphant body of Christ. "These are they which came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb."

In this view, how unspeakably sublime, is the spectacle here offered to the mind! The Apostle, seems, as it were, to stand like the prophet Balaam, upon some point of eminence: and to behold the armies of the living God, abiding in their tents, or drawn out, according to their tribes, upon the plains of Heaven. And while the separate orders and degrees of the celestial hosts, display, upon those fields of light, the varied splendours of their higher natures, and carry each some peculiar mark, which forms their distinctive character, amongst the countless myriads of heaven; while on the one hand, Seraphim, and on the other hand, Cherubim, cry, "Holy, holy, holy;" while angels and archangels are arranged and shining forth, in their graduated ranks of glory; while principalities and dominions shadow forth God's sovereignty, and powers reflect back the image of His omnipotence; — while, I say, the Apostle, wrapped in vision, contemplates these various com-

panies of the celestial hosts, a new order appears to advance upon his sight, uplifting the standard of the cross, which floats upon the heavenly breeze. Of these he desires to know the history, and the peculiar character : and of these he is told, in the language of my text ; “ These are they which came out of great tribulation ; and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb.”

Such is the view, which I take of these remarkable words. The happiness which all enjoy, who, from amongst men, are numbered with the blessed, will be a happiness, in a great degree growing out of former suffering. And the peculiar relation which they will bear to God, is that of viewing him, as their deliverer out of distress ; and as having humbled himself, to sufferings and death, to save and redeem their souls.

Amongst the blessed inhabitants of heaven, there are no jealousies, no rivalships nor envyings. Nor is it for us, perhaps, to say, what comparative rank the human race will hold, amidst those countless, happy multitudes. But, assuredly, as far as we have faculties to know, those must breathe the pure and blessed air of heaven, with a delight, transporting beyond all thought, who, to all eternity, will be able to compare their present felicity, with sorrows—with the deep waters of affliction,

through which they remember to have passed. When heaviness endureth even for a night, with what welcome does joy come in the morning! When the winter is past, with what freshness of delight, does the opening spring return! To him who has pined upon a bed of sickness, what peculiar pleasures does health restore! And how does one long immured in the damp cold dungeon of captivity—how does he come forth, amidst the fields of nature, as if the whole were like enchantment, or like opening heaven! Such, then, will be the future blessedness of those, who were born here to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Then will be clearly seen, why God, of very faithfulness, grieved and afflicted the children of men; and *why* those, who were his peculiar care, passed through the cloud and through the sea; why he sometimes hid his face from them, and vexed them with all his storms. Yes, my brethren. If we now keep the land of inheritance steadily in view, these waves and storms will only enhance the peace and blessedness, which await us, when we enter the haven where we would be. We may have our sufferings, as men, and our trials, as Christians: but these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. In this view, afflictions here are, to the children of God, but means

and preparations for a happiness, which they could not enjoy hereafter, without such previous exercise. If they have groaned in this earthly tabernacle, being burdened with pain and sickness, and the debility of age;—it is only that they may enjoy the more their spiritual bodies, formed after the similitude of Christ's glorious body. If they are torn from the friends they loved on earth;—it is only that they may meet, with increased delight, in the regions, where friends shall part no more. If clouds have hovered round them, in this wilderness, and often separated them from any joyous sense of God's presence;—it is only that when they see him, continually, in cloudless glory, their remembrance of former loss, may render this unspeakable gain the greater.

It will, also, be another blessedness, which in heaven distinguishes man from other happy beings, that, to him, God will appear as his *deliverer*. By the angelic natures, he is, doubtless, acknowledged, as the source of all their joys. But, to the redeemed, he will appear in the endearing character, of one who rescued them when in distress, and saved them out of all their troubles. "I waited patiently for the Lord;" (such will be their language to all eternity;) "and he inclined unto me, and heard my calling. He brought me, also, out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay; and set my feet

upon the rock, and ordered my goings: and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God." It is thus, that they are represented, as singing the mystical song of Moses, before the throne; "Sing ye to the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

But, as I have already said, that which will peculiarly constitute the character of man's love to God, and, consequently, of his happiness, to all eternity, is that, in the majesty of God, before which the cherubim veil their faces, he will see the marks and the memorials of the humiliation and sufferings, which the Son of God endured, to save him. There is deeply seated in the human mind, a disposition to connect the emotions of pity, with those of love. If we see any fellow-creature in sorrow and misery, the mind attaches itself, at once, to all that is amiable in the sufferer. And particularly, if we see an appearance of fallen greatness, of dignity exposed to unworthy and unsuitable treatment, it calls forth some of the finest and strongest feelings of our nature. That the Gospel addresses itself, by a divine adaptation, to this principle, I am sure. Those that exercise a living faith upon the Lord Jesus, are drawn by these cords of men, to him whom they acknowledge as their God. They sympathise with his

sorrows, and read the history of his hard and afflicted life, with all the tenderness and pity of a common nature. They behold their Saviour, exposed to the scorn, a victim to the injustice and cruelty, of the world. They see him, of whom the world was not worthy, destitute, afflicted, tormented. They see him oppressed, despised, and rejected of men. They see his agony in the garden, and his pangs upon the cross. And while tears of sorrow and of pity, flow from the believer's eyes, for one who was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; and while gratitude, of the deepest kind, mingles with that pity, from the consideration, that it was for his sake, and for his salvation, that this Lamb was led to the slaughter—this being of spotless purity, became a sin-offering, a curse, and an outcast from God's favour;—these, I say, are the powerful attractions, which draw the soul to Christ; which conform it, by the principle of assimilative transmutation, into the image of that Saviour, whom to resemble is to pass from death unto life, and from the power of Satan unto God.

It is, then, God thus brought near in his humiliation, that becomes the great principle of salvation here. And it is to behold that same Saviour, once a child of sorrow for our sakes, now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, which will constitute, I firmly believe, the crown of the

blessedness of ransomed souls, in heaven. "These are they which came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him, day and night, in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." It is the remembrance of what their Saviour was, compared with the glory in which he now shines forth, as the God and Sovereign of all worlds: yes—this will be, to them that love him, the subject of the new song, spoken of in the fifth chapter of this book:—a song never sung in heaven, till the Son of God came down, to seek and to save a lost race, and added to his many crowns, that which he wears as the great Captain of our Salvation; for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of God. "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb, as it had been slain." "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art

worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

SERMON XX.

ST. MATTHEW, vi. 28.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.”

AT this delightful season of the year,* it cannot, even in a religious point of view, be considered unsuitable, to turn our thoughts to the fertility and beauties, which lie scattered everywhere, upon the face of nature. Providence has, doubtless, placed them there, for some gracious purpose. Of this reason itself would sufficiently assure us. But we are not left to our own conjectures, in this matter. The Scriptures constantly invite our attention, to these soothing and interesting objects. They ground their best instructions, and their most useful lessons, upon the materials which these afford, and the illustrations which they supply.

The Psalmist, in particular, while he dwells upon these pleasing themes, leads the mind through all the varieties of nature, and all the scenes of pastoral life. He points our view to the cattle upon a thousand hills; and to the flocks feeding upon their green pastures. He conducts us through valleys, smiling with plenty, and standing thick

* Preached in the month of May.

with corn; to cooling and refreshing streams, and under the shade of trees planted by the rivers of water. A greater than the Psalmist, also, was wont to employ this engaging method of instruction. On this account, as well as from its accordance with the purity of his own heart, he, doubtless, made the garden of Gethsemane his frequent place of converse with his disciples. From the rising sun, the descending rain, and every natural object which, therein, met his view, he drew his lessons of heavenly wisdom. That such was his mode of teaching, appears from various passages of Scripture. But in none is it more beautifully displayed, than in that from which the words before us have been taken. "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

The words of my text may be expanded, into many pleasing and important topics of instruction.

And, first of all, I am deeply persuaded, that if the minds of children were early trained to the contemplation of such things, as are therein suggested, it would have the most kindly influence on their future character.

We are much mistaken in supposing, that those noisy sports, and cruel amusements, in which boys, especially, so soon indulge, are amongst their earliest propensities. Corrupt as human nature is, children are, nevertheless, *taught* the love of these. They hear that boisterous pursuits are manly: and often do violence to themselves, because they are ashamed not to like and follow them. They are told that schoolboys ought to be rough, and without feeling. They quickly imbibe such harsh and brutal principles; and, thus, an artificial perversion is taken, for the native and spontaneous movement of their mind. But earnestly would I, from this place, advise all parents, to protest against such maxims. There is a far better method of giving enlargement to the hearts of children, elevation to their spirits, and even true manliness to their characters. And would to God, I could persuade those, on whom the formation of these characters depends, to adopt that method; before the world has begun its work, and before the mischief is already done.

Children are early lovers of nature, of its pure enjoyments, and simple pleasures. What proves this is, that nothing takes so lasting a hold upon the memory, as rural objects. And hence it arises, that many a person, far advanced in the days of his pilgrimage,—many a weather-beaten voyager upon life's tempestuous ocean, remembers, with the vividness of yesterday, some oft frequented spot, some favourite haunt, some scene of early endearment, which calls back, at once, his childhood, and his father's house; and presents his early home, in bright and painful contrast with the dark clouds, and still deepening shades, which now hover round his path.

While cultivating your children's minds, direct their attention to the beauties and magnificence of God's creation. Point out to them, as they play around you, how good and how amiable that Being is, who "so clothes the grass of the field." Accustom them to enjoyments, which soothe, and purify, and tranquillize the soul; and in which no boisterous, or cruel, or selfish propensities, are indulged. Use them to pleasures, which you can taste in common with them; on which instruction can be engrafted; which will fix in their hearts the lasting association of true religion, with substantial happiness; and which will recall to their minds, a father's and a mother's lessons of wisdom, when,

in after life, they cast their eyes upon the face of nature—when they “behold the fowls of the air,” or “consider the lilies of the field.”

Gladly and anxiously would I address myself, on this interesting subject, to the youngest child now present, who is capable of understanding me. Children of five or six years old, and even younger, have, sometimes, been far from idle spectators of the works of God. And amongst these, as their written lives inform us, have been children that have grown up into great and pious men; blessings to their fellow-creatures, lights of the world, and ornaments of the Church of Christ. When, in this pleasant season, you are permitted to walk into the fields, do not pass, unheeded, those beauties, which are scattered around you, in such rich profusion. Pause for a moment, and “consider the lilies.” Contemplate those flowers, with which the grass is clothed. Remember that “Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.” Call to mind, that it was God who made them for your use and pleasure; that it was he who gave them their various colours, and their sweet perfumes;—and all this, that he might win your hearts, and draw your affections, “through nature, up to nature’s God;”—that he who sent his blessed Son, to wash you, in his own blood, from every stain of guilt, might, by these innocent

pleasures, preserve you from the snares of vice, and prepare you for that Paradise hereafter, whose beauties suffer no decay, and whose flowers will bloom for ever.

But these advantages are not confined to the days of childhood. Those who in maturer life, retain a relish for such simple pleasures, possess, therein, a powerful antidote to the blandishments of vice. Nothing is more pointedly opposed to the turbulence of sensual passion, than the calm tranquillity of the works of God. This opposition is finely depicted by the prophet Isaiah. “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.” The disorder of man’s riot, but ill accords with the harmony of the material creation. Man was formed to be the crown and glory of this lower world. And all that is fair in nature, was but the copy of his superior mind; a rougher draught of that divine image, which the hand of God had stamped upon the rational soul. And though this image has been defaced by sin—perverted, and depraved: yet, in Christ Jesus, it is again restored. And all who are found in him, are “renewed in

knowledge, after the image of him that created them." Thus are we reinstated in that rank in God's creation, which we had lost in Adam. We are invited to become, in a still higher sense than he was, the offspring of heaven, the heirs and representatives of God. Such are our privileges; and such are, consequently, our responsibilities. When embruted by vice, or debased by folly, all nature rises to rebuke us. And often has the keenness of this rebuke been felt, by those who have kept the secret to themselves. How often has it been felt by the votary of pleasure, when he issued forth from amidst the faded lights, and lingering dregs of his nightly revels; and found himself encircled by the glories of the opening day! The pure light of heaven—the innocence and majesty of nature—every early exhalation from the earth—every bird that sings among the branches—and every flower that pours its sweetness on the air;—these simple objects have spoken to him, as with an angel's tongue. They have seemed to ask, why he has sunk his immortal spirit, below the things which God has put under his feet; or how those eyes which he now averts, with involuntary shame, from the face of nature, can bear, hereafter, to look upon the face of God. This is not mere theory. I have myself known an individual, upon

whom effects incalculably important, were produced, under God, by the simple act of passing from a scene of dissipated gaiety, into the calm serenity, and splendid illumination, of a summer's morning. The contrast was overwhelming. The impression could not be resisted. He awoke, as from a dream—his conscience was convinced—his heart was changed—he saw the foulness and deformity of sin—he renounced the follies of the world; and, in a higher than a natural sense, passed from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Another benefit of considering “the lilies of the field,” is that such objects have a power to charm away the spirit of anxious care. It was with this immediate view, that our Lord addressed his disciples, in the words before us. For his sake they had abandoned every earthly comfort, and embraced a life of poverty. But he assures them, that the providence of a heavenly Father, would never leave them, nor forsake them. He shows them, with what infallible precision, each wandering bird is fed; in what rich attire the perishing grass is clothed; and leaves them to draw their own conclusions. He puts it to their understandings and their hearts, to say, whether He, whose tender mercies are over all his works, will, when his children ask bread, give them a stone; or

expose to cold and nakedness, those bodies which bear within them the image of his own eternity.

But some, perhaps, will say ; “ The reasoning is just ; the theory is fair ; and the thoughts which our Saviour’s words suggest, are soothing to the soul. But when we look to facts, how is this truth substantiated ? While even the sparrows are fed, and the lilies are adorned, multitudes of the human family, pine in want and misery.” Nothing can be more undeniable, I grant. But is there not a cause ? “ The ox,” saith the prophet, “ knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” The inferior creatures, animate and inanimate, fulfil the ends of their creation : but is it so with man, in general ? Our Saviour’s argument, derived from God’s care of these his lower works, applies not to those who refuse, but to those who embrace, the offer of becoming the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. It is with special reference to the latter, that the Saviour speaks : “ Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat ? or, what shall we drink ? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be

added unto you." Who will stand up and say, that he has fulfilled his part of this covenant, and that God has failed in *His*? Will any one come forward, and oppose his testimony, to the consentient voice of the Saints of every clime and age; and in the face of that cloud of witnesses, declare, that he had trusted in the Lord, and was confounded; that he abode in his fear, and was forsaken; or that God had ever despised the man that called upon him? It would be, perhaps, irreverent to the divine majesty, gravely to say, that such allegations are false, and could be forged alone in hell. It is true, that there may be those, who have sought the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, in mere subservience to their earthly interests; and fancied that they sought them in the first place, when all was a trick upon their own consciences. They may have tried to flatter the searcher of hearts, with the services of the lips; and made a profession of religion, not for its own sake, but because "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is;" and because of the hope which is held out here, that all temporal things shall be added unto them. They may have come to Christ, in the spirit which he himself has so pointedly condemned: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were

filled." No wonder that the advances of such flatterers of themselves and God, should be indignantly repulsed ; that they should fail of their grand object, namely, the bettering of their temporal condition ; and that they should be left without supplies, for the body or the soul. No wonder that, thus disappointed, they should return to a world, which in heart they had never left ; and report that they had served God for nought, and that he was a hard and ungenerous Master. I have known, myself, a melancholy instance of the kind. A man once told me, that he had totally given up prayer ; that he had made full trial, and found that there was no use in it ; that none of his miseries (and he was a truly unhappy man, and, as far as it is for us to judge, in every respect a truly bad one) had been relieved ; and that things were just the same with him, as before he began to pray. Such, then, may be the report of those who " suppose that gain is godliness ;" " who ask, and receive not ; because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts."

But far different will be the testimony of those, who, in sincerity of heart, have sought the Lord. They have cast all their care upon him ; and can attest, from glad experience, that he careth for them. Their conviction, on full trial, is, that God is faithful to, or better than, his promises. A

thousand instances have shown, that where it is safe for them, it is God's pleasure to bless them, even with temporal blessings ; and, therefore, they know, under all their distresses, that he does not willingly grieve them, or afflict them. In this frame of spirit, though poor as the early followers of him, who had not where to lay his head, the child of God can go forth, amidst the fields of nature, and thus preach to his own heart—"If God so clothe the grass, shall he not much more clothe me, the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, with raiment convenient for me ? But if the meanest garb, if rags, if nakedness, should teach me patience, should deepen my humility, and conform me more fully to my Saviour's image,—shall I complain ? Shall I refuse to be thus richly blessed, thus beautifully adorned, thus highly honored ? The Lord is my Shepherd : and if it were for my good, he would cover me with the choicest fleeces of the flock ; nay, I should be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. But if it be his will, that, in this world, the portion of Lazarus should be mine ; it is only that when mortality is swallowed up of life, I should wear a still brighter robe, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb ; a still more radiant crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

The contemplation of such objects as my text presents, may serve, moreover, to cherish in the heart, a delightful sense, if I may so speak, of the amiability of the divine character. "When I consider," says the Psalmist, "thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Such is the impression of reverential awe, naturally suggested by the magnificence of God's power. But when we look downward, and survey the pictured carpet on which we tread; and see with what incomparable skill, the Almighty Creator has arranged its minutest ornaments; we yield to the attraction of his softer attributes, his condescension and diffusive kindness. The adaptation of these soothing objects, to gratify the innocent taste for pleasure, to regale our senses, and to revive our spirits, bespeaks them as the contrivance of a Being, who delights in the happiness of his creatures.

There is something, in the lesser instances of God's goodness, which, in an especial manner, brings him home to our hearts and bosoms. Even in human transactions, gifts and benefits upon a large, extended scale, do not, necessarily, suppose the nearness of the parties. A man might place me in possession of a principality or an empire,

and yet confer this splendid favour, from some distant quarter of the world. But if he would speak a word of comfort to my sorrows; if he would prop my aching head, or soothe me on the bed of languishing; if he would give me a cup of cold water only, in the extremity of my thirst;—all these kind acts, though little in themselves, imply, for that very reason, that the agent and the object must meet, in close and personal contact. And, yet, these trifles, light as air, but oft repeated, are the cords, which bind our familiar friends around our hearts, in bonds which neither life nor death can sever.

Such is man, in relation to his fellow: and such, also, is man, in reference to his God. The great outlines of redeeming love, demand our gratitude; and call forth, from every true believer, the heartfelt acknowledgment, that it is very meet, right, and his bounden duty, to live no longer unto himself, but unto him who died for him, and rose again. But what feeds the gentle flame of love, is the view of the blessed Jesus, as the Scriptures paint him, in the intimate details, and familiar scenes, of his spotless and afflicted life; to contemplate him, when he took the little children in his arms—when he suffered his beloved disciple to lean upon his breast—when he beheld the city, and lamented over it—or when he wept

at the grave of Lazarus. It is thus, also, in the bounties of God's natural providence. His lesser works are those which speak most impressively to our hearts. The heavens declare his glory; and the firmament shows forth the omnipotence of his arm. But it is in the home scenes of nature—in the field, in the garden, and in the flower—that the Giver and the receiver, are brought into closest contact. In these, we see proofs before our eyes, how infinitely God can condescend, and with what confidence we may address him; with what delightful assurance we may feel that we have a Father and a Friend in heaven.

Such are the reflections which, “the lilies of the field” can produce, in pious souls. It is the very circumstance of their holding a rank so humble in God's creation, which makes them speak thus cheeringly and comfortably, to his nobler creatures. And, often, amidst these minute and, to others, unheeded objects, will the man of true devotion feel, in its happiest exercise, that spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Not that this spirit can grow upon the stock of nature; or that the whole compass of creation could quicken it into birth, within one human soul. No: it is the gift of God. Nevertheless, where this blessed principle resides; where God's spirit witnesses with our spirit, that we are his children, and his

heirs; we have a secret of enjoyment in the works of God, which no other souls can feel. We have a light within, which diffuses itself on all around; and makes God's goodness legible, and his presence visible, in every department of nature. The horizon clears, the landscape brightens, and the whole creation rejoices, in the contemplation of him

“ — who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
And smiling say—‘ My Father made them all !’ ”

I shall conclude with but one more brief observation; to show the wisdom of “ considering the lilies of the field ;” and of cultivating, in all other respects, a taste for what is pure in nature. We may rest assured, that between our present and future states of existence, there is an actual correspondence, a fine accordance, and close affinity. Many considerations concur, in intimating that, in this earth, the things of the eternal world are shadowed out, and reflected, as in a mirror. The mind, then, which harmonizes with God's creation here, will carry with it, into its after life, tastes already fitted for those new abodes. When it passes through the grave and gate of death, it will find itself, not in a strange and unknown region, but in a system which exhibits, in a manner suited to exalted natures—in brighter colouring,

and with a glory which our eyes of flesh could not behold—objects which the enlightened soul will recognise, as the counterparts of things below ; the substances, and the originals, of what, in this infancy of our being, we saw through a glass darkly, and knew only by draughts and shadows. If this be so, there is an evil in sin, of which few are thoroughly aware. The man who pollutes himself with vice, not only provokes God to anger, but vitiates the constitution of his mind, and disqualifies his own soul for even the possibility of being a sharer in future happiness. While, on the other hand, the pure in heart are, in every respect, training and maturing for the enjoyment of that state of blessedness, which God has prepared for those that love him ; and for the relish of those delightful scenes, which the Apostle John beheld in vision, and thus describes :—

“ And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” “ And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they

shall reign for ever and ever." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

SERMON XXI.

PHILIPPIANS, ii. 5—8.

“LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS: WHO, BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD; BUT MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, AND TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT, AND WAS MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN; AND BEING FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN, HE HUMBLD HIMSELF, AND BECAME OBEDIENT, UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.”

AMONGST the deep distempers, and manifold miseries of our depraved nature, there is none, perhaps, so fruitful in unhappy consequences, as pride. It was by pride that the angels fell. It was by a proud desire to rise above their proper sphere, and to be as gods, that our first parents brought down death upon themselves, and their posterity.

Pride is, in its essential nature, rebellion against God. It is, as it were, placing ourselves on the throne of the Most High, and claiming, for ourselves, that glory, which he will not give to another. Pride sets us in pointed opposition to God himself: for “God resisteth the proud.” It is his purpose to stain the pride of all human glory, to cast down every imagination, and every

high thing that exalteth itself : that no flesh should boast ; but that he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord.

Pride, if it be not subdued within us, must prevent our ever being admitted into the happiness of the world above. For the peace and joy of heaven itself, consist in a full subordination and conformity of the mind, to God. Such is the serenity and order, which prevail there. No jarring discords are heard, amidst the harmonies of the blessed. There God is all in all ; his will is the universal law ; and “ holy, holy, holy,” are the only sounds of triumph, in those happy regions. Into this state, the selfish and the proud could not enter. Let there be no decrees to oppose, their own tempers and nature, would bar the doors of heaven against them. It is on this account, that our Lord, who knew what heaven is, and who knew what we are, says ; “ except ye be converted”—except ye come down from the native pride, and high mettle of your natural hearts, to the simplicity and humility of little children—“ ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

The same temper of soul, which will exclude us from future salvation, is the great enemy of our present happiness. And so it must be. For our eternity begins here. These souls which live within us now, will live for ever. They are the

seed of an immortal being ; and in that seed are folded up destinies, as endless as eternity. There is a character impressed, in this life, upon the soul, by which we may read whether our names are written, or not written, in the rolls of heaven. The vessel is now launched ; and already the dark clouds are gathering, on the one hand, or the celestial breeze is rising, upon the other hand, which will attend it through its never-ending voyage. Many are the troubles of the righteous ; while the wicked are, oftentimes, in great prosperity. But under this outward surface, there is a deeper current of the waters. Beneath the history of the life, there is a secret history of the soul ;—in the righteous, the beginning of their future heaven ; in the wicked, the commencement of their future hell. The face of the deep may be agitated, and both be tossed upon its waves : but let them drop the fathom line, and they will find, the one, misery, and the other, happiness, at the bottom. In a word, the instinctive tendency of the righteous, is upwards, to the peace of heaven : the instinctive tendency of the wicked, is downwards, to the confusion and disorder of accursed spirits. And why ? Because the one is subordinated to God, and the other not : the one is humble, and the other proud. For who can be happy, who is vainly striving to rest upon himself,

as his own God? Who can be happy, whose life is rivalry and emulation? Can he be happy, who lies sleepless upon his bed, when another is preferred before him—who is sore and vulnerable at every point—whom every slight can unman with dejection, or madden into fury—who has no fortitude to bear the world's contempt?

In my text, we find the only remedy, to set a troubled mind at rest—to bring down a proud heart, to the blessedness of the meek, and the tranquillity of the poor in spirit. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

There is nothing, in common life, which tends more to wean us from pride, than to see humility in some acknowledged superior. If we have been carrying it with a high hand, over those a little below us, and making all the display we can, of our comparative importance; nothing more effectually dissipates the bubble, and shames our vanity, than the presence of one who unites meekness, to exalted station. We compare his condescension, even to the lowest, with our wish to magnify every trifling distinction, which can set us above others. We are humbled by the contrast; and feel the meanness and littleness of pride. The Scriptures, then, in order to hide pride from man, bring home this very motive, with overwhelming power, in the words before us.

Here was one, whose exalted majesty exceeds all finite comprehension ;—who was “ in the form of God” from all eternity ; “ of one substance with the Father ;” “ the brightness of his glory,” and the partner of his throne. In this high estate, he “ thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He thought it no derogation from the eternal Father’s honour, to confess himself his fellow, and his like ; that “ such as the Father is, such is the Son”—“ the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.”

Such was the being who, in pity to lost sinners, “ made himself of no reputation.” He emptied himself—for so the expression may be taken—he emptied himself of his divine glories ; threw them all aside ; and came down to visit us, in great humility. Being “ made in the likeness of men,” he did not assume even the dignity of earthly state. He had not large possessions. He was not attended by a train of followers. He did not fare sumptuously every day, and live delicately, like those in kings’ houses. The name of Jesus was not enrolled with heroes and statesmen, with the honorable of the earth, and the idols of the world. No. Far otherwise was the humble condition of the Son of Man. His situation was low ; his life was obscure ; the path he trod was far removed from all the haunts of human greatness. He came to preach the gospel to the poor ; and with the

poor he cast in his lot. He was born in the midst of want and indigence. His youth was passed in all the hardships of a low condition. During the whole of his afflicted life, he was the child of poverty; with no provision, but the bounty of Heaven; dependant on others, for his daily bread; without any abode, which he could call his own, or where he could lay his head. Thus did he take upon him, as my text expresses it, "the form of a servant."

Of this great humility we have a remarkable exhibition, in the 13th chapter of St. John's Gospel. "He riseth from supper," saith the apostle, "and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The use to which our Lord would turn this mysterious action, he has, himself, expressly declared. It was to mortify all pride within us. "If I, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye, also, ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do, as I have done to you."

But there was a still lower depth, to which the Son of God descended, "even the death of the cross." It was not to death, in its ordinary array of trials and of sufferings, that the Lord of life

submitted. The last conflict with the king of terrors, is often accompanied with felt support, and strong consolation. Tender care, and sympathizing friends—a thousand soothing circumstances, may lighten the clouds which overhang the soul, when passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Above all, the presence of an Almighty Saviour—the assurance of pardon, through an atoning sacrifice—the living sense that we are at peace with God, and the blessed hope of immortality;—these can cheer the Christian, amidst the cold damps of death, and teach his fainting heart to cry, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

But what Christ has conquered for his people, he submitted to himself, in all its rigour, and all its horrors. His death was wholly devoid of every kind of comfort. Unlike our quiet death-beds, all, in his case, was violent, painful, ignominious. We have, when dying, tender relations, and anxious friends, around us. But his lovers and friends were put far from him, and his acquaintance hid out of his sight. When we feel pain, some kind hand, or healing medicine, is applied, to mitigate the anguish. But when he cried, there was none to hear him; when he complained, there was no man to pity him. “Fat bulls of Basan”—inhuman persecutors, in comparison of whom, the wild beasts

are merciful—encompassed the Lamb of God, “on every side.” And when the blessed Jesus lifted up his eyes to the everlasting hills—when he looked to God, in his sore distress—when he fled, for refuge, to that bosom, in which he had dwelt from all eternity—behold! the heavens were become iron, and were clothed with blackness. “It pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and to “put him to grief.” His Father had delivered him into the hand of his enemies; and his God had forsaken him.

Such was the death of Christ. Such, my brethren, was the sacrifice offered for your sins. Such the humiliation of him who was “in the form of God,” and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Before this object, when realized to the mind—before a believing view of Christ crucified, the high looks of the lofty are brought low, and the very root of pride withers in the heart. For let us consider a moment, what was it which rendered this great sacrifice needful? What called for this infinite price and ransom? Was it not that, by nature, we are withered branches, cut off from the tree of life, from hope, from happiness, and from God? Yes: all our expectations for eternity, depend, not on our own deservings, but upon mercy freely extended to the lost. We can draw near to God, only through the blood of Jesus. Nothing is properly our own, but

sin. We have no hope, but that of forgiveness, which we do not deserve; no plea to offer, but that Christ has died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Who, then, that feels these things, can, with any consistency, be proud?

Again: professing to follow the Lord Jesus, as our example, shall we withstand the lesson, which this overwhelming instance of his humility teaches? Is the servant above his Lord? Or can we be his disciples, if we refuse to take up our cross, and follow him? Shall we boast of the few inches, which raise us higher than our fellow worms, when he who called us into being, and who makes the sun to rise, became, for our sakes, the servant of his own creatures, the reproach of his own people, the scorn and derision of his own world; and now calls us to follow in his lowly footsteps, to tread that narrow path of meekness and humility, which alone conducts to the hidden glories of his kingdom?

The great question for each of us, individually, to put to our own conscience, is this: what advantage will accrue to me, from that divine compassion, which brought the Lord of glory down from heaven? What interest have I, in his great salvation? What scriptural grounds of confidence have I, that I am one of that number, who will be saved out of the ruin of a lost world, and pass

through the grave and gate of death, to a joyful resurrection? Life will soon be over: and is it not important, beyond all calculation, to know whether that endless future, which spreads out into infinitude before us, will be eternal happiness, or eternal misery? To the mansions of God's glory, there is but one door,—even Christ, the true and living way, the only mediator between God and man. Have we, then, believed on him, for pardon and forgiveness—And has the same blood that justifies, begun to sanctify our souls? Do we feel it cleansing us from all sin—I do not mean from outward sin, (though this it must do, also, or our religion is vain,) but from inward sin—from pride—from impurity—from whatever can offend the eyes of him, who searcheth the reins and heart? Have we a spirit easy to be entreated, ready to be reconciled, forgiving others, even as Christ forgave us, gentle, mild, compassionate? Is the love of God a well-spring of joy, of serenity, of cheerfulness, of liberty, of happiness, in our souls? Is God's presence continually before us? Have we, thus, our fellowship with the Father and the Son? Is our religion a present salvation, the earnest of our inheritance? Do we experience what our hearts assure us, is the commencement, in some faint degree, of the glory to be revealed? Is it our sweetest consolation,

to look beyond the valley of the shadow of death, to look across that Jordan which we all must pass, and see, by faith, the inviolable peace, the smiling fertility, the verdure, the sunshine, and the glory, of the heavenly Canaan? If so, we are born from above—we have the mind of Christ—and if we are faithful unto death, we shall receive a crown of life. If not—if we have not that faith which purifies the heart, and works by love—if we do not, at least, hunger and thirst after the righteousness I have described; we are not, according to the plainest meaning of the Scriptures, in a state of salvation. But the door is always open. Let us, this day, repent of all our sins, and believe the Gospel; and “behold! now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

To conclude. None of you, my brethren, (if there be any such here,) who feel unconcerned in these matters, can form any conception of the painful anxiety, which ministers often experience, when they address a congregation of professing Christians. We seem to ourselves, as if we beheld many of you scattered upon the hills, like sheep that have no shepherd. We see you toiling for happiness; and we see the cup of living water near your lips, while you dash it from you, and say, “Am I not in sport?” Like one who stands on some lofty summit which overlooks the ocean,

we see the haven of eternal rest, opening her calm bosom, to receive you; while many of you are steering off, that you may plough the dark waves of this troublesome world—that you may navigate a sea that knows no bounds, till you strike upon some hidden rock, and then go down, and render all our lights and signals vain, and leave our warnings and invitations to float upon the winds of heaven. In such a spirit of deep anxiety, with many tears and prayers, we would beseech all that are unconverted to God, now to turn unto him, and live. We would pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. We trust that we can say, with the apostle, "We also believe, and therefore speak." Will you, then, receive our witness? Will you believe the testimony of God himself? Will you take part with those, whom God has covenanted to pardon, to save, and to make a blessing for ever? Will you cause the angels in heaven to rejoice over a sinner that repenteth? Will you make a holyday in heaven, and put a new song into the mouths of the blessed, and cause them to tune their harps, that they may sing, for you, the triumphs of redeeming love?

May these affecting motives, these animating considerations, reach your hearts, and gently force a passage to the seat of conscience, and touch the springs of life and immortality, within you! And

may we all depart from this house of prayer, with renewed resolves, with a firm, unalterable purpose, that we will, for the time to come, serve God with an undivided heart ; and, henceforth, live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us, and rose again !

THREE LECTURES

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE

BOOK OF RUTH.

LECTURE I.

RUTH i. 1.

“NOW IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES RULED, THAT THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND. AND A CERTAIN MAN OF BETHLEHEM-JUDAH WENT TO SOJOURN IN THE COUNTRY OF MOAB, HE, AND HIS WIFE, AND HIS TWO SONS.”

I HAVE taken these words as my text, because they form the commencing verse of a chapter, the greater part of which I propose, God willing, to review, in this and two following discourses.

Amongst the various excellencies of the Scripture, it is not the least, that it alone can remove the veil, which shuts out from our view the history and occurrences of a remote antiquity. Led by the hand of that unerring guide, we can penetrate into those deep recesses of the past, to which no merely human records can direct our footsteps. And there we can contemplate life, with all its living interests, and character, in its most intimate shades and colours, fresh, as in the scenes and objects which form the present world around us. Nor is this magic power, by which the pen of inspiration can summon back the past, exercised

merely for our recreation and delight. It is by converse with things which have been, that we learn to anticipate things to come. It is from the experiences of the past, that the mind is furnished with the materials, out of which, alone, it can form the shapes, and mould the combinations, of what it pictures to itself, or hopes for, as future happiness.

Such is the correspondence between what has been, and what is to be, that we feel an instinctive tendency, whenever we travel back in thought, to relieve the painful sense that all is gone, by sending forward our intellectual spies, into the land of future promise. This inclination serves as a kind of pendulum or balance, to the soul. And it is wisely and mercifully given. For without it, who could bear the pangs of memory? Who could endure to see those visions of our early youth—of what was then our home—of the animated, beloved, and happy circle, which once were gathered there;—who could look on these bright forms, which reappear for a moment, and then vanish;—who could bear the whisper of that voice, which tells us, that these are but shadows, and can no more be grasped;—who, I say, could endure such retrospects, were it not that the sinking soul is propped, revived, and cheered, by the ever-blessed hope, that all that is pure, and lovely, and in harmony

with God's nature, here, will rise again to our transported view, and shine amidst the glories of "new heavens and a new earth?" Thus it is, that the soul, that bird of paradise, when it stretches out one wing into the past, stretches out another wing into the future; and then rises, on its pinions, into the anticipation of that eternity, where there is no past, nor future;—where all is one present fulness of joy, one NOW of blessedness; where all is stamped with the image of the great I AM, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

This chapter introduces us, at once, to the knowledge of a retired family, who lived at a distant period of this world's history; and makes us feel almost a party in their private concerns, interior movements, and domestic interests.

"It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons, Mahlon, and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there." (vv. 1, 2.)

These few Israelites, strangers in a strange land, represent to us the position, in which the

spiritual seed of Abraham must always stand. Their citizenship is in heaven. This is to them a foreign clime, and a country far from home. They are pilgrims in the earth, strangers and sojourners, as all their fathers were. Their whole deportment shows, that they look for a city, whose foundations are not built upon this transitory world. All their actions "declare plainly, that they seek a country." This, in fact, is the badge of their discipleship; the seal which makes their calling and election sure. Inhabitants of the most widely separated regions; members of every Christian denomination; differing from one another in outward professions; opposed to one another, in all but essential doctrines; they are, upon this point, indissolubly bound in the finest cords of sympathy;—"they are not of the world." Their characters are not moulded in the common fashion. They are a peculiar people. They are aliens in their native land. "They dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations."

Were I asked, in what the salvation of a soul mainly consisted; I should say, in this separation from the world. The grounds and meritorious cause of our salvation, are not (need I say?) in ourselves, but in Him who reconciled God to sinners, by the blood and agony of his cross; who died, the just for the unjust, that pardon might be

extended to the guilty ; that “ mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.” But we must be, not merely, admissible, in point of title : we must be connaturalized to the blessedness above ; or it is plain to reason, heaven would be no heaven to us. And this suitableness, this preparedness of the soul, by which it is assimilated and attuned to a holy and spiritual constitution of things, may be fitly termed its salvation. And this salvation, I repeat it, mainly consists in our answering to that character, by which our Lord peculiarly designates his people ; “ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

I call this salvation, because it is deliverance out of the hand of our great enemy ; it is victory in the grand contest, where all is at stake, and on which all depends. We are placed in a state of trial and probation, here : and what is the point to be tested, and made proof of ? It is simply this : being placed between two attractions—solicited by two kinds of pleasurable allurements—invited to the love of two irreconcilably opposing principles and objects ;—which of these will draw our affections, to which of them we shall yield our hearts. On the one hand, the world holds out her sensual baits, and soft enchantments ; her pride of life—her artificial lights—and glittering vanities. On

the other hand, the sober dawn of endless day appears : a still small voice is heard, which tells of joys that eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived ; and appeals to gratitude and love, are made from the cross of a dying Saviour, “ who loved us, and gave himself for us.” Such are the two contending systems, and rival powers, which continually strive for the mastery over the human nature ; assaying, the one to draw us up to God, the other to draw us down to ruin. Our all depends on this one point, which of these shall gain us. If the world prevail, then we are “ of the world,” and, with her, shall drink of the cup of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. If He, whom the world crucified, prevail, then we are “ not of the world ;”—we are saved out of the world ;—we are of the household of God, and shall be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus it is, that this family of Israelites, strangers in the land of Moab, remind us of the Christian’s pilgrimage through this vale of tears. But they afford us other matter of instruction. Few and insulated, as they were, yet even this little flock, while spared to one another, were independent of the world ; and needed not to look abroad for happiness. For, assuredly, if there be, on this side heaven, a sheltered spot, where tranquillity

and bliss have found a refuge from the pitiless storm and tempest; it is in the dwellings of the righteous, in scenes of domestic love, and amidst the sweet charities of home.

But alas! how frail is earthly happiness! How quickly must all human ties be rent asunder! The family of whom we are now discoursing, soon experienced the common lot. "Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons." (v. 3.) The wife is now a widow, and the children fatherless, in a land of strangers.

But time, in its progress, opens, to the young, new scenes and interests. The remembrance of Elimelech lives only in the widow's heart. His sons, advanced to manhood, must have their day, and act their part upon the stage of life. "They took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years." (v. 4.)

Such was the brief span, during which they rejoiced, each of them, "with the wife of his youth." This union of hearts was soon dissolved. The hour of parting was not long delayed. The sons are now summoned to the sepulchre of their father. "Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband." (v. 5.)

Thus bereaved was Naomi! And to this it must come at last, with those who are crowned with more than ordinary success, in parrying the assaults of death. It is our nature, nor do I deny that it is our duty, to prop up this frail and feverish being, and to continue life, by every lawful means we can. And, yet, what does all this argue, but the vanity of man's estate? What does it amount to but this,—that we are under a law, which constrains us to use our ceaseless efforts and endeavours, to bring ourselves into a region of desolation;—to prolong a life, which, if protracted beyond a certain point, becomes a living death—a solitary existence, amidst the tombs and relics of departed friends?

We lately contemplated Naomi in the midst of her domestic circle. Alas! how changed the scene! And how true a picture of the world does it present! No sooner are we at the height of human happiness, than we have arrived at the point from which every thing *must* now decline. We have reached the summit of the hill: and there we cannot stop—for life is a journey—we must go down. This one reflection, had we this life only as our portion, would be enough to throw bitterness into the most sparkling cup. If on any given day, however bright, we knew, by some infallible assurance, that this was the happiest

day we should ever pass on earth, all would be, at once, involved in gloom.

I remember when, in the days of youth, a month appeared to me more than years do now ; when summer, with its bright suns, and live-long days, its healthful recreations, and boyish sports, was all that my heart could wish. I remember, nevertheless, that when that delightful season arrived at the full blow of all its charms, and it was announced that the longest day had come ; I felt a melancholy, scarcely to be described. All the positive enjoyments of that crowning day, were lost, in the gloomy notion that now nothing could go beyond the present—nay, that every thing must fall short of it ; that to-morrow the best would be over ; that the day after, and every succeeding day, would be shorter and shorter, each one step down, towards the cheerless depths of winter. Well can I call to mind the conclusion, which was thus forced upon me ;—that happiness was more in expectation, than in possession ; and that the shortest day was, in some respects, more cheerful than the longest : because at the former, however dark itself, the prospect brightened ; while at the latter, however bright, the prospect darkened.

Such is human life ! Look at a man encircled with every earthly blessing ; his goods in peace—

his business prospering—his children like olive plants round about his table—his health and animal spirits high—and nothing wanting, of all that his heart could wish:—is that man's, I say, an enviable state? I do not mean, as connected with his eternal interests: for that can admit no doubt. But is it an enviable state, as it respects, merely, his worldly happiness? Surely not. His cup is full, indeed: but that very fulness, in some measure, constitutes its bitterness. For what is the real position, in which a man, thus cursed with blessings, stands? He has everything to lose, and nothing to gain. Every change must be for the worse. All his treasures are around him: he must part with them, one by one; and he has nothing in this world, to supply their places. Such is man. Cut him off from the consolations of religion, and he is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. He is the child of misery, and the heir of sorrow. Nor is it easy to determine, whether at the summit of prosperity, or in the lowest depths of adversity, he is most entitled to our pity.

Naomi, now left alone, without husband, and without children, resolves upon returning to her own country. (vv. 6, 7.) That it was good for her to have been in trouble, her subsequent conduct abundantly proves. For, throughout the whole, we find that tenderness of spirit, that consideration for

others, and that deadness to self, which are rarely discovered in any, but those who have learned in the school of sorrow, and been tried in the furnace of affliction. To her daughters-in-law, who proposed to cheer her solitude, and to accompany her on the way, she manifests the most generous preference of their interests, and their comforts, to her own. "Go," says she, "return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me." (v. 8.)

Oh! how wisely do those contrive, for the peace of their own minds; what hours of vain regret, and too-late repentance, may those avert, who, not only in greater matters, evince affection, but who, in the daily intercourses, and minute details of domestic life, bear with the frailties, consult the wishes, and study to promote the happiness, of the members of their own households! It is indeed, in addition to every other, a constraining motive, in family connexions, to put away all bitterness, and anger, and contentions about trifles, and every word which can give one needless pang;—to think how uncertain life is, and how soon the objects of these petty irritations, may be removed from before our eyes, for ever. There is, often, warm affection, nay, deep attachment, where, nevertheless, from faults of temper, and trifling disagreements, harsh expressions are employed, and many unkind things

done, and many provocations given; which can leave no memorial, but unavailing remorse, and pungent sorrow, when we have lost a friend. No balm of Gilead can be now applied, to heal those wounds;—no tender accents of reconciliation can now reach “the dull cold ear of death;”—no pardon can now be asked. Those lips are closed for ever;—that voice will be no more heard, nor that smile of returning love be seen;—which could, and would have said, in more than words, all is forgiven, and all forgotten.

God forbid that, by these observations, I should add one pang to the mourner’s heart; or heap sorrow upon his sorrow, by reminding him of his infirmities upon so vulnerable a point; or calling to his remembrance the interruptions of an affection, which was, as he now feels, but too powerful, and too near his heart. Oh! if God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, will those whom we have loved as our own soul, write bitter things against us, because some frailties mingled with an attachment, which no change of time, or lapse of ages, can obliterate or diminish? No: I would rather heal, than lay open, such tender wounds as these. I would say to him who loved his departed friend in Jesus: Cease from regrets which cannot profit; look forward to those times of blessed reunion, when friends shall meet again, and when

love, without pause, or interval, shall reign in every bosom;—look up to those bright abodes, into which those alone shall enter, who have learned on earth, from their hearts, to forgive, every one his brother, their trespasses, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them. Nevertheless, I would earnestly desire to impress upon the minds of all, who have it still in their power, to save themselves from the risk or possibility of such self-reproaches; so to live, amidst the minute details of each successive day, in the habits of domestic love; so to abstain from every word and action, which can disturb the sweet tranquillity of home;—that, should that home become a house of mourning, they may be able to stay the bleeding of their hearts, by this consolatory reflection: “Well, thank God, I never willingly grieved that dear and beloved object, whose loss I now so deeply feel: I never caused one needless tear to start into those eyes, which, alas! are closed for ever.”

There is unspeakable tenderness, in those few words; “The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.” But even this must yield in pathos, and in beauty, to one more passage in the chapter before us, which I must present to your especial notice. After a scene which exhibits, in the intervening verses, the most disinterested affection between Naomi

and her daughters-in-law, each anxiously endeavouring to sacrifice self, to the benefit of the other ; we find the former, at the 13th verse, giving full vent to all that was in her heart, in the following expressions : “ Nay, my daughters ; for it grieveth me much, *for your sakes*, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.” Here we seem to catch a kindred spirit, with that which breathes in Phil. ii. 26. “ For he ” (Epaphroditus) “ longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that *ye had heard* that he had been sick.” And here, also, we discern some faint image of that all perfect Being, who, in the darkest hour of his mysterious agonies, could thus address his weeping followers : “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me ; but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

These are strokes of that nature, which is above nature, to be found in the sacred volume only. In vain we should look for touches like these, in writings, or in hearts, which have not received the impressions of the spirit of God’s love. It is only by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, that we can contemplate or combine those rays of light, which reveal the character, and present us with draughts and images, of Him, whom to know is life eternal.

I speak of draughts and images, because by

these alone can God be apprehended : so that even He “in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily,”—who was the highest possible manifestation of Deity,—the nearest possible approach of the Creator to the creature,—is styled, Col. i. 15, “the image of the invisible God ;” and Heb. i. 3, “the express image of his person”—the character or draught of his subsistence. For no man hath seen God, or can see him : no created intelligence can survey that incomprehensible nature, in the spread of its vast dimensions, or rather in the boundless infinitude of its being. It is essential idolatry, to substitute tangible and material objects, for the invisible and all-pervading Spirit. It is gross and senseless superstition, alone, which would impose upon the mind so wild an imagination, as that we could withdraw ourselves from the element in which we breathe ; that we could stand out from that encircling essence, in which all nature lives, and moves, and has its being ; and then look upon that, in whose centre we are, as some defined and separate object ; and turn the eyes of others, as well as our own, to some visible glory,—some majestic figure, as it were, seated on a shining throne—and say, that is God. No : this is altogether materialism ; blindness to the nature of a spiritual world. God reveals himself to us, in those reflections of his

glory, which survive, and still are traceable, amidst the ruins of the fall. And thus, like that majestic emblem of himself, which he makes to rise upon this lower world, God is seen, not in his own inaccessible light, but in the beams which issue from his presence, and are scattered throughout the boundless fields of his creation. It is with this view, that both Testaments sparkle with such gems of pure, disinterested, self-denying, and self-sacrificing tenderness and goodness:—it is, I say, in order that, in diverse manners, and in all varieties of exhibition, the mind, as it traverses the pages of inspiration, may meet these rays from the central sun, these drops from the parent ocean, and recognize, in them, reflections, however faint, of what God is; and thus, kindling into sympathy with what it hath seen, be drawn to the great original, whom it hath not seen.

God, we are told, is love. But love is but a word: we must have some realizing sense of what it means; we must come into some experimental contact with the thing it signifies; or we know not God. How, then, shall we effect this greatest of all purposes? I know, and blessed be God, I *do* know, that Christ alone is the way, through which a sinner's person can be accepted with, or his heart return again unto its rest in, God. But still, it is our duty, to stir up every

gift, and to work by every instrument we can, in the great concerns of salvation. If then, I say, we would, at any moment, desire to retouch within our breast, the bright impression, and living sense, of what God is; let us take the following method. Let us select, even from the low level of human attachments, some instance which the Scripture records, of genuine tenderness and love. We need not go far, to find it. The only difficulty would be to choose, amidst such countless treasures. But as some example must be taken, let us turn to that unrivalled picture of a mother's patient constancy, and the feelings of a mother's heart, even to the lifeless remains of those who once had hanged upon her breast: "And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest, until water dropped upon them out of heaven; and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."—[2 Sam., xxi. 10.] Or let us, for a moment, contemplate one or two of those bright touches of simple nature, with which the history of Joseph everywhere abounds:—where forgiving and forgetting all the wrongs and injuries which he had received, he makes himself known to his brethren. "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore, be not grieved

nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you, to preserve life.” “ And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen ; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither.”—[Gen. xlv. 4, 5, 12, 13.] Or let us turn from this, to the no less tender and affecting scene, which the venerable patriarch presents, [vv. 26—28.] “ And they told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them : and when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived ; and Israel said, It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive : I will go and see him, before I die.”

Passages like these, could be quoted without number. Enough, however, for our present purpose, have been adduced. Let us, then, observe how such instances of warm and generous affection, touch the springs of sympathy within us ;—how, at such exhibitions, the mind will catch the infection, and kindle into a congenial flame ;—how love begets love, and proofs of strong attachment

between two souls, however distant from us in time and place, will, insensibly and irresistibly, draw us to love them both. What means the gentle fire which, under such excitement, warms the heart? the joy which fills the breast—the heaven which sheds its beams throughout the soul? I scruple not to say, to the man of genuine piety; “Be still, and know that this is God.” God is love; and love, when sanctified and pure, in a certain sense, is God. It is an effluence and emanation from him. Only suppose the drop to swell into a boundless ocean—the spark to spread into an infinite sun of glory;—and such, as far as our faculties can reach, is the God with whom we have to do. Happy those, who can say; “This God will be our God, for ever!”

LECTURE II.

RUTH, i. 14, 15.

“AND THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICE, AND WEPT AGAIN: AND ORPAH KISSED HER MOTHER-IN-LAW, BUT RUTH CLAVE UNTO HER. AND SHE SAID, BEHOLD, THY SISTER-IN-LAW IS GONE BACK UNTO HER PEOPLE, AND UNTO HER GODS: RETURN THOU AFTER THY SISTER-IN-LAW.”

THE kind and generous expostulations of Naomi, which I noticed in my former Lecture, are interrupted by the sobs and lamentations, both of herself and her two daughters. “And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.”

Orpah was like the stony-ground hearer, in the Gospel; susceptible of strong and lively impressions, for the moment. But hers was not the attachment of principle, nor the deep engagement of a constant heart. She loved her mother-in-law; but she had other ties. The world, its ways, its people, and its idols, had still their attractions;—and to these she yielded. Now was, perhaps, the grand turning point and crisis of her everlasting destiny. She chose, that day, whom she would serve. And from the moment she made the wrong decision, we hear of her no more.

The Scriptures are silent : but it is as if that silence had a voice that spoke ;—as if it said, “ she is joined to idols, let her alone ; ”—as if it signified the erasure of her name and memorial, from the book of life. For Orpah was not like the Moabites who knew not God. She, we may be well assured, had been instructed in the true religion. She had seen its blessed fruits in Naomi, and (can we doubt ?) in her own husband, the son of such a mother. She had, for ten years, lived in a Goshen, in the midst of surrounding darkness ; had learned to call God’s sabbaths a delight ; and had heard of all his mercies, and all his truth. Nor were these motives without influence. She had resolved to forsake her country, her kindred, and her father’s house. She had, actually, set out on her journey, to the land of Judah. She had put her hand to the plough :—but she looked back, and was not fit for the kingdom of heaven. Oh ! how dark and cheerless are the paths that lead from God ! Surely, those tears of parting which Orpah shed, were but the beginnings of her sorrows. With bleeding heart, and troubled spirit, and wounded conscience, she measured back her steps to those, who knew not how, even if they were willing, to speak comfort to her soul. For though she had forfeited the blessing, she carried the reproach, of him whom the nations

abhorred. She returned "to her mother's house," and "unto her people;" but alas! no fatted calf was killed, no festive sounds of joy were heard, no glad welcomes greeted her approach. Former sympathies were gone: mutual confidence had fled. The scenes of childhood were no longer the home, they had once been to her. She was a stranger, in the land that gave her birth. She returned "unto her Gods;" but she could not unlearn the lessons, nor fly from the light, which taught her that the Gods of the heathen were but vanity. She knew that the true God, alone, could help in the time of need: but she had renounced his service, and dared not now to pray; neither could she call upon him, in her trouble, to deliver her out of her distress. Like the rich man, who in hell lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, how might she, in the musings of her solitary days, or in the visions of her sleepless nights, have pictured to her mind, the happier condition of her sister Ruth, now in the bosom of Abraham's covenant, in the favor of Abraham's God, an heir of glory, and fellow-citizen with the saints! In what accents of sickening anguish, might she have poured forth her unavailing sorrows:—"It was my own deliberate and voluntary act, which excluded me from the blessedness she now enjoys.

She has chosen that good part, which never shall be taken from her; and but for myself, I might have followed her bright example, and have gone, hand in hand, with her, in the paths of peace. We might now be taking sweet counsel together, and walking in the house of God as friends; and giving praise to him who had called us out of heathen darkness, into marvellous light; anticipating that rest which remaineth for the people of God; and rejoicing in the prospect of that day, when we and our beloved husbands, should be again united, in bands of everlasting love. But alas! I have thrown these blessings, and these hopes, to the winds of heaven. I have been the carver of my own destiny. I have left the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

If this colouring should appear too high, for the known facts of Orpah's case, at all events, we may let the picture stand, as a solemn warning, in times like these.

It has been my lot, alas! to witness, more than once, the melancholy spectacle of persons, who after making a fair religious profession, and seeming to take the Lord for their portion, have again returned to the vanities of the world. "But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be

salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Never was this pregnant saying more amply verified, than in the case of such deserters. They had lost *caste*, and never could regain it. They never could recover their former position in society. They had rebelled against the world's authority ; and they now come back to it, with no recommendation, but that of having forfeited their allegiance to their new master. They had spoken, with unmeasured severity, of worldly pleasures, and worldly pursuits, and worldly characters, (for no zeal flames like that which soon goes out ;) and they vainly expect to be on the same gay and easy terms, with those, many of whom they have personally and lastingly offended. Besides, there is an unpleasant seriousness about an apostate, which they cannot shake off, and which ill accords with scenes of merriment. It is not the seriousness of religion ; but it is the seriousness of having renounced religion. The smell of its fire has passed on them, and there is no getting rid of it. And, thus, they are unfitted for the element in which they live. They glide, like gloomy spectres, through places of public amusement, as if in scenes to which they did not legitimately belong. Their movements are not natural ; their gaiety is forced ; their part is over-acted ; and

their high spirits seem like an effort to stifle the cries of conscience. They may find a few bad spirits, who reject God and goodness, on deliberate calculation, and will hail them, as doubly traitors to the King of heaven. But the lighter circles are not generally composed of such stern depravity. Many of the gayest of the gay, would turn, with high disdain, from one who had taken up the cross, and then trampled it under his feet. Amongst the apparent votaries of pleasure, many sigh for purer scenes. They respect religion. They find the world no resting-place to the soul. Their hearts are not at ease. They begin to find a mighty famine in that land. They often resolve on giving their whole affections unto God. They have come to themselves, and thought upon their father's house. They meditate a return. They long for the happy moment, when they shall have fortitude to go into the presence of their God, and say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; make me as one of thy hired servants." It is at such a point of transition, at such a crisis of its destiny, that the soul views with peculiar horror, those deserters from the camp of Israel, whom it meets, as it were, flying in an opposite direction, and returning to that city of destruction, from which it seeks its own escape. But I need say no more. For the world itself

despises those who fall from a high religious profession: and it may be truly said of such, that "men cast them out." If they were of the world, the world would love its own. But they are not of the world. They were once, indeed, in appearance at least, above the world; but now they have sunk below it.

When Orpah, in time of temptation, fell away, the constancy of Ruth was put to its severest test. "Behold," says Naomi, "thy sister-in-law is gone back, unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law."

Accompanied by one who was, in all her circumstances, and all her trials, the counterpart of herself, we are not so much surprised, that a youthful female should have had fortitude to go forth, like another Abraham, into new scenes, and into a land of strangers, "not knowing whither she went." There is no limit, almost, to the power of sympathy. And here I would venture to hazard an observation, which tends, I think, to lead the mind, by a new process, to the all-important conclusion of Augustin, namely, that we are formed for God, and that we cannot rest, until we rest in Him.

Let us suppose that, amidst the countless myriads of our race, we had at last discovered, what we all instinctively desire to find, one friend, one

kindred soul, who could understand our thoughts, and catch our finest shades of meaning, and see, at a glance, every fleeting image which we would place before his mind;—who intimately knew what, in every instance, caused us either joy or sorrow;—who, if we were wounded in some tender point, saw, with infallible precision, where the shaft had hit, and why the anguish was so bitter, and the pain so sharp; why the wound still festered, and no balm could heal it;—who, if we had lost a parent, a husband, a wife, or child, had a bright conception, and living remembrance, of all that beloved object was, and all it was *to us*;—who could travel back with us to every scene, with which that object was associated, and recall every instance of fond endearment which had passed, so that we knew that the image of all our thoughts, stood before his mind, and answered, as face to face in a glass:—if we were assured, moreover, that this friend not only saw with our eyes, but felt with a kindred heart, so that “in all our afflictions, he was afflicted,”—that our sorrows were his sorrows, and our joys his joys:—there needs no argument to show, that this friend would more than prove a compensation, for the loss of every other; that in him our hearts would find repose; that our tenderest sensibilities would find a shelter in his sympathy; that all our griefs would be

charmed away, in the very act of pouring them into his faithful bosom.

But what does all this prove? Is it that, even if such a friend could be ours for ever, we could find in man, or in any created nature, an all-sufficient good—the secret of substantial happiness—the bread of life, which can sustain and satisfy the soul? No. But it establishes, by a new process of ascertainment, the great and cardinal truth, that God, alone, is competent to this. For the being, of whom we have formed to ourselves such notions, is not the creature, but the Creator; is not man, but God. For these are the inalienable attributes of him, who searches the heart, and reads the thoughts, and tries the reins. So that if we could find such a friend as I have described, that friend would be our God. Yes: and we have such a friend on high:—a friend to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid;—one who, by personal experience, knows our griefs, and is acquainted with our sorrows;—who feels, as man can feel for man; and who can identify that sympathy with the sovereign will, and with almighty power, to bless, to rescue, and to save him. Such is the friend which the gospel invitation offers. Let us make this friendship once, and it is made for ever. Yes: let us make this friendship, and *we* are

made for ever. All things are ours. Our sun is risen, and it will never go down.

If the power of sympathy can support the mind, and fit it for the most arduous duties ; it can exercise a counter influence, no less decisive, when near connexions, and persons who stand in similar positions with ourselves, but, above all, when those who have been fellow-workers and fellow-soldiers, desert us in the time of need, and fail us in the day of battle. To such a trial was Ruth exposed. While Orpah was by her side—Orpah, who had so long shared in all her vicissitudes and trials—who in wedlock, and in widowhood, in all she had loved, and all she had lost, seemed bound up in one common destiny ;—while cheered and seconded by another self, Ruth felt, no doubt, in that vibration of hearts, and union of souls, a principle of support, a secret charm, which could convert her weakness into strength, and carry her, more than conqueror, through her arduous conflicts. But when these cords of sympathy were snapped asunder, or, rather, when they were, violently and suddenly, drawn against the motion of her conscience, and of her sense of bounden duty ; what, but the hand of God, could have enabled her to go forward ? What, but the consolations of God, could have cheered her, when deserted by her more than sister ? But why should I say more than sister ?

For of all the several relations, which bind the human family in cords of sympathy, there is none which gives such influence to example, or which so renders character infectious, as that which links sister to sister, and brother to brother.

It was on this account, that He whose great design it was, to cast us in the mould of his own all-perfect pattern; that He who was manifested, that we, by the vision of his glory, might be changed into the same image; that He who was sent to draw us by the cords of men, and to save us by the power of sympathy;—that He became the first-born among many brethren; that He was not ashamed to call his people, by that endearing title, or to acknowledge them in that relation, while entering into his glory. “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.”

Allow that the ties which bind husband to wife, and wife to husband, parent to child, and child to parent, are still nearer and dearer than the ties of brethren. Still, the peculiar tenderness of those relations, proceeds rather from contrariety, than sameness. It is the result of interchanges, and reciprocations, and endearments, arising, not from the similarity of the parties, but from their mutual adaptation to supply, each, what the other wants, and is formed to love. The one blessed in giving,

the other in receiving. The one privileged to protect, the other grateful for protection. The one affection ascending, like the love of man towards God; the other descending, like the love of God towards man. But the bands of brotherhood are, in an emphatic sense, the bands of sympathy. Those who stand in this relation, are formed of the same materials, shoot from the same stock, and grow, like contiguous plants, under the influence of the same sunshine, and the same showers. Hence the instinctive and habitual tendency of brothers, to compare themselves with brothers, as those whose opportunities, whose advantages and disadvantages, and, consequently, whose responsibilities and duties, are identical with their own. And, hence, I do not scruple to say, that the eldest brother of a family, is in one of the most important positions, in which an accountable being can be placed.

There is, in the course of nature, a disparity of age and circumstances, between child and parent, unfavourable to the force of example. Young persons often feel, that a father and a mother have so long ceased to be what they are, that, however indulgent, they cannot make due allowance for the frailties and temptations of the young. They are impressed with the idea, that fashions are changing, and new habits introducing, every day; and suspect

that their parents require, of them, things suitable rather to bygone times, than to the present condition of the world. They reverence, perhaps, their parents' judgment, in higher matters, and on abstract cases ; but they fear to trust themselves, in lighter concerns, to such antiquated guides. And these very details and trifles, endlessly multiplied, and ceaselessly recurring, are the life and soul of that which goes to form the taste and the character, in youth. It is this, which renders the influence of the elder brother, or elder sister, (but for brevity's sake, I shall speak only of one sex,) of such unspeakable importance. Raised sufficiently above his juniors, in point of age, to command respect, and, at the same time, enough of their contemporary, to be but a step before them, on the road of life ; he stands, precisely, in the relative position, best calculated to make impression, and to act with influence on the mind. His superiority is just of the kind, which calls forth admiration : for it is in matters near enough to attract ; to touch the springs of emulation, and excite the movements of ambition. Engaged in the same pursuits, as his younger brothers, yet always advanced before them ; taking the lead in all their sports and studies ; raised to the rank of schoolboy, when they are children, and of collegian, when they are schoolboys ;—they feel a contrast, and are

sensible of an inferiority, which the remoter relation of the parent, is too vague and distant, to bring, with lively impression, to the mind.

Thus powerful, and almost resistless, is the moral influence of an elder brother. And when this mighty engine takes a wrong direction,—when it becomes an instrument of mischief; no calculation can come up to the amount of evil, which it produces. In the day of eternity, and not till then, it will be known, how many souls have fallen by a brother's hand; how many plants, that a father's anxious cares have planted, and a mother's tears have watered, have been uprooted, and cast, as withered branches, on the ground, by the bad example, and by the filthy conversation, of those whom God and nature had placed in this most delicate and honourable of all trusts. But bad brothers care for none of these things. Like “Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother,” their daily task is to murder innocents, and to offend those little ones, whose angels do always behold the face of God. This is strong language; but can I overcharge the picture? For can any guilt, or any cruelty, exceed the deliberate contamination of the young; of those who, in an especial manner, are “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?” It requires but small acquaintance with the machinery of this sinful world, and with

the havoc of souls which this moral slaughter-house exhibits, to know how many families are blighted, how many parents' fondest hopes are blasted, and scattered to the winds, by the evil influence of elder over younger children. Thousands and ten thousands, now tossed upon the waves of sin, could trace back all their miseries, to this prolific source. They could tell how the seeds of ruin were first laid, in the lessons which they learned at home. They could acquit both father and mother of the charge, and bear witness before heaven, that they were free from the blood of their souls. They could testify, that at a parent's knee, they learned an infant's prayer; that from a parent's lips, they heard the invitations of a Saviour's love; that a father and a mother ceased not their endeavours, day and night, by every art of endearment and soft persuasion, by prayers and supplications, now registered in heaven, to win their children's hearts to God, and to keep them, like the apple of their eye, from the horrors of pollution, and from the defilements of the world. But they could tell, alas! how all these labours of parental love, were under-worked and counteracted, by the secret, and more effective, influence of a brother;—how all the instructions of the closet were defeated, by the living lessons of the school-room and the playground. Ah! this is no fancied picture: it is sad

reality, and painful truth. These scenes are acted every day. This work of ruin is now going on, in many families.

But let us briefly trace its progress ; that, if the description should reach the ears of any who are parties concerned, they may start back with horror from the view ;—that it may say, “Thou art the man :” —that it may convince them of their sin, and lead them to compassionate their own souls, and the souls whom they are destroying.

Take a child, like that whom our blessed Saviour placed in the midst of his disciples, saying, “of such is the kingdom of heaven” —a child who has grown in early grace, and never strayed from that “first commandment with promise,” which is the seed of every blessing, the dawn of every grace, and every virtue in the soul ;—contemplate such an opening flower of paradise, and then estimate, if you can, the awful guilt of him, who implants, in the bosom of this child, the first suspicion that his parents are not so perfect, or so infallible, as, in his happy simplicity, he had thought them. This, then, I believe, is the commencing link of that chain of death, by which a soul is drawn from the guide of its youth, and from the covenant of its God. Like him who thus addressed the woman, “Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?” —the elder brother

suggests the doubt, unknown before, that a mother's scruples may be too precise; that a father's strictness may be over-strained. But it is not so much by what is said to, as by what is said in presence of, a child, that his mind is biassed, and his heart corrupted. It is the murmur amongst his seniors, that their liberty is needlessly curtailed, and that they are denied the fair indulgencies of youth;—it is the half-smothered laugh, at a father's peculiarities and frailties;—the insinuations that it is unmanly, to receive the caresses of a mother's tenderness;—it is the sly jest, at the expense of modesty and purity, the blasphemy scarce uttered, for fear that the wind might waft it to a father's ears;—it is the avowed intention of sinning with a still higher hand, when boyhood passes into manhood;—it is the unblushing boast, and the disgusting details, of profligacies actually committed, or pretended to have been committed:—these are the steps, by which a brother advances to the full accomplishment of a brother's ruin, and destroys the fairest blossoms which the soul, in its morning prime, can yield. A child listens to these filthy communications. To him they have the excitement of new thoughts, the freshness of new conceptions. He hears with wonder—he is filled with admiration of the speaker. He knows not the nature of the process: but a process his mind and

his whole soul, are undergoing. There is a something, now, which checks the delightful freedom, which damps the joyousness and lightness of heart, with which he ran into the embraces of his parents. The shyness of conscious guilt, the self-reproaches of ingratitude, cast a gloom upon his countenance, and he is no longer what he was. Nor is the jealousy of parental fondness, slow to discern the change. Suspicions may, indeed, be rejected for a time, as too painful to be endured. But their assaults cannot long be parried. The case becomes too clear. Conviction comes home to the parent's heart, that he has lost his child—that he has, at least, lost all comfort in him. I need say no more. Fathers and mothers, who have experienced this sorest, perhaps, of all trials, alone can tell its bitterness. Disappointed in their elder children, they have looked for, and hitherto had found, compensation in the younger. But the sad discovery is made, that the infection is descending. The heart-sickening process has commenced, in the quarter where they were least prepared. And they are, in a fresh and aggravated instance, again to feel, “how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is, to have a thankless child.”

Now, I hesitate not to affirm, that if there be a position, in which a human being can stand doubly hateful in the sight of God, it is that of

a young person blighting those tender plants, which it was his own parents' fondest care to nourish. Let such beware, lest it end, at last, in bitter regrets, where all regrets are vain. Let them, while they have time, take the awful warning of him, who in hell pleaded, with fruitless supplication, for his five brethren:—not that he cared for their souls; but because he dreaded their upbraidings, for the fatal influence of his example, as the most intolerable of the pains, which he was doomed to suffer, in that place of torment.

Is there, then, no reverse to this revolting picture? Yes. Blessed be God, there are instances, and I can bear testimony to the fact, of elder brothers, who have fulfilled, and are still fulfilling, their sacred and important duties. Nor is there a plant, in the garden of the Lord, which brings forth fruit more pleasant to the eye of God or man, than a son, who thus maketh a glad father, and causeth his mother's heart to sing for joy. Like another John the Baptist, his delightful task is to turn the hearts of his parents to their children, and the hearts of those children to the Lord their God. Or rather, like that Saviour, in whose steps he treads,—like that mediator, by whom it pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto himself,—he brings down, and softens the

authority of the parent, in the familiar and equal character of the brother ; while, as the first-born and representative of his brethren, he offers the continual sacrifice of filial piety, obedience, and love.

Oh ! if I address any who stand in that high, that amiable, that Christ-like position, I would say, persevere, and your reward will be great in heaven. Persevere, and you will shine amongst those celestial stars, who have turned many to righteousness. Persevere, and Joseph's dream will be more than a dream to you. In "the sober certainty of waking bliss," and in the open daylight of eternity, your father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters, will present themselves before you, and say, "It was you, as God's chosen instrument, who brought us to this state of blessedness ; it was you, who kept us from being scattered on life's tempestuous ocean, and landed us all, at last, a family in heaven."

LECTURE III.

RUTH, i. 16, 17.

“AND RUTH SAID, ENTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE, OR TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER THEE : FOR WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO ; AND WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE : THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND THY GOD MY GOD : WHERE THOU DIEST WILL I DIE, AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED : THE LORD DO SO TO ME, AND MORE ALSO, IF OUGHT BUT DEATH PART THEE AND ME.”

THESE words, so full of deep, unalterable affection, give ample proof, how the character of Naomi had won upon the heart of Ruth. They show, moreover, how the affections which thus conciliated, terminated not in herself, but proceeded onwards, till they found their rest in God. And such is, no doubt, the final cause of those mutual attractions, by which heart is linked to heart, and man is bound to man. If creature-attachments rested in the creature, they would only prove endless sources of disquietude and pain. But why did I say rested? For our souls were formed for God; and they cannot rest, until they rest in him. Human ties are but links of that great chain, which binds the whole rational creation to its universal centre; but steps, by which nature ascends to nature's God.

Every other tendency is out of course ; it is utterly wide of the true mark, and is but scattering abroad.

Hence we have a sure rule to go by, in ascertaining the character of our pursuits, our inclinations, and our friendships. How do they affect us, in the main concern ? Do they, or do they not, act as instruments and means, by which our hearts draw nigh unto God ? This, I repeat it, is the touchstone, by which every thing should be tried. We are moral beings ; and all our tendencies are moral. They are either good or bad ; *towards* God, or *from* him. Let a line be drawn, in imagination, from us to God. Those affections, then, are rightly placed, whose objects hover round that track of light : and those affections are wrongly placed, whose objects do not lie along that only path of safety.

And, thus, it is not so much the strength of an attachment, as the obliquity of its direction, that constitutes it idolatrous. If we love that in our friends, which is contrarious to God's will, and repugnant to his nature, we then set up his rivals in our hearts, and are, as the prophet speaks, " estranged from him through our idols." But if what we prize in the object of our attachment, be the gentleness, the tenderness, the purity of his heart ;—if it be the transcript of the divine nature,

the image of God, the mind that was in Christ Jesus;—if such be the cords, which bind us to the friends we love, can this be thought a sinful preference of the creature to the Creator? No: such love descends from God, and leads to God. We know, from Scripture, that this love of man is inseparable from the love of God; and that where the one is not, the other cannot be. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?” The truth is, that if the faithful copy have, to us, no form nor comeliness, that we should desire it, the great original, in spite of all our imaginations, can have no place in our hearts. If we turn from the living draughts of what God is, as dangerous objects, which would divert our affections from him, we are substantially and fundamentally in error. We place God’s name above his nature. We substitute an unreal fancy, or cold abstraction of the mind, for that source of light and life, who though, like his material emblem the sun, himself too dazzling for our directer gaze, scatters his bright beams around, and is reflected by ten thousand mirrors, in which the pure in heart see God.

And here I would endeavour to remove a scruple, which, to my knowledge, has often

“made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad.” When the all-wise Disposer takes from us the desire of our eyes, and deprives us, for a little while, of the sweet counsel and companionship of a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, or friend that sticketh closer than a brother; under such sore bereavement, the Christian instinctively ascends, in heart and mind, whither that beloved object is gone before. He derives his richest consolation, from the sure and certain hope of a blessed re-union, in a happier world. His thoughts, habitually, fly up to heaven, because his friend is there; and his affections turn from earth, because his friend is *not* there. But in the midst of this, conscience may sometimes whisper,—does not the creature usurp that place, in your heart, which Christ alone should occupy? Do you not, virtually, say, to that departed soul,—“Whom have I in heaven but thee: and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?” Assuredly, we should, at all times, watch and pray, that no created being should be thus overprized; that none, however dear, should be loved, with that boundless flow of heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, which can find room in no other than an infinite object. But I doubt that those whose thoughts ascend to friends in heaven, are in danger of this idolatry. The danger is in the

case of those, who refuse such consolations, and whose affections still linger amidst the tombs and relics of the departed. I have never known a mourner's heart respond to that voice, which said, "Thy friend is not dead, but sleepeth"—"he is not here, but is risen;" unless that mourner had, in his affliction, turned to God. All others "refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." No force can tear them from the ashes of the dead: and why? Because they have set up an idol in their hearts.

But since the mind, when softened and subdued by sorrow, is disposed particularly to write hard things against itself, I would propose, to all those who love to think of heaven, because their dearest friends are there, the following simple questions; and if their hearts condemn them not, I would beseech them to set their fears and jealousies at rest. Have you found it good for you, to be afflicted? Has it purified your heart? Has it rendered sin exceeding sinful, in your eyes? Has it made Christ more precious to your soul? When you feel yourself deserted, and all around you seems forlorn; and when you would spread the wings of faith, and flee away, and, in imagination, light on these celestial fields, on whose green pastures your beloved friend now feeds, or haunt those living streams of paradise, on whose

banks he now reposes ;—do these meditations, naturally and insensibly, blend into devotion ? Are these thoughts, in a measure, identical with prayer ? Or are they not, at least, fuel, to feed its sacred flame ? In a word, do these attractions draw your hearts to God ? If they do, as I am sure they must, then prize the privilege, and adore the providence, by which the cords of nature are let down, to lift you up to heaven ; by which God has been pleased to take your earthly treasure to himself, that where your treasure is, there may your heart be also.

The generous contest between Ruth and Naomi, which should act the most disinterested part, and make the largest sacrifice of selfish motives, appears to have reached its crisis, when the words of my text were spoken. But in order that we may feel their utmost force, we should endeavour to realize the whole scene, and, thus, to place the parties before our eyes. We should picture to ourselves the mother hastening forward, that she might elude her daughter's vigilant pursuit, and save her, thereby, from a life of trial and privation ; but, still, so closely pressed, that she cannot cut the cords, which seem to bind their fates together :—enforcing every plea, and urging every motive, to dissuade her ; but, nevertheless, unable to shake her purpose, or to change her constant mind.

“Think not,” she would say, “to lighten my afflictions, by adding your burthens to those which God has been pleased to lay upon me. My own infirmities I could, and must sustain; but why bring down your youth, to the sorrows of my old age? Return, I entreat you; and cease from following after me. Save me, at least, from the bitter consciousness, that I have blighted all the prospects of her, who is now the dearest object that remains to me on earth. Alas! whither would you go? I scarce know, myself, to what point I should direct my footsteps. I am a stranger here: and, by long absence, I am a stranger to my native country. When I left my home, I felt no fears that I should wander out of the way, or meet with perils in it: for I had, then, a husband’s counsels to guide me, and the arms of my two sons to bear me up, on the right hand, and on the left. But now, I have neither prop nor staff. No hope remains, but that God will direct me, by a way that I know not, to my now deserted home;—no prospect, but that in every place upon my solitary road, sorrows and afflictions abide me. Why, then, should you wed yourself to misery and want? If you will persist in thus accompanying me, I have no comforts to offer you, no provision nor accommodations for the way. I came out full, but the Lord bringeth me

home again empty. Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but I have not where to lay my head; unless, like our father Jacob, I take of the stones, and put them for my pillows, and lay me down, in that place, to sleep. But even were I to meet some Israelite indeed, 'who knows the heart of a stranger,' who would receive me into his home, or bring me to an inn and take care of me;—that consolation would be denied to you. When I pass the boundary which separates this land from mine, those who would welcome me, would bar their doors against you. I go to a people that 'dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations;' a people, by whom it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;' a people, in whose law it is written, that 'a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, for ever.' Unless, therefore, you renounce the land that gave you birth; unless you 'forget also your own people, and your father's house;' unless you snap asunder every cord that binds you to friends, to kindred, and country; unless 'thou, being a wild olive tree,' wert torn from thy native soil, and 'grafted in' among them;—you would be an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and an abomination to the Jew. But even all these renunciations would not, of themselves, be accounted an availing sacri-

ficé. The God of the Jews, is a jealous God. His first and great commandment is, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ You cannot be incorporated with his people, unless you serve their God, and worship him alone. If, therefore, there still remain one fond recollection of all your early infancy was taught; if the Gods whom your father and your mother worshipped, have left one root of cherished remembrance, behind them;—you must pluck that root, and tear that idol from your heart, and cast it to the moles and to the bats. All this, perhaps, you may be prepared to do. The energies of youth, and the excitement of the moment, may arm you with this present fortitude. But, when strength declines—when infirmities increase, and age is bending towards the grave;—nature will urge her plea with you, as it now does with me, for burial in some kindred and congenial soil. It is the last wish that lingers in the heart, the latest sigh it breathes to heaven. It is common to man, to desire that he may close his eyes, amidst those scenes on which they first were opened; that so the beginning and the end of his earthly span, may meet; that the dawn of life, and the dawn of eternity, may commingle, and blend into one light,

to lighten him through the valley of the shadow of death. If, indeed, your husband lay buried in the land to which you are going, even filial love might veil to that still higher obligation. You might in death, as well as life, leave father and mother, and cleave unto your husband. But it is not so. You committed his body to that earth, from which you would separate yourself for ever. Will you, then, leave him alone, in a land of strangers? Will you deny him the admitted claims of one who bore the name of husband? Will you refuse to say, ‘when I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein he is buried; lay my bones beside his bones?’ Pause, then, I entreat you, before you take a step which cannot be recalled. Let no partiality, however kind, towards me—let no rash estimate of what I have been, or can be, to you—let no human motives—let nothing short of imperative duty, and that clearly manifested, as the will of heaven;—let nothing less than this, persuade you to a course of action, so awfully decisive, or to determine on a line of conduct, which implies a sacrifice of almost every tie, which can bind the human heart.”

Such, we may conceive, were the reasonings and expostulations, by which this mother in Israel was employed, to make full proof of her daughter-in-law, and to sift her as wheat. But

her faith failed not. Her heart was fixed. She had counted the cost. She was not disobedient to the design and calling of that Providence, who had predestinated her to a place amidst the ancestry of the world's Deliverer, and written her immortal name, in the list of those "of whom," by direct and lineal descent, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." To every argument that could be urged, to every motive, best calculated to act upon the tenderness of her sex, or the weakness of her nature, upon a mind harassed by sufferings, and subdued by sorrows; Ruth, but doubtless by a spirit not her own, replied: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for, whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

In the address which I have put into the mouth of Naomi, I have suggested all that I could offer, in the way of comment or enlargement, upon the several clauses of this memorable answer; and shall not now dilute their strength, or mar their beauty, by adding water to the wine of Scripture. These words will best exhibit the mind and cha-

acter of Ruth, when left to make their own impression, and to derive enforcement, from the circumstances, alone, under which she spoke them. My object, in the remainder of this discourse, shall be, to show how the expressions here employed, apply, at least in an accommodated sense, to the relation in which the true believer stands, and should feel himself as standing, towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

And first, in reference to the commencing clause,—“Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee,”—I would address those who have made the great transition, from darkness into marvellous light. But to those I would more particularly appeal, whose conversion has been, not, as is the case with many, by gradual and imperceptible advances, but so marked, in time, effects, and circumstances, as to have left a distinct and ineffaceable impression on the mind. I would ask, whether the soul, upon its first entrance on a state so brightly contrasted with all it knew before, had not a felt experience of what that Scripture meaneth, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” I would ask, when the atoning Lamb said Peace to the troubled con-

science,—when sorrow was turned into joy,—when the thirsty land became springs of water, and the desert of this world blossomed as the rose,—when the mists of impurity, and the clouds of unbelief, moved off, and the realities of eternity stood out, in the dawning light of a never-ending day:—I would ask those who alone can answer, whether, under impressions, so new, so elevating, and so overwhelming, they were not, as the Psalmist speaks, “like them that dream,” whose “mouth is filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing;” whether they did not feel, while carried thus on eagles’ wings, that sin, and its attendant miseries, had fled for ever; and that, on that mount of transfiguration, they would stand, till mortality was swallowed up of life.

But, to souls in such a state, we would say, in the words of Moses, “Ye are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you.” It is, indeed, wisely and mercifully ordained, that the heart should, at this earlier stage, be drawn with cords of love; that its first espousals should be days of cloudless sunshine; in order that the affections should be engaged, and fixed on Christ; and that, having found the pearl, and known its priceless value, the believer should be prepared to pass through the needful discipline, and to drink of that cup, without

which, established peace, and solid happiness, cannot become our permanent possession. It is, in fact, the unvarying experience of God's children, that this bright season of joy and gladness, is of short continuance. The substance of the blessing still abides ; the root still remains in the heart ; and the spirit of adoption cries, "Abba, Father." Nevertheless, through much tribulation, through manifold temptations, through deep waters of affliction, and days of darkness and desertion, the believer may have yet to pass. I know that much painful discipline may be escaped, and many an arrow that would pierce the heart, averted, by fidelity upon our part, by watchfulness, and striving against sin. For God does not cause one needless pang : he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Notwithstanding, trials and tribulations are the ordinary, and (because we render them so) the necessary means by which we are taught to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts ; by which we are brought to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings ; by which we are planted together in the likeness of his death, that we may be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Thus it is, that whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. But no chastening, for the present,

seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. And through what scenes of trial, and clouds of sorrow, the learner in the school of Christ may pass, he alone can tell, who has trod that rugged path himself. But, "here is the patience, and the faith of the saints." Though perplexed, they are not in despair: though cast down, they are not destroyed. They remember the everlasting covenant. They fly to the cross. They seek and find their refuge in God. If prospects darken, and wave succeed to wave, they pray the more earnestly. If all within, and all around, charge them that they should hold their peace, they cry the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." They exclaim with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." They expostulate with all the tender earnestness of my text; "Be not against me," (for it may be so rendered,) "that I should leave thee, or return from following after thee."

"For whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge." It is the condition of our being, that we should be encircled, on all sides, by essential Deity. To some, indeed, it is but the sad necessity of their case, that God is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways. To whatever point they turn, he is straight before them. In the silence and solitude of the

night, and when they say, "Surely the darkness shall cover us," his sleepless eye is upon them. There is no spot upon the map of creation, no desert in the wastes of this wide world, which is not in the full blaze and sunshine of a present God. Where, then, shall the ungodly, and the sinner appear? Whither shall he fly, to whom the "fulness of joy" has been perverted into his heaviest curse? For so it is with him, who is at war with the element in which he lives; who is dragged at the chariot-wheels of an Almighty Conqueror; the language of whose resistless fate, if not of his lips, is, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge." What, then, is man's truest wisdom? It is to convert inevitable necessity, into cheerful acquiescence; to be conformed to the unchangeable constitution of things, and to join the universal harmony. It is to be at peace with God; to be reconciled to his laws, and to his nature; and, thus, to have Omnipotence as his defence, Omniscience as his guide, and God's continual presence as the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

The man who seeks and finds his happiness, in the habitual sense of such a presence, has a clew to conduct him through all the labyrinths of life. So various are our temporal callings, our ranks and stations, our talents and responsibilities, that

to give detailed directions, how far the Christian should conform to the habits of, or come in contact with, what is emphatically called the world, is a task from which I shrink, as quite beyond my skill or province. No one, however, can, I presume, materially go wrong, who makes this his rule;—to engage in no undertakings, to be a party in no scenes, pursuits, or pleasures, with which he cannot, comfortably and satisfactorily, associate the consciousness, that God is present. Surely, this is not to lift the mark too high. For can the creature be in his right place, where he cannot consistently remember his Creator? Or can an accountable being stand in his right position, when he is obliged to say in his heart, (with his understanding he cannot,) that there is no God? But the Christian must put the matter to a still severer test. He can, in no case, safely trust himself, where conscience would be pained, or where he would instinctively recoil, were his Saviour to appear to the eye of faith, crucified before him. Nor would this, as his regulating principle, interfere with any providential duties, or forbid one lawful pleasure. In the paths of innocence, in the cheerful walks of nature, amidst the beauties of creation, and the enchantments of the landscape;—would it be inconsistent, to look “through nature, up to nature’s God;” or to think

of him who died, that we might live amid still purer scenes, and possess within us "a paradise happier far?" Nor would the man whom extraordinary talents had raised, or whose providential station had called him, to a place in the councils of the nation, be thereby debarred the privilege, amidst the din, and noise, and collisions of the world, of pressing the remembrance of his Saviour to his heart, and saying, "Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that duty, and not inclination, has brought me here." Nay, it is my firm conviction, that a king, upon his coronation day, might withdraw his heart from all the glory that encircled him, might think upon the cross, and feel the testimony of a good conscience, that though it humbled, it did not reproach him. But how would it be with "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God?" How would it be in the crowded ball-room, or amidst the false and dazzling splendours of the theatre? Or how would it be with him, whose restless ambition, and nothing else, had forced him upwards, till he had found a seat among the rulers of the land, and caused them all to wonder, by what wheel of fortune he had lighted there? If, in such a scene, the doors were to fly open, and the King of glory to enter in, or if, the doors being shut, Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them, would there be no searchings

of heart, no jar of discordant principles, no collision of hostile elements? These are points, upon which conscience alone can determine. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself, in that thing which he alloweth."

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Thus to follow the footsteps of the flock, is one of the surest indications that the Lord is our shepherd. "We know," says St. John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" upon which there cannot be a finer comment, than that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 24—26. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." But where are the people of God, at the present moment? In the times of Moses, and of the Apostles, the question could have received a direct and immediate answer. The line of demarcation between an Israelite and an Egyptian, between a Christian and a heathen, was broad and visible. But where, I repeat it, is the class, the denomination, or the church, which stands out, in bold relief, and palpable separation,

from the world? Where is the society, however small, to whom we can point the view of one who seeks for evidences of his conversion, and say, if you love these, with an affection which you feel for them alone, you have a solid proof, that you are born from above? For my part, I know of none. I have met with some, who had long been seeking for such a brotherhood: but they had, after endless unsettlement, and endless changes, given over the search, as vain. I have heard of others, who, in failure of finding, have endeavoured to found, a sect, to originate a system, or, at least, to collect a society, thus suited to their wishes: but it has been all vanity, and vexation of spirit. It has signally failed, in what it aimed at as the main object; and has lowered, instead of raising, the spiritual standard of religion. For the principle of exclusion is, necessarily, a principle of adoption. And where the many are rejected, the few who *are* retained, are, thereby, as it were, sealed and set apart, with all their blemishes and infirmities, their wayward tempers, and their sins; as if he who searches the hearts, could present them to himself, as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The leaders in such schemes, however pure in intention, set up their own little visible party, against the invisible church of Christ. They reverse the words imme-

diately before us. Their language is not, "*Thy* people shall be *my* people;" but, "*My* people shall be *thy* people." They say, "Lo! here," or "Lo! there;" while they mistake the very nature of the object to which they point. For Christ's mystical body is not thus discernible: the children of God are not thus located. They are scattered throughout every denomination under heaven, which holds the essential doctrines of the Gospel. And whoever, as he reads their lives, or hears their eventful story, or as he meets them, here and there, in his progress through this vale of tears, feels for them a brother's sympathy, and, without distinction of sect or party, loves them with a brother's love, because they belong to Christ; he alone can say, in the fulness of its meaning, "Thy people shall be my people."

But can a worm of the dust presume to add, "Thy God shall be my God?" Yes: for, in so saying, he but echoes back his Saviour's words; "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Such was the last message of him, who, though in the form of God, and equal with God, yet humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Through the merits of that cross alone, can we approach the mercy-

seat, or draw nigh unto God. And through the assimilative efficacy of that cross alone, and the lessons which it teaches, can we be moulded into that pure and holy, and humble frame of spirit, without which the Gospel would but mock and tantalize us with purchased blessings, and with an offered heaven, which we could not enjoy. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life." If such be our calling, and our salvation, can any expressions better befit the Christian, in the contemplation of a Saviour, who for him was crucified, and dead and buried, than those which next follow in my text; "Where thou diest will I die; and there will I be buried?"

So far we can accommodate this interesting portion of Scripture, to the purpose we have had in view. But the analogy, it will be said, can hold no further. For how can the following words, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me;"—how can such expressions be employed by a Christian, in reference to his Saviour? How can one that liveth, and believeth, and shall never die, thus

bespeak the source of life, “the King, eternal, immortal, invisible,” “the Lord, the everlasting God?” How can death part between the deathless fountain, and the deathless stream? So far, it would be an unwarrantable perversion of language, and profane abuse of Scripture, to apply these latter words, in any sense, to the point in hand. Nevertheless, that deep devotedness, and generous attachment, which this form of imprecation implies, “The Lord do so to me, and more also;”—those who unfeignedly love God, will need no prompter to suggest, as the spontaneous movement of their own hearts. I do not mean to put asunder what God has joined together; or to insinuate that we can love God, irrespectively of our own chiefest good, and exceeding great reward. For to love him, and be blessed; to give our whole hearts to God, and to be happy; are but the same inestimable blessing, viewed in two different aspects. Notwithstanding, I do say, that the soul which has tasted of his goodness, and which owns its debt of endless gratitude to a dying Saviour, would, in the contemplation of its own apostacy, turn with abhorrence upon itself; and feel that indignation, that zeal, and that revenge, of which the apostle Paul so emphatically speaks. It is not that the man who feels this generous inspiration, coldly calculates even upon the possibility

of his flying in the face of his Almighty benefactor. His detestation of the thing is his felt assurance, that, amidst all his infirmities and sins, in the sin of unfaithfulness, the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. In such a case, no loyal heart would refuse the test of imprecating just judgment on its own delinquency.

Such was the sentiment of the men of Judah, as we find, 2 Chron. xv. 12—15. “And they entered into a covenant, to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul; that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel *should be put to death*, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah *rejoiced at the oath*; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire.” Such was the kindred feeling of the Psalmist—“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” [Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.] Such also was the mind of the pious Dr. Doddridge.

Do not I love thee, from my soul?

Then let me nothing love;

Dead be my heart to every joy,

When Jesus cannot move.

And here I cannot deny myself the pleasure of

recording an instance, in humbler life, of the same uncompromising fidelity of heart—the same in principle, though the mode of its development was different. A pious woman, wife of a serjeant, whose regiment was quartered in my neighbourhood, was invited to attend the preaching of a Unitarian minister; and, upon her refusal, great solicitation was used. Amongst other arguments, it was said; “Why no one wants you to be convinced against your will. It is mere prejudice, that would object to hear the fair merits of a case. All that we want of you, is to weigh the proofs which can be adduced from Scripture; and then to determine, on which side the truth lies.” To which she replied, in “words that burn.” “Truth!” she said, “I should *hate* truth, if it could persuade me that my Saviour was not God. Nay, if that were proved, I should not care whether there was a God at all. My only wish would be that I never was born.”

But all this may be pronounced by some, bigoted, wild, and frantic. To me, however, it appears in a far different light. I never met, in spite of all her ardour, a more sober-minded Christian, than the one in question; one who better knew her innate depravity; who more thoroughly renounced her own righteousnesses, as filthy rags; or who trusted with a more simple faith, to the alone merits of a Saviour. But that Saviour's death,

and sufferings, and sorrows, had won her heart; and she desired neither life nor heaven, without him.

This is what I would term true loyalty of heart. I do not call it disinterested affection. Strictly speaking, there can be no such thing, in reference to God; for *we know* that all things work together for good, to them that love him. Neither do I say, that it can be irrespective of our own salvation; for love like this *is* salvation. The man who bears this jewel in his breast, is not a mere expectant—he is saved already. This charity never faileth; this love can never die; for it is the seed of immortality, and the dawning of endless day. “Herein,” says the Apostle, “is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” He who loves his Saviour, for his own sake, will not fear to meet him face to face, upon that tremendous, that glorious day. It is true, that when he sees his blessed Lord and master, wearing upon that brow which was once pierced with thorns, his many crowns of glory; and bearing in that hand which was once transfixed with nails, the sceptre of universal empire;—all thoughts of selfish interests will be lost, in the shouts and acclamations of saints and angels, to the once despised, but now exalted Saviour. But though he may forget himself, he will not be forgotten by the Judge of quick

and dead. His all-seeing eye will search him out, amidst the countless millions which crowd around the bar; and say, in more than words, "It is I, be not afraid; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I am the Saviour, whom, though unseen, you loved—whom you thought upon in your bed, and remembered when you were waking. You confessed me, before a generation that disowned me. You were not ashamed of me, nor of my words, amidst a hostile and contemptuous world. And now I fulfil my promise. Now I confess you, before my Father, and the holy angels. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But independently of these considerations, if the solemnities of the day of judgment, were nothing more than splendid metaphor,—if there were no promises nor decrees, to render the salvation of God's elect, as unchangeable as his truth, and as fixed as the pillars of his throne;—the love of God would, by its own inherent energy, reascend to the source from which it flows. That deathless principle would remain unmoved, amidst the storms which will one day shake this earth from her foundations. Amidst the groans of expiring nature, and the ruins of this material fabric, the celestial spark would rise to the life immortal. Love would spread its soft pinions, and soar aloft, through burning elements, and dissolving worlds;

till it lighted on the topmost branch of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God ; and there commenced its never-ending song of praise, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

THE END.

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