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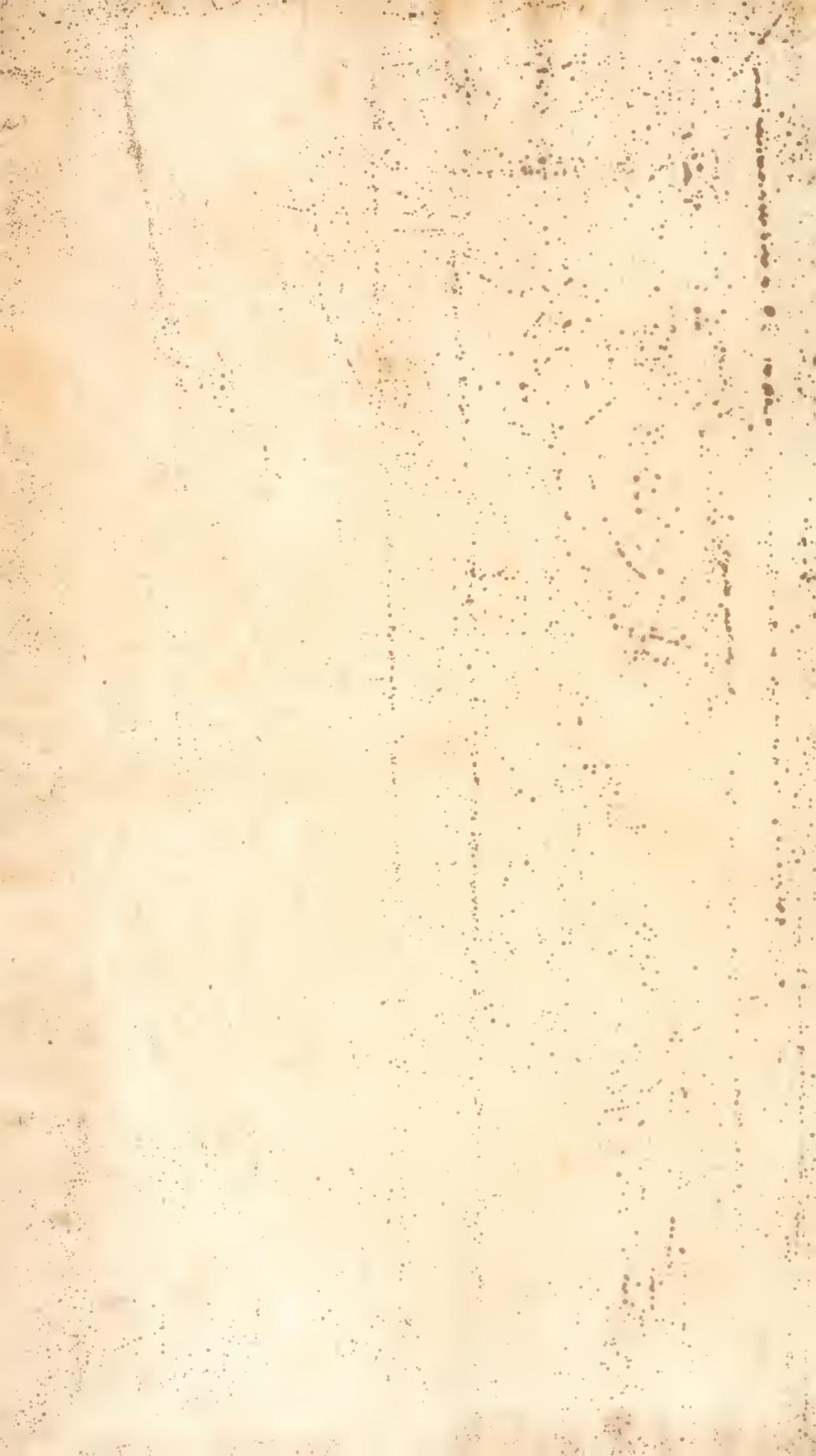






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THE  
WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE

RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES

OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,

London.

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FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION,  
PUBLISHED BY DIRECTION OF HIS EXECUTORS.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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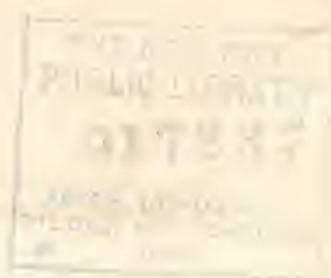
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NEW-HAVEN:  
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## PREFACE.

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THE following Sermons, as to the substance, (for most of them are considerably abridged,) were preached to a public and numerous assembly ; and, therefore, an accurate and logical discussion of the several subjects was not aimed at. They are rather popular discourses, in which the author, though he wished not to treat the politer part of his auditory with disrespect, thought it likewise his duty, so to adapt his manner to the occasion, as to be intelligible to persons of weak capacities, and in the lower ranks of life. He conceives himself to be a debtor to every class of his hearers, and that he ought to endeavour to please all men, with a view to their edification ; but further than this, not to be greatly affected, either by their approbation or by their censure.

Many of the subjects are so nearly coincident, that repetitions could not be always avoided, without the appearance of affectation. Besides, as it may be expected, that in a large congregation there are always some persons present for the first time ; with respect to these, an observation may be new, though, perhaps the more stated hearers may recollect its having been mentioned before. For a similar reason, such repetitions are not improper in print. Many persons read part of a book, who may not have opportunity or inclination to read the whole. Should any one, by opening these Sermons at a venture, meet with a passage which, by a divine blessing, may either awaken a careless, or heal a wounded spirit, that passage will be exactly in the right page, even though the purport of it should be expressed in several other places. Further, since we do not always so much stand in need of new information, as to have what we already know more effectually impressed upon the mind ; there are truths which can scarcely be inculcated too often, at least until the design for which they are mentioned *once* be effectually answered. Thus, when the strokes of a hammer are often repeated, not one of them can be deemed superfluous ; the last, which drives the nail to the head, being no less necessary than any of those which preceded it.

From those readers, whose habits of thinking on religious subjects, are formed by a close attachment to particular systems of divinity, the author requests a candid construction of what he advances, if he ventures, in some instances, to deviate a little more from the beaten track. If he is sometimes constrained to differ from the judgment of wise and

good men, who have deserved well of the church of God, he would do it with modesty. Far from depreciating their labours, he would be thankful for the benefit which he hopes he has received from them. It is a great satisfaction to him, that in all doctrinal points of primary importance, his views are confirmed by the suffrage of writers and ministers eminent for genuine piety and sound learning, who assisted him in his early inquiries after truth, and at whose feet he is still willing to sit. Yet, remembering that he is authorized and commanded to call no man *master*, so as to yield an implicit and unqualified submission to human teachers; while he gladly borrows every help he can from others, he ventures likewise to think for himself. His leading sentiments concerning the grand peculiarities of the Gospel were formed many years since, when he was in a state of almost entire seclusion from society; when he had scarcely any religious book but the Bible within his reach: and had no knowledge either of the various names, parties and opinions, by which Christians were distinguished and divided, or of the controversies which subsisted among them. He is not conscious that any very material difference has taken place in his sentiments since he first became acquainted with the religious world; but, after a long course of experience and observation, he seems to possess them in a different manner. The difficulties, which, for a season, perplexed him in some points, are either removed, or considerably abated. On the other hand, he now perceives difficulties that constrain him to lay his hand upon his mouth, in subjects which once appeared to him obvious and plain. Thus, if he mistakes not himself, he is less troubled with scepticism, and at the same time less disposed to be dogmatical than he formerly was. He feels himself unable to draw the line, with precision, between those essential points which ought to be earnestly contended for, (in a spirit of meekness,) as for the faith once delivered to the saints: and certain secondary positions, concerning which good men may safely differ, and wherein perhaps, we cannot reasonably expect them to be unanimous during the present state of imperfection. But if the exact boundary cannot be marked with certainty, he thinks it both desirable and possible to avoid the extremes into which men of warm tempers have often been led.

Not that the author can be an advocate for that indifference to truth, which under the specious semblance of *moderation* and *candour*, offers a comprehension, from which none are excluded but those who profess and aim to worship God in the spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to renounce all confidence in the flesh. *Moderation* is a Christian grace;

It differs much from that tame unfeeling neutrality between truth and error, which is so prevalent in the present day. As the different rays of light which, when separated by a prism, exhibit the various colours of the rainbow, form, in their combination, a perfect and resplendent *white*, in which every colour is incorporated; so, if the graces of the Holy Spirit were complete in us, the result of their combined effect would be a truly candid, moderate, and liberal spirit towards our brethren. The Christian, especially he who is advanced and established in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his Gospel. The honest warmth which he feels, when such a law is broken, such a Gospel is despised, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occasion of his infirmities, often degenerate into anger or contempt towards those who oppose themselves, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence and humility; it is softened by a consciousness of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited in itself, and very faint in its efficacy; that his attainments are weak and few, compared with his deficiencies; that his gratitude is very disproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unspeakably short of conformity to his prescribed rule; that he has nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing but what, in a greater or less degree, he has misapplied and misimproved. He is therefore a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives on his multiplied forgiveness. And he makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himself a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures. He cannot boast, nor is he forward to censure. He considers himself, lest he also be tempted;\* and thus he learns tenderness and compassion to others and to bear patiently with those mistakes, prejudices, and prepossessions *in them*, which once belonged to his own character; and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed. But then, the same considerations which inspire him with meekness and gentleness towards those who oppose the truth, strengthen his regard for the *truth* itself, and his conviction of its importance. For the sake of peace, which he loves and cultivates, he accommodates himself, as far as he lawfully can, to the weakness and misapprehensions of those who mean well; though he is thereby exposed to the censure of bigots of all parties, who deem him flexible and wavering, like a reed shaken with the wind. But there are other points nearly connected with the

\* Gal. vi. 1.

honour of God, and essential to the life of faith, which are the foundations of his hope, and the sources of his joy. For his firm attachment to these, he is content to be treated as a bigot himself. For here he is immovable as an iron pillar; nor can either the fear or the favour of man prevail on him to give place, no, not for an hour.\* Here his judgment is fixed; and he expresses it in simple and unequivocal language, so as not to leave either friends or enemies in suspense concerning the side which he has chosen, or the cause which is nearest to his heart.

The minister who possesses a candour thus enlightened, and thus qualified, will neither degrade himself to be the *instrument*, nor aspire to be the *head*, of a party. He will not servilely tread in the paths prescribed by men, however respectable. He will not multiply contentions, in defence either of the *shibboleths* of others, or any *nostrum* of his own, under a pretence that he is pleading for the cause of God and truth. His attention will not be restrained to the credit or interest of any detached denomination of Christians, but extended to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. On the other hand, knowing that the Gospel is the wisdom and power of God, and the only possible mean by which fallen man can obtain either peace or rectitude, he most cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being ashamed of it, he esteems it his glory. He preaches Christ Jesus the Lord, and him crucified. He dares not sophisticate,† disguise, or soften the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taste of the times. He disdains the thought. And he will no more encounter the prejudices and corrupt maxims and practices of the world with any weapon but *the truth as it is in Jesus*,‡ than he would venture to fight an enraged enemy with a wooden sword.

Such is the disposition which the author wishes for himself, and which he would endeavour to cultivate in others. He hopes that nothing of a contrary tendency will be found in the volumes now presented to the public. MESSIAH, the great subject of the Oratorio, is the leading and principal subject of every sermon. His person, grace, and glory; his matchless love to sinners; his humiliation, sufferings and death; his ability and willingness to save to the uttermost; his kingdom, and the present and future happiness of his willing people, are severally considered, according to the order suggested by the series of texts. Nearly connected with these topics, are the doctrines of the fall

\* Gal. ii. 5.

† 2 Cor. iv. 2.

‡ Eph. iv. 21.

and depravity of man, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature and necessity of regeneration, and of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. On these subjects the author is not afraid of contradiction from those who are taught of God.

With respect to some other points which incidentally occur, he has endeavoured so to treat them as to avoid administering fuel to the flame of angry controversy. He is persuaded himself, and shall be happy to persuade his readers, that the remaining difference of opinion among those who truly understand and cordially believe the declarations of Scripture on the preceding articles, are neither so wide nor so important as they have been sometimes represented. Many of these differences are nearly verbal, and would cease, if due allowance was made for the imperfection of human language, and the effects of an accustomed phraseology, which often lead people to affix different ideas to the same expressions, or to express the same ideas in different words. And if, in some things, we cannot exactly agree, since we confess that we are all weak and fallible, mutual patience and forbearance would be equally becoming the acknowledgments we make, and the Gospel which we profess. We should thereby act in character, as the followers of Him who was compassionate to the infirmities and mistakes of his disciples, and taught them, not every thing at once, but gradually, as they were able to bear.

The author ought not to be very solicitous, upon his own account, what reception his performance may meet with. The fashion of this world is passing away. The voice, both of applause and of censure, will soon be stifled in the dust. It is therefore but a small thing to be judged of man's judgment.\* But conscious of the vast importance of the subject which he thus puts into the reader's hands, he cannot take leave of him without earnestly entreating his serious attention. The one principle which he assumes for granted, and which he is certain cannot be disproved, is, that the *Bible is a revelation from God*. By this standard he is willing that whatever he has advanced may be tried. If the Bible be true, we must all give an account, each one of himself, to the great and final Judge. That when we shall appear before his awful tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, accepted in the Beloved, is the author's fervent prayer, both for his readers and for himself.

*London, 15th April, 1786.*

\* 1 Cor. iv. 6.



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# Messiah :

FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES,

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES,

WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF THE CELEBRATED

ORATORIO OF HANDEL.

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD-STREET.



—————Al! ———  
Tantamne rem tam negligenter agere! TER.

Unum pro multis dabitur caput. VIRG.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this! DEUT. xxxii. 29.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

PHYSICAL CHEMISTRY

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TO THE PARISHIONERS  
OF  
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW.  
LONDON,  
THESE SERMONS  
ON  
**THE MESSIAH,**  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY  
THE AUTHOR;  
TO REMAIN  
AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS RESPECT FOR THEIR PERSONS,  
AND  
HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE;  
WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION TO THEM.  
AS THEIR MINISTER,  
SHALL BE DISSOLVED.



# MESSIAH.



## SERMON I.

### THE CONSOLATION.

ISAIAH xl. 1, 2.

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

THE particulars of the great mystery of Godliness, as enumerated by the apostle Paul, constitute the grand and inexhaustible theme of the Gospel Ministry, 'God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. It is my wish and purpose to know nothing among you but this subject; to preach nothing to you but what has a real connexion with the doctrine of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and with the causes and effects of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But a regard to the satisfaction and advantage of my stated hearers, has often made me desirous of adopting some plan, which might lead me to exhibit the principal outlines of the Saviour's character and mediation in a regular series of discourses; so as to form, if not a picture, at least a slight sketch of those features of his glory and of his grace, which endear him to the hearts of his people. Such a plan has lately, and rather unexpectedly, occurred to me. Conversation in almost every company, for some time past has much turned upon the commemoration of Handel; the grand musical entertainments, and particularly his Oratorio of the *Messiah*, which have been repeatedly performed on that occasion in Westminster Abbey. If it could be reasonably hoped that the performers and the company assembled to hear the music, or the greater part, or even a very considerable part of them, were capable of entering into the spirit of the subject; I will readily allow that the *Messiah*, executed in so masterly a manner, by persons whose hearts, as well as their voices and instruments, were tuned to the Redeemer's praise; accompanied with the grateful emotions of an audience duly affected with a sense of their obligations to his love; might afford one of the highest and noblest gratifications of which we are capable

in the present life. But they who love the Redeemer, and therefore delight to join in his praise, if they did not find it convenient, or think it expedient, to hear the *Messiah* at Westminster, may comfort themselves with the thought, that, in a little time, they shall be still more abundantly gratified. Ere long, death shall rend the vail which hides eternal things from their view, and introduce them to that unceasing song and universal chorus, which are even now performing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Till then, I apprehend, that true Christians, without the assistance of either vocal or instrumental music, may find greater pleasure in a humble contemplation, on the *words* of the *Messiah*, than they can derive from the utmost efforts of musical genius. This, therefore, is the plan I spoke of. I mean to lead your meditations to the language of the Oratorio, and to consider, in their order, (if the Lord, on whom our breath depends, shall be pleased to afford life, ability, and opportunity,) the several sublime and interesting passages of Scripture which are the basis of that admired composition.

If he shall condescend to smile upon the attempt, pleasure and profit will go hand in hand. There is no *harmony* to a heaven-born soul like that which is the result of the combination and coincidence of all the Divine Attributes and Perfections, manifested in the work of redemption; mercy and truth meeting together, inflexible righteousness corresponding with the peace of offenders, God glorious, and sinners saved. There is no *melody* upon earth to be compared with the voice of the blood of Jesus speaking peace to a guilty conscience, or with the voice of the Holy Spirit applying the promises to the heart, and sweetly inspiring a temper of confidence and adoption. These are joys which the world can neither give nor take away, which never pall upon the mind by continuance or repetition; the sense of them is always *new*, the recollection of them is always pleasant. Nor do they only satisfy, but sanctify the soul. They strengthen faith, animate hope, add fervency to love, and both dispose and enable the Christian to run in all the paths of holy obedience with an enlarged heart.

The *Messiah* of Handel consists of three parts. The first contains prophecies of his advent and the happy consequences, together with the angel's message to the shepherds, informing them of his birth, as related by St. Luke. The second part describes his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension; his taking possession of his kingdom of glory, the commencement of his kingdom of grace upon the earth, and the certain disappointment and ruin of all who persist in opposition to his will.

The third part expresses the blessed fruit and consummation of his undertaking, in the deliverance of his people from sin, sorrow, and death, and in making them finally victorious over all their enemies. The triumphant song of the redeemed, to the praise of the Lamb, who bought them with his own blood, closes the whole. The arrangement or series of these passages is so judiciously disposed, so well connected, and so fully comprehends all the principal truths of the Gospel, that I shall not attempt either to alter or to enlarge it. The exordium or introduction, which I have read to you from the prophecy of Isaiah, is very happily chosen.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the prophet had any reference, in this passage, to the return of Israel from Babylon into their own land, his principal object was undoubtedly of much greater importance. Indeed, their deliverance from captivity, and their state afterwards as a nation, do not appear to correspond with the magnificent images employed in the following verses. For though they rebuilt their city and temple, they met with many insults and much opposition, and continued to be a tributary and dependant people. I shall therefore wave the consideration of this sense.

The eye of the prophet's mind seems to be chiefly fixed upon one august Personage, who was approaching to enlighten and bless a miserable world: and before he describes the circumstances of his appearance, he is directed to comfort the mourners in Zion, with an assurance, that this great event would fully compensate them for all their sorrows. The state of Jerusalem, the representative name of the people of God, was very low in Isaiah's time. The people, who in the days of Solomon were attached to the service of God, honoured with signal tokens of his presence and favour, and raised to the highest pitch of temporal prosperity, were now degenerated; the gold was become dim, and the fine gold changed. Iniquity abounded, judgments were impending, yet insensibility and security prevailed, and the words of many were stout against the Lord. But there were a few who feared the Lord, whose eyes affected their hearts, and who mourned for the evils which they could not prevent. These, and these only, were, in strictness of speech, the people of the Lord; and to these the message of comfort is addressed. Speak to Jerusalem comfortably, speak to *her heart*, (as the Hebrew word is,) to her very case, and tell her that there is a balm for all her wounds, a cordial for all her griefs, in this one consideration, MESSIAH is at hand. In the prophetic style, things future are described as present; and that which the mouth of

the Lord has spoken of as sure to take place, is considered as already done. Thus the prophet, rapt in future times, contemplates the manifestation of MESSIAH, the accomplishment of his great undertaking, and all the happy consequences of his obedience unto death for men, as though he stood upon the spot, and with John, the harbinger of our Lord (whose appearance he immediately describes,) was pointing with his finger to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

This comfortable message consists of two parts. First, the removal of evil; her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned. Secondly, A promise of good more than equivalent to all her afflictions; she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

I. Two ideas are included in the original term translated *warfare*.

1. A state of service connected with hardship, like that of a military life, Numb. i. 3.

2. An appointed time, as it is rendered in Job vii. 1. and xiv. 14.

These ideas equally apply to the Mosaic dispensation. The spirit of that institution was comparatively a spirit of bondage, distance, and fear; and the state of the church, while under the law, is resembled, by the apostle, to that of a minor, who, though he be an heir, is under tutors and governors, and differeth but little from a servant, until the time appointed of the Father, Gal. iv. 1—4. The ceremonial law, with respect to its inefficacy, is styled *weak*, and with respect to the long train of its multiplied, expensive, difficult, and repeated appointments, a *yoke and burden*. But it was only for a prescribed time. The gospel was designed to supercede it, and to introduce a state of life, power, liberty, and confidence. The blackness and darkness, the fire and tempest, and other circumstances of terror attendant on the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai, Heb. xii. 18—22. which not only struck the people with dismay, but caused even Moses himself to say, 'I exceedingly fear and quake,' were expressive of its design; which was not to lead the people of Israel to expect peace and hope from their best obedience to that covenant; but rather to convince them of the necessity of a better covenant, established upon better promises, and to direct their hopes to MESSIAH, who was prefigured by all their sacrifices; and who, in the fulness of time, was to make a complete atonement for sin, by the sacrifice of himself. Then their legal figurative constitution would cease, the shadows give place to the substance and the true worshippers of God would be instructed, enabled, and en-

couraged to worship him in spirit and in truth ; no more as servants, but in the temper of adoption, as the children of God, by faith in the Son of his love.

There is a considerable analogy to this difference between the Law and the Gospel, as contradistinguished from each other, in the previous distress of a sinner, when he is made sensible of his guilt and danger as a transgressor of the law of God, and the subsequent peace which he obtains by believing the Gospel. The good seed of the word of grace can only take root and flourish in a soil duly prepared. And this preparation of the heart, Prov. xvi. 1. without which all that is read or heard concerning MESSIAH produces no permanent good effect, is wholly from the Lord. The first good work of the Holy Spirit, upon the heart of fallen man, is to convince of sin, John xvi. 9. He gives some due impressions of the majesty and holiness of the God with whom we have to do, of our dependence upon him, of our obligations to him as our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor ; then we begin to form our estimate of duty, of sin and its desert, not from the prevalent maxims and judgment of mankind around us, but from the unerring standard of Scripture. Thence new and painful apprehensions arise—the lofty looks of man are humbled, his haughtiness is brought low, his mouth stopped, or only opened to confess his guilt and vileness, and to cry for mercy. He now feels himself, under the law ; it condemns him, and he cannot reply ; it commands him and he cannot obey. He has neither righteousness nor strength, and must sink into despair, were it not that he is qualified to hearken to the Gospel with other ears, and to read the Scriptures with other eyes, (if I may so speak,) than he once did. He now knows he is sick, and therefore knows his need of a physician. This state of anxiety, conflict, and fear, which keeps comfort from his heart, and perhaps slumber from his eyes, is often of long continuance. There is no common standard whereby to determine either the degree or the duration. Both differ in different persons ; and as the body and the mind have a strong and reciprocal influence upon each other, it is probable the difference observable in such cases may, in part, depend upon constitutional causes. However, the time is a prescribed time, and though not subject to any rules or reasonings of ours, is limited and regulated by the wisdom of God. He wounds, and he heals in his own appointed moment. None that continue waiting upon him, and seeking salvation in the means which he has directed, shall be finally disappointed. Sooner or later he gives them, according to his promise, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise

for the spirit of heaviness, Isa. lxi. 3. This warfare is accomplished, when they rightly understand and cordially believe the following clause :

‘ Her iniquity is pardoned.’ Though the sacrifices under the law had an immediate and direct effect to restore the offender, for whom they were offered, to the privileges pertaining to the people of Israel considered as a nation or commonwealth, they could not, of themselves, cleanse the conscience from guilt. It is a dictate of right reason, no less than of revelation, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, Heb. x. 4. For this purpose the blood of Christ had a retrospective efficacy, and was the only ground of consolation for a convinced sinner, from the beginning of the world. He was proposed to our first parents as the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head, Gen. iii. 15. In this seed Abraham believed, and was justified ; and all, of every age, who were justified, were partakers of Abraham’s faith. Therefore the apostle teaches us, that when God set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, he declared his righteousness in the remission of the sins that were past, Rom. iii. 25. For though we may suppose God would have declared his *mercy* in forgiving sin upon any terms, no consideration but the death of his Son could have exhibited his *righteousness*—that is, his holiness, justice, and truth, in the pardon of sin. True penitents and believers were pardoned and saved *under* the law, but not *by* the law. Their faith looked through all the legal institutions to him who was represented and typified by them. But the types which revealed him, in a sense concealed him likewise. So that, though Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced, and a succession of the servants of God foresaw his glory and his sufferings, and spake of him ; yet, in general, the church of the Old Testament rather desired and longed for, than actually possessed, that fulness of light and knowledge concerning the person, offices, love, and victory of Messiah, which is the privilege of those who enjoy and believe the Gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40. Yet great discoveries of these things were vouchsafed to some of the prophets, particularly to Isaiah, who, on account of the clearness of his views of the Redeemer and his kingdom, has been sometimes styled a fifth Evangelist. The most evangelical part of his prophecy, or at least that part in which he prosecutes the subject with the least interruption, begins with this chapter and with this verse. And he proposes it for the comfort of the mourners in Zion in his day. We know that the Son of God, of whom Moses and the prophets

spake, is actually come, 1 John v. 20; that the atonement for sin is made, the ransom for sinners paid and accepted. Now the shadows are past, the veil removed, the night is ended, the dawn, the day is arrived, yea, the Sun of Righteousness is arisen with healing in his beams, Mal. iv. 2. God is reconciled in his Son, and the ministers of the Gospel are now authorized to preach comfort to all who mourn under a sense of sin, to tell them all manner of sin is forgiven for the Redeemer's sake, and that the iniquity of those who believe in him is freely and abundantly pardoned.

II. Though the last clause of the verse does not belong to the passage, as selected for the Oratorio, it is so closely connected with the subject, that I am not willing to omit it. 'She has received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' The meaning here cannot be, that her afflictions had already been more, and greater, than her sins had deserved. The just desert of sin cannot be received in the present life, for the wages of sin is death and the curse of the law, or, in the apostle's words, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Therefore a living man can have no reason to complain under the heaviest sufferings. If we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners, we have likewise cause to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities. Nor can the words be so applied to MESSIAH as to intimate, that even his sufferings were more than necessary, or greater than the exigence of the case required. The efficacy of his atonement is indeed greater than the actual application, and sufficient to save the whole race of mankind if they truly believed in the Son of God. We read, that he groaned and bled upon the cross, till he could say, It is finished, but no longer. It becomes us to refer to infinite wisdom the reasons why his sufferings were prolonged for such a precise time; but I think we may take it for granted that they did not endure an hour or a minute longer than was strictly necessary. The expression seems to be elliptical, and I apprehend the true sense is, that Jerusalem should receive *blessings*, double, much greater than all the afflictions which sin had brought upon her; and in general to us, to every believing sinner, that the blessings of the Gospel are an unspeakably great compensation, and over-balance, for all afflictions of every kind with which we have been, or can be exercised. Afflictions are the fruit of sin, and because our sins have been many, our afflictions may be many. 'But where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded,' Rom. v. 20.

Before our Lord healed the paralytic man who was brought to him, he said, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*, Mark ii. 5. His outward malady rendered him an object of compassion to those who brought him; but he appears to have been sensible of an inward malady, which only Jesus could discern, or pity, or relieve. I doubt not but his conscience was burdened with guilt. An assurance, therefore, that his sins were forgiven, was sufficient to make him be of good cheer, whether his palsy were removed or not. To this purpose the Psalmist speaks absolutely and without exception. ‘Blessed is the man,’ however circumstanced, ‘whose transgression is forgiven, whose iniquity is covered,’ Psal. xxxii. 1. Though he be poor, afflicted, diseased, neglected or despised, if the Lord imputeth not his iniquity to him, he is a blessed man. There is no situation in human life so deplorable, but a sense of the pardoning love of God can support and comfort the sufferer under it, compose his spirit, yea, make him exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations; for he feels the power of the blood of Jesus cleansing his conscience from guilt, and giving him access, by faith, to the throne of grace, with liberty to say, *Abba, Father*; he knows that all his trials are under the direction of wisdom and love, are all working together for his good, and that the heaviest of them are light, and the longest momentary, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is reserved for him in a better world, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. Even at present, in the midst of his sufferings, having communion with God, and a gracious submission to his will, he possesses a peace that passeth understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I shall close this preliminary discourse with a few observations, by way of improvement.

1. How justly may we adopt the prophet’s words, ‘Who is a God like unto thee!’ Micah vii. 18. Behold and admire his goodness! Infinitely happy and glorious in himself, he has provided for the comfort of those who were rebels against his government, and transgressors of his holy law. What was degenerate Israel, and what are we, that he should thus present us with his mercy, remember us in our low estate, and redeem us from misery, in such a way, and at such a price! Salvation is wholly of *grace*: Eph. ii. 5. not only undeserved, but undesired by us, till he is pleased to awaken us to a sense of our need of it. And then we find every thing prepared that our wants require, or our wishes can conceive: yea, that he has done exceedingly beyond what we could either

ask or think. Salvation is wholly of the *Lord*, Psalm iii. 8. and bears those signatures of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, which distinguish all his works from the puny imitations of men. It is every way worthy of himself, a great, a free, a full, a sure salvation. It is great, whether we consider the objects, miserable and hell-deserving sinners; the end, the restoration of such alienated creatures to his image and favour, to immortal life and happiness; or the means, the incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and death of his beloved Son. It is free, without exception of persons or cases, without any conditions or qualification, but such as he himself performs in them and bestows upon them. It is full, including every desirable blessing; pardon, peace, adoption, protection, and guidance through this world, and in the world to come eternal life and happiness, in the unclouded, uninterrupted enjoyment of the favour and love of God, with the perfect and perpetual exclusion of every evil.

2. When the Lord God, who knows the human heart, would speak comfort to it, he proposes one object, and only one, as the necessary and all-sufficient source of consolation. This is *MES-  
SIAH*. *JESUS*, in his person and offices, known and received by faith, affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. If we admit that they who live in the spirit of the world, can make a poor shift to amuse themselves, and be tolerably satisfied in a state of prosperity, while every thing goes on according to their wish; while we make this concession, (which, however, is more than we need allow them, for we know that no state of life is free from anxiety, disappointment, weariness, and disgust,) yet we must consider them as objects of compassion. It is proof of the weakness and disorder of their minds that they are capable of being satisfied with such trifles. Thus, if a lunatic conceives his cell to be a palace, that his chains are ornaments of gold: if he calls a wreath of his straw a crown, puts it on his head, and affects the language of majesty—we do not suppose the poor creature to be happy because he tells us that he is so: but we rather consider his complacency, in his situation, as an effect and proof of his malady. We pity him, and, if we were able, would gladly restore him to his senses, though we know a cure would immediately put an end to his pleasing delusions. But, I say, supposing or admitting the world could make its votaries happy in a state of prosperity, it will, it must leave them without resource in the day of trouble. And they are to be pitied indeed, who, when their gourds are withered, when the desire of their eyes is taken from them with a stroke, or the evil which they most feared touches them, or when death looks them closely in the face, have no acquaintance with God, no access to the throne of grace, but,

being without Christ, are without a solid hope of good hereafter, though they are forced to feel the vanity and inconstancy of every thing here. But they who know MESSIAH, who believe in him, and partake of his spirit, cannot be comfortless. They recollect what *he* suffered for them, they know that every circumstance and event of life is under his direction, and designed to work for their good; that though they sow in tears, they shall soon reap in joy; and therefore they possess their souls in patience, and are cheerful, yea, comfortable, under those trying dispensations of Providence, which, when they affect the lovers of pleasure, too often either excite in them a spirit of presumptuous murmuring against the will of God, or sink them into despondency, and all the melancholy train of evils attendant on those who languish and pine away under that depression of spirits, emphatically styled a broken heart.

3. To be capable of the comfort my text proposes, the mind must be in a suitable disposition. A free pardon is a comfort to a malefactor, but it implies guilt; and therefore they who have no apprehension that they have broken the laws, would be rather offended than comforted, by an offer of pardon. This is one principal cause of that neglect, yea, contempt, which the Gospel of the grace of God meets with from the world. If we could suppose that a company of people who were all trembling under an apprehension of his displeasure, constrained to confess the justice of the sentence, but not as yet informed of any way to escape, were to hear this message for the first time, and to be fully assured of its truth and authority, they would receive it as life from the dead. But it is to be feared, that for want of knowing themselves, and their real state in the sight of him with whom they have to do, many persons, who have received pleasure from the music of the *Messiah*, have neither found, nor expected, nor desired to find, any comfort from the words.

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## SERMON II.

THE HARBINGER.

ISAIAH, xl. 3--5.

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

THE general style of the prophecies is poetical. The inimitable simplicity which characterizes every part of divine Revela-

tion is diversified according to the nature of the subject; and the magnificence and variety of imagery which constitute the life and spirit of poetry, evidently distinguish the style of the Psalms, of Isaiah, and the other poetical books, from that of the historical, even in the common versions. The various rules and properties of Hebrew poetry are not, at this distance of time, certainly known. But the present bishop of London,\* in his elegant and instructive lectures on the subject, and in the discourse prefixed to his translation of Isaiah, has fully demonstrated one property. It usually consists either of parallel or contrasted sentences. The parallel expressions (excepting in the book of Proverbs) are most prevalent. In these, the same thought, for substance, expressed in the first member, is repeated, with some difference of phrase, in the following; which, if it enlarges or confirms the import of what went before, seldom varies the idea. Almost any passage I first cast my eye upon will sufficiently explain my meaning. For instance, in the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah:

- Ver. 1. Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save,  
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
- Ver. 9. Therefore is judgment far from us,  
Neither doth justice overtake us;  
We wait for light, but behold obscurity;  
For brightness, but we walk in darkness.

So in Chap. lv.

- Ver. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread;  
And your labour for that which satisfieth not?  
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,  
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

So likewise in Psalm ii.

- Ver. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;  
The Lord shall have them in derision.
- Ver. 5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath;  
And vex them in his sore displeasure.

These specimens may suffice for my present purpose. The knowledge of this peculiarity of the poetical idiom may often save us the trouble of inquiring minutely into the meaning of every single word, when one plain and comprehensive sense arises from a view of the whole passage taken together. This observation applies to the first of the verses in my text. Though it be true that John the Baptist lived for a season retired and un-

\*Dr. Lowth.

noticed in a wilderness, and began to preach in the wilderness of Judea, the expression, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, does not merely foretell that circumstance. The verse consists of two parallels. The prophet, wrapt in future times, hears a voice proclaiming the approach of MESSIAH, and this is the majestic language.

In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord ;  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The wilderness and the desert are the same here, as likewise in chap. xxxv. where the happy, the sudden, the unexpected effects of his appearance are described :

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad,  
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Now to see, by the eye of faith, the glory of the Redeemer in his appearance ; to see power divine preparing the way before him ; to enter into the gracious and wonderful design of his salvation ; acknowledge, admire, and adore him as the Lord, and humbly to claim him as *our God*, must afford a pleasure very different from that which the most excellent music, however well adapted to the words, can possibly give. The latter may be relished by a worldly mind ; the former is appropriate, and can only be enjoyed by those who are taught of God.

When the eastern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before, to give notice that the king was upon the road, and likewise proper persons to prepare his way, and to remove obstacles. Some of them, (if we may depend upon history,) in the affectation of displaying their pomp and power, effected extraordinary things upon such occasions. For man, though vain, would appear *wise* ; though a sinful worm, he would fain be accounted *great*. We read of their having actually filled up valleys, and levelled hills, to make a commodious road for themselves or their armies, through places otherwise impassable. The prophet thus illustrates great things by small, and accommodates the language and usages of men to divine truth. MESSIAH is about to visit a wilderness world ; and those parts of it which he blesses with his presence, shall become the garden of the Lord. Till then it is all desolate, rocky and wild. But his way shall be prepared. Mountainous difficulties shall sink down before him into plains. In defiance of all obstacles, his glory shall be revealed in the wilderness, and all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The leading ideas respecting MESSIAH'S appearance, suggested by this sublime representation, are,

I. The state of the world at his coming—*A wilderness.*

II. The preparation of his way. 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.'

III. The manner and effects of his manifestation. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it.'

I. The word *wilderness*, I suppose, generally excites the idea of an intricate, solitary, uncultivated, dangerous place. Such is the description Jeremiah gives of that wilderness, through which the Lord led Israel, when he had delivered them from Egypt. 'A land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passeth through, and where no man dwelt,' Jer. ii. 6. The world in which we sojourn for a season, does not appear to us in this unpleasing view at first. The spirit, and the things of it, are congenial to our depraved inclinations; and especially in early life, our inexperienced hearts form high expectations from it; and we rather hope to find it a paradise than a wilderness. But when the convincing power of the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding, we awake as from a dream; the enchantment by which we were deluded is broken, and we then begin to judge rightly of the world; that it is a wearisome wilderness indeed, and that our only important concern with it is to get happily out of it. In a spiritual view, a wilderness is a significant emblem of the state of mankind, both Jews and Heathens, at that period which the apostle calls the fulness of time, when God sent forth his Son, Gal. iv. 4.

Israel, once the beloved people of God, was at that time so extremely degenerated, that, a few individuals excepted, the vineyard of the Lord, so highly cultivated, so signally protected, yielded only wild grapes, Isaiah v. 4. Though they were not addicted to imitate the idolatry of the Heathens, as their forefathers had been, they were no less alienated from the true God; and their wickedness was the more aggravated, for being practised under a professed attachment to the forms of his law. They drew nigh to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him, Mark vii. 6. Their very worship profaned the temple in which they gloried, and the holy house of prayer, through their abominations, was become a den of thieves. They owned the divine authority of the Scriptures, and read them with seeming attention, but rendered them of none effect, through the greater attention they paid to the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boasted in their relation to Abraham as their father, but

proved themselves to be indeed the children of those who had persecuted and murdered the prophets, Matth. xxiii. 30, 31. The Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in the chair of Moses, and were the public teachers of the people, under an exterior garb of sanctity, of prayer and fasting, were guilty of oppression, fraud and uncleanness: and while they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, their real character was a combination of pride and hypocrisy. Therefore, he who knew their hearts, and saw through all their disguises, compared them to painted sepulchres, fair to outward appearance, but within, full of filth and impurity, Matth. xxiii. 27. From the spirit of these blind guides, we may judge of the spirit of the blind people who held them in admiration, and were willingly directed and led by them. Thus was the faithful city become a harlot; it was once full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers, Isa. i. 21. Such a wilderness was Judea when MESSIAH condescended to visit it.

Among the Heathens, ignorance, idolatry, sensuality and cruelty universally prevailed. Their pretended wise men had, indeed, talked of wisdom and morality from age to age; but their speculations were no more than swelling words of vanity, cold, trifling, uncertain, and without any valuable influence, either upon themselves or upon others. They had philosophers, poets, orators, musicians and artists, eminent in their way; but the nations reputed the most civilized, were overwhelmed with abominable wickedness, equally with the rest. The shocking effect of their idolatry upon their moral principles and conduct, notwithstanding their attainments in arts and science, is described by the apostle in the close of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. With great propriety, therefore, the state of the world, both Jew and Gentile, considered in a moral view, is compared by the prophet to a wilderness—a barren and dreary waste. The pursuits and practices of the world were diametrically opposite to the spirit and design of that kingdom which MESSIAH was about to set up; and, therefore, as the event proved, directly disposed to withstand his progress. But,

II. Before his appearance a way was prepared for him in the wilderness.

The providence of God, by a gradual train of dispensations, disposed the political state of mankind in a subserviency to this great event. All the commotions and revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of the earth are so many detached parts of a complicated, but wisely determined plan, of which the es-

establishment of MESSIAH'S kingdom is the final cause. The kings and politicians of the world are not aware of this. God is not in their thoughts. But while they pursue their own ends, and make havock of the peace of mankind to gratify their own interests and ambition, and look no higher, they are ignorantly, and without intention, acting as instruments of the will of God. The wrath of man is overruled to his praise and his purpose, Psalm lxxvi. 10. and succeeds so far as it is instrumental to the accomplishment of his designs, and no further. While they move in this line, their schemes, however injudiciously laid, and whatever disproportion there may seem between the means they are possessed of, and the vast objects they aim at, prosper beyond their own expectations; but the remainder of their wrath he will restrain. Their best projected and best supported enterprizes issue in shame and disappointment if they are not necessary parts of that chain of causes and events which the Lord of all has appointed. Thus Sennacherib, when sent, by the God whom he knew not, to execute his displeasure against the kingdom of Judah, had, for a time, a rapid and uninterrupted series of conquests, Isa. xxxvii. 26—29.; but his attempt upon Jerusalem was beyond the limits of his commission, and therefore failed. Among the principal instruments who were appointed to prepare a way in the wilderness for MESSIAH, and to facilitate the future spread of his kingdom, we may take notice of Alexander; and this designation secured his success, though the extravagancies, excesses, and rashness, which marked his character, were sufficient to have rendered his undertakings abortive, had he not been in the hand of the Lord of hosts, as an axe or a saw in the hand of a workman. By his conquests the knowledge of the Greek language was diffused among many nations; and the Hebrew Scriptures being soon afterwards translated into that language, an expectation of some great deliverer was raised far and wide, before MESSIAH appeared. When this service was fulfilled, the haughty, presumptuous worm who had been employed in it, was no longer necessary, and therefore was soon laid aside; and all his proud designs, for the establishment of his own family and dominion, perished with him. His empire was divided towards the four winds of heaven, and this division likewise contributed to bring forward the purpose of God, Dan. viii. 8. For each of the four kingdoms, established by his successors, being thus separated, became a more easy prey to the Roman power. This power, which had been gradually increasing and extending in the course of several hundred years, was at the height about the time of our Lord's birth. The greatest part of the habitable

earth which was at that time distinctly known, was united under one empire, composed of various kingdoms and governments, which, though once independent and considerable, were then no more than Roman provinces; and as all the provinces had an immediate connexion with Rome, a way was thus prepared, and an intercourse opened, on every side, for the promulgation of the Gospel.

Among the Jews, the professing people of God, a way was prepared for MESSIAH by the ministry of his harbinger, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, (as has been foretold of him by the prophets, particularly by the last of the prophets, Malachi,) preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and proclaiming that the Saviour and his kingdom were at hand. He who sent him accompanied his mission with a divine power. A multitude of persons of various descriptions, were impressed by his message, insomuch that John himself seems to have been astonished at the numbers and characters of those who came to his baptism.

When the ministry of John had thus previously disposed the minds of many for the reception of MESSIAH, and engaged the attention of the people at large, MESSIAH himself entered upon his public office, on the same scene, and among the same people. As he increased, John willingly decreased. So the morning star ceases to be seen, as the sun advances above the horizon. This distinguished servant of God, having finished his work, was removed to a better world. Not in the triumphant manner in which Elijah was translated; but as he came to announce a new dispensation, under which believers were to expect opposition and ill treatment; to walk by faith, and frequently to be called to seal their testimony with their blood, he was permitted to fall a sacrifice to the revenge of a wanton woman; and though we are assured that none of the race of Adam was greater in the estimation of God than he, his death was asked and procured as the reward of an idle dance, Matth. xi. 11. xiv. 8—11.

III. The latter part of my text describes the manner and immediate effects of MESSIAH's appearance during his personal ministry, with an intimation of its future and more extensive consequences.

‘The valleys shall be exalted.’ A valley is an emblem of a low condition. Such was the condition of most of our Lord's followers; but his notice and favour exalted them highly. He came to preach the Gospel to the poor, to fill the hungry with good things, to save the chief of sinners, to open a door of hope

and salvation to persons of the vilest and most despicable characters in human estimation. Such, for instance, was the woman mentioned by the evangelist Luke, Luke vii. 37, 38. The Pharisee thought our Lord dishonoured himself by permitting such a one to touch him, nor had she a word to say in her own behalf. But the compassionate Saviour highly exalted her, when he vouchsafed to plead her cause, to express his gracious acceptance of her tears and love, and to assure her that her sins, though many, were all forgiven. Very low, likewise, was the state of the malefactor on the cross; he had committed great crimes, was suffering grievous torments, in the very jaws of death, Luke xxiii. 42. But grace visited his heart, he was plucked as a brand out of the fire, and exalted to paradise and glory. The world accounts the proud happy, and honours the covetous if they be prosperous. But true honour cometh from God. They who are partakers of the faith and hope of the Gospel, and have interest in the precious promises, are indeed the rich, the happy, the excellent of the earth, however they may be unnoticed or despised by their fellow-creatures. The honour of places, likewise, is to be considered in this light. Bethlehem, though but of little note among the thousands of Judah, was rendered more illustrious, by the birth of MESSIAH, than Babylon or Rome. The Galileans were held in contempt by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as a mean and provincial people; but the places in Galilee, which our Lord frequently visited, or where he sometimes resided, are spoken of as exalted unto heaven, by the honour and privileges of his presence, though some of them were no more than fishing towns. And so at this day, if we have spiritual discernment, we shall judge, that a little village, where the Gospel is known, prized, and adorned by a suitable conversation, has a dignity and importance far preferable to all the parade of a wealthy metropolis, if destitute of the like privileges.

On the contrary, 'Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.' MESSIAH came to pour contempt on all human glory. He detected the wickedness, and confounded the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers, and made it appear, that what is highly esteemed among men, το ὑψηλον, the summit of their boasted excellency, is worthless, yea, abomination in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. And by living himself in a state of poverty, and associating chiefly with poor people, he placed the vanity of the distinctions and affluence which mankind generally admire and envy, in the most striking and humiliating light. Such, likewise was and will be the effect of his Gospel. When faithfully

preached it is found mighty, through God, to the pulling down strong holds, high thoughts, and every species of self-exaltation. When the convincing word touches the heart, it has an effect like the hand-writing which Belshazzar saw upon the walls, Dan. v. 6. In that day the lofty looks of man are humbled, and his haughtiness bowed down, Isa. ii. 11; he dares no longer plead the goodness of his heart, or trust to the work of his hands. A sense of forgiveness and acceptance through the Beloved, received by faith in his atonement, lays him still lower: he now renounces as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, all that he once esteemed his gain, and is glad that he has nothing to trust or glory in but the cross, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Further, every mountain that opposes the kingdom of MESSIAH, in due time must sink into a plain, Zech. iv. 7; though the nations rage, and the rulers take counsel together, he who sitteth in the heavens will support and maintain his own work, and all their power and policy shall fall before it.

‘The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth.’ He came to rectify the perverse disposition of the hearts of men, to soften and subdue their obstinate spirits, and to form to himself a willing people in the day of his power. The Jewish teachers, by their traditions and will-worship, had given an apparent obliquity to the straight and perfect rule of the law of God, and deformed the beauties of holiness, binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, upon the conscience; but he vindicated the law from their corrupt glosses, and made the path of obedience plain, practicable, and pleasant.

‘Thus the glory of the Lord was revealed.’ Not to every eye; many, prejudiced by his outward appearance, and by the low, mistaken views the Jews indulged of the office and kingdom of MESSIAH, whom they expected, could see no form or excellence in him, that they should desire him; but his disciples could say, ‘We beheld his glory,’ John i. 14. He spake with authority. His word was with power. He controlled the elements. He raised the dead. He knew, and revealed, and judged the thoughts of men’s hearts. He forgave sin, and thus exercised the rights, and displayed the perfections of divine sovereignty in his own person. But the prophecy looks forward to future times. After his ascension he filled his apostles and disciples with light and power, and sent them forth, in all directions, to proclaim his love and grace to a sinful world. Then the glory of the Lord was revealed, and spread from one kingdom to another people. We still wait for the full accomplishment of this promise, and

expect a time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It is to the power of his word that we owe the continuance of day and night, and the regular return of the seasons of the year. But these appointments are only for a limited term; the hour is coming, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not a jot or tittle of what he hath declared concerning his kingdom of grace shall fail, till the whole be fulfilled.

Those of you who have heard the *Messiah*, will do well to recollect, whether you were affected by such thoughts as these while this passage was performed; or whether you were only captivated by the music, and paid no more regard to the words than if they had no meaning. They are, however, the great truths of God. May they engage your serious attention, now they are thus set before you!

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## SERMON III.

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### THE SHAKING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

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HAGGAI, ii. 6, 7.

*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts.*

GOD shook the earth when he proclaimed his law to Israel from Sinai. The description though very simple, presents to our thoughts a scene unspeakably majestic, grand, and awful. The mountain was in flames at the top, and trembled to its basis, Exod. xix. 16—19. Dark clouds, thunderings, and lightnings, filled the air. The hearts of the people, of the whole people, trembled likewise; and even Moses himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. Then, as the apostle, referring to this passage, observes, The voice of the Lord shook the earth, Heb. xii. 26. But the prophet here speaks of another, a greater, a more important and extensive concussion. Yet once, a little while, and I will shake not the earth only, but the heavens.

If we really believe that the Scriptures are true, that the prophecies were delivered by holy men who spake as they were

moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they shall all be certainly fulfilled, how studious should we be to attain a right understanding of passages and events, in which we are so nearly interested, that our hearts may be duly affected by them? But, alas! experience and observation strongly confirm the remark of the poet,

Men are but children of a larger growth,

If you put a telescope into the hands of a child, he will probably admire the outside, especially if it be finely ornamented. But the use of it, in giving a more distinct view of distant objects, is what the child has no conception of. The music of the *Messiah* is but an ornament of the words, which have a very weighty sense. This sense no music can explain, and when rightly understood, will have such an effect as no music can produce. That the music of the *Messiah* has a great effect in its own kind, I can easily believe. The ancients, to describe the power of the music of Orpheus, pretend, that when he played upon his harp, the wild beasts thronged around him to listen and seemed to forget their natural fierceness. Such expressions are figurative, and designed to intimate, that by his address and instructions, he civilized men of fierce and savage dispositions. But if we were to allow the account to be true in the literal sense, I should still suppose, that the wild beasts were affected by his music only while they heard it, and that it did not actually change their nature, and render lions and tigers gentle as lambs, from that time forward. Thus I can allow, that they who heard the *Messiah* might be greatly impressed during the performance; but when it was ended, I suppose they would retain the very same dispositions they had before it began. And many, I fear, were no more affected by this sublime declaration of the Lord's design to shake the heavens and the earth, than they would have been, if the same music had been set to the words of a common ballad.

The Jews, when they returned from captivity, and undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord, met with many discouragements. They were disturbed by the opposition and the arts of their enemies, who at one time so far prevailed, as to compel them, for a season to intermit the work. And when the foundation of the temple was laid, the joy of those who hoped soon to see the solemn worship of God restored, was damped by the grief of others, who remembered the magnificence of the first temple, and wept to think how far the second temple would come short of it, Hag. ii. 3. Ezra, iii. 12. In these circumstances, the

prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to animate the people by a promise, that inferior as the second temple might appear, compared with that which Solomon built, the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former, Hag. ii. 9. Had this depended upon a profusion of silver and gold, the Lord could have provided it; for 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine saith the Lord of hosts.' But the glory spoken of was of a different kind. The presence of MESSIAH in the second temple, would render it far more honourable and glorious, though less pompous, than the temple of Solomon; and would be attended with greater consequences than even the manifestation of the God of Israel on mount Sinai. Then he only shook the earth; but under the second temple he would shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, to introduce the kingdom of MESSIAH.

We may consider, from the words,

I. A character of MESSIAH: 'The desire of all nations.'

II. The effects of his appearance: 'Shaking the heavens and the earth.'

III. 'His filling the house with glory.' This close of the 7th verse is not in the passage set to music; but as it is an eminent part of the prophecy, I shall not exclude it.

I. MESSIAH is styled 'The Desire of all nations.' The propriety of this title may be illustrated by two considerations.

1. Before he came into the world to save sinners, an expectation prevailed, in many nations, that a great deliverer and friend to mankind was at hand. This was, perhaps, partly the effect of some ancient traditions founded on the promises of God respecting the seed of the woman, the traces of which, though much corrupted by the addition of fables, were not worn out, but might be chiefly owing to several dispersions of the people of Israel, and imperfect notices derived from the Scriptures in their hands. The sense of many prophecies concerning MESSIAH, though misapplied, is remarkably expressed in a short poem of Virgil, written a few years before our Saviour's birth. This eclogue, of which we have a beautiful imitation in our own language, by Mr. Pope, affords a sufficient proof that the Heathens had an idea of some illustrious personage, who would shortly appear and restore peace, prosperity, and all the blessing of their imaginary golden age, to mankind. The miseries and evils with which the world was filled, made the interposition of such a deliverer highly desirable. There were even a few among the Heathens, such as Socrates and his immediate disciples, who seem to have felt the necessity of a divine teacher; and to be sen-

sible that man in a state of nature, was too depraved, and too ignorant, to be either able or disposed to worship God acceptably without one. There is reason to believe that the Revelation which we enjoy, though despised by too many who affect to be called philosophers in modern times, would have been highly prized by the wisest and best of the philosophers of antiquity. Socrates thought men were not capable of knowing and expressing their own wants, nor of asking what was good for themselves, unless it should please God to send them an instructor from heaven, to teach them how to pray. And, therefore,

2. The need that all nations had of such a Saviour, is sufficient to establish his right to this title, admitting they had no knowledge or expectation of him. If we could suppose a nation involved, for ages, in the darkness of night, though they had no previous notion of light, yet light might be said *to be* their desire, because the light, whenever they should enjoy it would put an end to their calamity, would answer their wants, and, in that sense, accomplish their wishes; for if they could not directly wish for light, they would naturally wish for relief. The Heathens were miserably bewildered. They had a thirst for happiness, which could not be satisfied by any, or all the expedients and pursuits within their reach. They had fears and forebodings of conscience, for which they knew no remedy. They were so sensible, both of their guilt and their weakness, that being ignorant of the character of the true God, and of that forgiveness which is with him, in times of extremity they frequently offered the most expensive sacrifices to the objects of their idolatrous superstition, even the blood and lives of their children, Micah vi. 6. 7. When MESSIAH appeared, as he was the glory of Israel, so he was a light to the Gentiles, as we shall have opportunity of observing more at large hereafter. He, therefore, who came purposely to bless the nations, by turning them from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God, may justly be called their *Desire*, though, in the time of their ignorance, they could form no suitable conception of him.

II. 'I will shake the heavens and the earth.' This part of the prophecy has been, in a measure, literally fulfilled. At his birth a new star appeared. At his death the sun withdrew his shining, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the dead arose. During his life, he often suspended and overruled the stated laws of nature, and exercised supreme power over the visible and invisible worlds. He shook the kingdom of darkness, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his cross. He

shook the kingdoms of the earth ; the idols trembled and disappeared before his Gospel, till, at length, the Roman Empire renounced Heathenism, and embraced the Christian name.

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative. Mountains and trees, land and water, sun and moon, heaven and earth, often signify nations, people and governments. And particularly, heaven and earth are used to denote the religious and political establishment of Israel ; or, as we say, their constitution in church and state. This, without doubt, is the primary sense here. The appearance of MESSIAH shall be connected with the total dissolution of the Jewish economy. The whole of their Levitical institution was fulfilled, superseded, and abrogated by MESSIAH, which was solemnly signified by the rending of the vail of the temple, from the top to the bottom, at his death. And, a few years afterwards, the temple itself was destroyed ; by which event, the worship of God according to the law, of which the temple-service was an essential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. Their civil state, likewise, was dissolved ; they were extirpated from the promised land, and dispersed far and wide among the nations of the earth. Though, in one sense, they are preserved by the wonderful providence of God, as a distinct people, unaffected by the changes and customs around them ; in another sense, they are not a people, having neither settlement nor government, but living as strangers and foreigners in every country where their lot has been cast, Hosea, iii. 4. Nothing like this can be found in the history of mankind. It is an obvious, striking, and perpetual proof of the truth of the Scriptures. What was foretold, concerning them, by Moses and the succeeding prophets, is accomplished, to a demonstration, before our eyes. How unlikely was it once that it should be thus ! yet thus it must be because the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. And all that he has spoken is equally sure. He will yet again shake the heavens and the earth, dissolve the frame of nature, and execute his threatened judgments upon all those who do not receive and obey his Gospel.

III. 'He shall fill this house with glory.' He did so when he condescended to visit it in person. The blind and the lame came thither to him, and he healed them, Matth. xxi. 15, 16. Children felt his power, and sung Hosanna to the Son of David, a title appropriate to MESSIAH ; and when the Pharisees rebuked them, he said, 'If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out,' Luke, xix. 40. As the Lord in his own house, he purged the temple, and drove out those who profaned it ; and not one of his enemies durst offer the least resistance to his will. And when he left it the last time, with sovereign authority he denounced

that awful sentence which was soon afterwards executed by the Romans, both upon the temple and the nation, Matt. xxiii. 37. His glory filled the temple when he was an infant, so that Simeon and Anna then acknowledged his character, and spake of him to those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, Luke, ii. 25—38. Especially his glory was manifested when he proclaimed himself the fountain of life, and invited every thirsty, weary sinner to come to him, to drink and live for ever, John, vii. 37.

The temple of Jerusalem has been long since destroyed. But he has still a house, 'A house not made with hands.' This is his church, comprising all the members of his mystical body. He dwells in each of them individually; he dwells in and among them collectively. Where two or three are met in his name, where his ordinances are administered and prized, where his Gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there he is present in the midst of them. There his glory is seen, his voice heard, his power felt, his goodness tasted, and the savour of his name is diffused as a precious ointment, which refreshes the hearts of his people, renews their strength, and comforts them under all their sorrows and cares. The glory and magnificence of the temple-worship, even in the days of Solomon, was faint, compared with the glory displayed to the hearts of believers, who worship him in spirit and in truth, under the New Testament dispensation. But it can only be perceived by an enlightened and spiritual mind. To outward appearance all may be low and humiliating. The malice of their enemies has often constrained his people to assemble in woods and on mountains, in places under ground, or in the dead of the night, to secrete themselves from informers. But vaulted roofs, and costly garments, the solemn parade of processions, music, and choristers, and the presence of nobles and dignitaries, are not necessary to constitute the glory of Gospel-worship. It is enough that he, in whose name they meet, condescends to visit them with the power and influence of his Spirit, to animate and hear their prayers, to feed them with the good word of his grace, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. If they have these blessings they desire no more, they are compensated for all their difficulties and hardships; and however unnoticed and despised by the world, they can say, 'This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven,' Gen. xxviii. 17. For they approach, by faith, to the city of the living God, the Jerusalem which is above, to the worship which is carried on, day without night, by the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22.

But every member of this mystical temple, being by nature afar off from God, experiences a previous change, which may be not unfitly described by the terms of my text. Before the Lord takes possession of his people, and in order to it, 'He shakes the heavens and the earth.' Their former views of God and of themselves, are altered by a light which penetrates the soul. All that they have been building in religion, till then is shaken and overturned. Their vain hopes are shaken to the foundation. 'This concussion makes way for the perception of his glory as a Saviour. In this day of his power they are made willing to throw open the gates of their hearts, that the King of Glory may enter.

But as I do not stand here to amuse you with a declamation on a subject in which you are not immediately interested, and as my office as a preacher both warrants and requires me to address myself not only to your understandings, but likewise to your consciences, I must be allowed, before I conclude, to propose this question to your consideration, Is MESSIAH, the desire of all nations, the object of your chief desire? How much depends upon the answer! Do you wish to know your present state in the sight of God? If you are faithful to yourselves you may be satisfied, provided you will abide by the decision of the Scripture. God is well pleased *in* his Son; if you are well pleased *with* him, if he is precious to you, and the desire of your soul is supremely directed to him, then you assuredly possess the beginning, the fore-taste, and the earnest of eternal life. If you so enter into the descriptions given in the Bible, of his person, love, office, and glory, as to place your whole dependence upon him, to devote yourselves simply to him, and to place your happiness in his favour, then you are happy indeed! Happy, even at present, though not exempted from a share in the afflictions incident to this mortal state. For your sins are pardoned, your persons are accepted in the Beloved; to you belong the promises of guidance, protection, and supply through life, victory over death, and then a crown of glory which fadeth not away. To say all in a few words, God is your Father, and heaven is your home.

But, on the other hand, if you trust in yourself that you are righteous and good, at least comparatively so; if your attachment to the business or the pleasure of the world engrosses your thoughts and application, so that you have no leisure to attend to the record which God has given of his Son, or no relish for the subject, you have been hitherto guilty of treating the most glorious display of the wisdom and goodness of God with contempt. Many persons thus employed and thus disposed, bear respectable characters in civil life, from which I do not wish to

detract. But, however amiable you may be in the judgment of your fellow-creatures, you are a sinner in the sight of God, and will be treated by him as an enemy to his government and glory, if you finally persist in a rejection of his Gospel. The great point which will determine your state for eternity, will be this, What think you of Christ? For it is written, ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,’ 1 Cor. xvi. 22. He must and will fall under the curse and condemnation of the law, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, (for to-morrow is not ours,) may you hear his voice, and flee for refuge to the hope-set before you.

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## SERMON IV.

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### THE LORD COMING TO HIS TEMPLE.

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MALACHI, iii. 1—3.

*The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap—And he shall purify the sons of Levi—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

‘WHEREUNTO shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?’ Luke. vii. 31. I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom, to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources, they call in the assistance of music. And amidst a great variety of subject in

this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their Judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the ground-work of a musical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The King however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them, that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments, Dan. iii. 5. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed, could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of the people, I should commiserate their insensibility!

But is not this case more than a supposition? Is it not, in the most serious sense, actually realized amongst ourselves? I should insult your understandings, if I judged a long application necessary. I know my supposition *must* already have led your thoughts to the subject of the *Messiah*, and to the spirit and temper of at least the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The Holy Scripture concludes all mankind under sin, Rom. iii. 9. It charges them all with treason and rebellion against the great sovereign Lawgiver and Benefactor; and declares the misery to which as sinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious. The stroke of death, which would instantly place us before his awful tribunal, is still suspended. In the mean time he affords us his Gospel, by which he assures us there is forgiveness with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that, of his great love to sinners, he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator, in favour of all who shall sue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unspeakable love, his dreadful sufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethsemane, and upon the cross are made known to us. And as his past humiliation, so his present glory, and his invitation to

come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. These are the principal points expressed in the passages of the *Messiah*. Mr. Handel, who set them to music, has been commemorated and praised, many years after his death, in a place professedly devoted to the praise and worship of God; yea, (if I am not misinformed,) the stated worship of God, in that place, was suspended for a considerable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr. Handel. But, alas! how few are disposed to praise and commemorate MESSIAH himself! The same great truths, divested of the music, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the Oratorio with indifference, too often with contempt.

Having thus, as I conceived myself bound in duty, plainly and publicly delivered my sentiments of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of Christianity the subject of a public amusement, I leave what I have said to your serious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean to trouble you often with a repetition of it. Let us now consider the passage before us. If you read it with attention, and consider the great ideas it suggests, and the emphatical language with which they are clothed, you will not perhaps, think the manner of my introducing it wholly improper.

Malachi confirms and unites, the prophecies of Isaiah and Haggai, which were the subject of our two last discourses. John is the messenger spoken of in the beginning of the first verse, sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Then 'the Lord himself shall come suddenly to his temple,' that is, immediately after the appearance of his forerunner, and with regard to the people in general, unexpectedly.

The question, 'Who may abide the day of his coming?' intimates the greatness and solemnity of the event. If we take his coming in an extensive sense, to denote the whole of his sojourning upon earth, from his incarnation to his ascension, it is unspeakably the greatest of all events recorded in the annals of mankind; and though he lived in the form of a servant, and died the death of a malefactor, the vast consequences which depend upon his appearance under these humiliating circumstances, rendered it a manner of coming every way worthy of himself. It afforded a more awful discovery of the majesty, glory, and holiness of God, than was displayed upon mount Sinai, and proved a closer and more searching appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. To enter more into the spirit and meaning of the question here proposed, we shall briefly take notice of the following points which the words offer to our serious meditation. May the

Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify the Saviour, enlighten our hearts to understand them, with application to ourselves!

I. The *names* which are here ascribed to MESSIAH.

II. 'The suddenness of his coming.

III. 'The searching power of it in general, expressed by 'a refiner's fire,' and by 'fuller's soap.'

IV. Its purifying power on the 'sons of Levi,' the priesthood in particular.

I. The names ascribed to MESSIAH.

'The Lord.' It is a general rule with our translators to express LORD in capital letters, where it answers to Jehovah in the Hebrew, and there only. But this place is an exception. The word here is not Jehovah, but Adonia. It is, however, a name of God, though not incommunicable like the other, being frequently applied to kings and superiors. It properly implies authority and rule; as we say, *A Lord and Master*. In this connexion it is undoubtedly a divine name. The Lord is said to come to his temple, to his own temple. It was a house consecrated to the God of Israel. The first temple he honoured with tokens of his presence; the second, he visited in person; on which account it exceeded the first in glory. MESSIAH, therefore, who appeared in our nature, and was known amongst men, as a man, and who is now worshipped both in heaven and upon earth, is the God of Israel. 'He came to his own.' This doctrine of God manifest in the flesh is the pillar and ground of truth: the only foundation on which a sinner, who knows the just desert of his sin, can build a solid hope of salvation, is, that Jesus Christ 'is the true God and eternal life,' 1 John, v. 20. Unless this be admitted, the whole tenour, both of the Old and New Testament, is unintelligible. To say that this doctrine approves itself to human reason in its present fallen, depraved state, would be to contradict the apostle, who asserts, that 'no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,' 1 Cor. xii. 3. But it is highly reasonable to those who see that they must perish without such an atonement as shall declare the righteousness of God, no less than his mercy, in the forgiveness of sin; who feel the necessity of holiness, in order to happiness; and are acquainted with the nature and variety of the snares, temptations, and enemies to which they are exposed. Such persons cannot venture their eternal concerns upon the dignity, or care, or power, or patience of a mere creature, however exalted and excellent; they must be assured that their Saviour is almighty, or they dare not trust in him; nor would they dare to honour the Son as they honour the

Father, to love him with all their heart, and soul, and strength ; to devote themselves absolutely to his service, and to expect their supreme happiness from his favour and approbation, if they did not know that he is over all, God blessed forever.

With respect to the inferior character he sustains in our nature, and for our sakes, as the Father's servant, he is styled, 'The Messenger of the covenant.' He is the Gift, Promise, Head, and Substance of the everlasting covenant. And he came himself to establish the covenant, and to declare and bestow the blessing it contained. 'God, who had before spoken, at divers times, and in sundry manners, by his prophets, spoke, in the fulness of time, by his Son, Heb. i. 1 ; testifying to him by a voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him ; in him I am well pleased,' Matth. iii. 17. To the same purpose our Lord spake of himself. He prefaced his gracious invitation to all, without exception, who are weary and heavy laden, to come to him for rest, with a declaration of his commission and authority, saying, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one,' (*οὐδεις*) 'knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him,' Matth. xi. 27. The law was given by Moses, John, i. 17 ; the moral law, to discover the extent and abounding of sin ; the ceremonial law, to point out, by typical sacrifices and ablutions, the way in which forgiveness was to be sought and obtained. But *grace*, to relieve us from the condemnation of the one, and *truth* answerable to the types and shadows of the other, came by Jesus Christ.

It is further said, 'The Lord, whom ye seek, and the Messenger in whom ye delight.' MESSIAH was the hope and desire of the true Israel of God, from the earliest times ; and when he was born into the world, there was a prepared people waiting and longing for him, as their consolation. The people at large, likewise, professed to expect great things from the coming of MESSIAH. But their expectations were low and earthly. They supposed that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them victory and power over the Heathen nations. The mere grievous bondage of sin under which they were enslaved, they were not sensible of, nor had they had a disposition suited to the privileges and honours of the kingdom which he designed to establish ; and therefore, their understandings being darkened by prejudice and prepossession, they could not discern his character. The prophecies, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath, marked out the time and circumstances of MESSIAH's appearance, the places which he should principally visit,

the doctrine he should teach, and the works which he should perform ; but though all these particulars exactly applied to Jesus, they obstinately rejected him, and proceeded to fulfil what was further foretold of his sufferings and death, with such a minute punctuality, as if they had designedly taken the prophecies for the rule of their conduct. Thus, by giving neither more nor less than thirty pieces of silver to his betrayer ; by buying the potter's field, and no other, with the money afterwards ; by casting lots for one of his garments, and making a distribution of the rest ; by piercing his side, contrary to the customs in such punishments ; and by omitting to break his legs, which, from their treatment of the malefactors who suffered with him, seems to have been usual—in these, and several other instances, they acted, though unwittingly, as if it had been their design and study to accomplish the Scriptures, to their own confusion and condemnation.

II. This was the reason why his coming to his temple was to them *sudden*. Though long foretold and long expected, and though the precise time of his advent, and the accompanying signs, were accurately defined and described, yet, when the season arrived, he came suddenly, unlooked for, and unknown. He came upon them in an hour that they thought not of, and in a manner of which they were not aware. When he stood in the midst of them, they knew not that it was he. How dreadfully does sin harden and infatuate the hearts of men ! The Jews, in our Saviour's time, furnish us with a striking instance, that it is possible for people fatally to miscarry with the greatest advantages and means for information in their possession. They accounted themselves the people of God, made their boast of his law, and their relation to Abraham. But they hated MESSIAH, and crucified *him* who was the object of Abraham's faith. The opposition of their leaders and teachers was the most malicious ; for many of them acted against the light of their minds, and were often convicted in their consciences, though they refused to be convinced. But an ignorant attachment to these blind guides was ruinous to their blind followers ; who, though they sometimes, from a view of his mighty works, were struck with astonishment, and constrained to say, ' Is not this the son of David ? ' were at length influenced by their priests to prefer a murderer to him, and with a clamorous importunity, to compel Pilate to put him to death. The like misapprehensions produce the like effects among professed Christians at this day. *We*, likewise, have the Scriptures ; but how many who admit their authority in words, live willingly ignorant of their contents.

and act in direct contradiction to their tenour ! The power of the Saviour is likewise displayed among us : his preached Gospel is daily made effectual to the great purposes for which it is vouchsafed, yet multitudes reject it with no less pertinacity than the Jews rejected him in person. At length death surprises them, and they sink into darkness, beyond recall. To them the Lord may be said to come suddenly, for they think not of him till they actually find themselves at his tribunal. And this not only when they are cut off by a sudden stroke, but often when their dissolution is most gradual, and every one about them can perceive its approach by their countenances ; they themselves, though wasting with disease, and worn out with pain, still flatter themselves with hopes of amendment and recovery to the last gasp ; and a lingering death is to them no less sudden than if they were killed by a flash of lightning.

III. It is asked, 'Who may abide the day of his coming ?' The effect is compared to a refiners's fire, and to fuller's soap. The refiner's fire penetrates the metal, and thereby searches, discovers, and consumes the dross. The fuller's soap also, though it does not destroy the texture of the cloth, cleanses it, by removing, and, as it were, consuming the spots and defilement which are found in it. The idea conveyed by these illustrations is the same. The day of his coming is a day of trial, a trial which issues in the purification of the work of God in his church, and in the detection and destruction of every thing in it which is contrary to his will.

The coming of MESSIAH may be taken in several senses.

To the Jews, according to the promise of God, repeated from age to age, he came in person. 'The word was made flesh, and dwelt among them,' John, i. 14. The term in the original alludes to the visible symbol of the divine presence, which resided in the tabernacle and temple. Thus, for a season, he resided among them, in a temple not made with hands, but formed by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a virgin. This was a happy time to those who received and acknowledged him. But the bulk of the nation could not abide the trial which his appearance exposed them to ; they were proved by it to be but reprobate and counterfeit silver. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed, Luke, ii. 35. Many specious characters were detected. The pretended sanctity and outward strictness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was evidenced to be mere hypocrisy. He exposed them in their true colours, and upon many occasions put them to shame and to silence. And where his word did not cleanse like soap, it burnt like fire, and the persons and places that rejected

him were rendered inexcusable. Their great privilege of seeing his wonderful works, and hearing his gracious words, being abused, aggravated their guilt and condemnation, and made their doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To them, the day of the Lord, which in their own sense they professed to desire, was darkness, and not light, Amos, v. 18. If he had not come and spoken to them himself, they had not had sin, John, xv. 22. That is, comparatively; he found them great sinners, and they would have been such if he had not visited them. But after he had spoken to them, and spoken in vain, they had no cloak for their sin. From that time they were deprived of every shadow of plea, excuse, or extenuation. And all their former wickedness was light compared with the enormous crime they were guilty of in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. By refusing him, they rendered their case helpless and hopeless, because there is no other name but his, given among men, whereby they may be saved. But he cleansed those who received him, he removed their guilt, their fears, their ignorance. He gave them a clean heart, and a new spirit. Yet to these, also, he was as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap. They likewise had prejudices and selfish tempers, which were not at once removed. He called them to a state of suffering and self-denial, to forsake all, and to take up their cross daily for his sake.

In another sense, his coming is not restrained to a particular time. Wherever his Gospel is preached, the Lord is come. It is by the Gospel he rides forth prosperously, conquering and to conquer, Psalm xlv. 4. Thus he has promised to be present with his ministers, 'and wherever two or three are met in his name,' to the end of the world. Thus he is come to us. And the effects are the same as when he was personally upon earth. His Gospel still discovers the thoughts of many hearts. Many persons who, till then, were reputed religious, by the contempt they cast upon this wonderful expedient of infinite wisdom and love to save sinners, manifest their ignorance and hatred of the law and holiness of God, and that the religion they pretend to is an empty, lifeless form destitute of life and power. To them, though in itself a savour of life, it proves a savour of death. It provokes their enmity, increases their obduracy, and leaves them without excuse. But it is life indeed, to those who receive it. They are raised by it from a death of sin, unto a life of righteousness and peace. Their tempers, desires, pursuits, and hopes, are changed and elevated. Old things pass away, and all things become new

to them, according as it is written, 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature,' 2 Cor. v. 17.

He comes to individuals by the power of his Spirit. This makes the word of his Gospel effectual. For the kingdom of God is not in word only but in power. When he thus visits the hearts of sinners, his word is like fire and soap; 'quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword,' Heb. iv. 12. Then they feel, and tremble, and cry out, with the prophet, 'Woe is me, I am undone.' But in this way their dross is consumed, their defilement removed. When he thus wounds, he likewise heals. He gives them faith; by faith they look unto him, are enlightened and saved.

We surely expect that he will come again. Not as he once came, in a state of humiliation. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of Sorrows, who hung, and bled, and died upon the cross for our sins, will return in glory. 'Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him,' Rev. i. 7. Concerning this day, emphatically called the day of the Lord, we may well say, 'Who may abide it?' To those who have not been the subjects of his refining operations here, he will then be a consuming fire. That great day, (for which all other days were made,) 'when the Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble,' and the day that cometh 'shall burn them up,' Mal. iv. 1. Where, then, shall the impenitent, ungodly sinner appear? But it will be a joyful day to them that love his appearing. He will arise upon them, as the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on his wings; he will wipe away their tears, vindicate their characters, acknowledge them before the assembled world, and say unto them, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you,' Matth. xxv. 34.

IV. It is particularly said, 'He will purify the sons of Levi,' that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. 'The Sons of Levi,' the priests, the officiating ministers of God, 'were gone out of the way, and had corrupted the covenant of the Lord, and thereby had caused many to stumble,' Mal. ii. 8, 9; they dishonoured their office, and became themselves vile and contemptible. Thus they went on, from bad to worse, till the men of that generation filled up the measure of the iniquity of their forefathers, by the rejection of MESSIAH. He also rejected them. The blasted, barren fig-tree, (Matth. xxi. 19.) which withered to the very root at his word, was an emblem of their con-

dition. In a little time, wrath came upon them to the uttermost ; they saw the temple in which they had trusted, and which they had profaned, destroyed by fire, and the greater part of them perished. But a remnant of them was purified. We read, that after his ascension, a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, Acts, vi. 7. And his apostles and disciples were sent forth with a new spirit, and in a new character, to offer and to serve in righteousness. The purport of this passage has been repeatedly exemplified under the Christian dispensation. A declension from the simplicity and purity of worship, principles, and morals, was visible very early in the church. The progress of it was rapid, especially from the time of Constantine. When persecution ceased, and a tide of wealth and worldly honours flowed in upon those who, by their profession, were bound to be patterns of humility and self-denial to others ; from that period till the Reformation, ecclesiastical history affords us little more than a detail of such instances of pride, intrigue, oppression, and cruelty, under the pretext of religion, as had not been known among the Heathens. And the nations which were relieved from the chains and darkness of Popery at the Reformation, did not long preserve much more than a name and a form to distinguish them. In most countries the state became the *idol* of the church, and the church the *creature* of the state. How it is with us in this nation, I need not say. Facts speak for themselves. It is a mournful fact that the ministry is become contemptible ; nor is it difficult to assign the cause. But we are favoured with the Gospel, and are eye-witnesses of its purifying power. It still produces the effects which marked its progress when it was preached by the apostles. It enlightens the dark mind, softens the hard heart, heals the wounded spirit ; and many persons who before were burdensome to society, are rendered by it ornamental and useful. When every other argument and motive failed of success, the consideration of the mercies of God in Christ, revealed by the Gospel, constrains the believing sinner to present himself a living, willing, holy sacrifice unto God. Thus, being purified by the blood of Jesus, he offers to the Lord a sacrifice in righteousness. Such principles and aims are essential to a Christian minister. He knows the terrors of the Lord, and has tasted his goodness. He is constrained by love, the love of Christ, and the love of souls. He preaches, as the apostles did, Jesus Christ, and him crucified ; a subject which though despised and reproached by the formal Jew and the sceptical Greek, is evidenced, by its efficacy, to be the wisdom and power of God. Such ministers may

be, and frequently are, depreciated and disregarded; but they cannot be contemptible until integrity, benevolence, and usefulness, are the proper objects of contempt.

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## SERMON V.

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IMMANUEL.

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ISAIAH vii. 14.

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.*

THERE is a signature of wisdom and power impressed upon the works of God, which evidently distinguishes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the splendour of the sun, but the glimmering light of the glow worm, proclaims his glory. The structure and growth of a blade of grass are the effects of the same power which produced the fabric of the heavens and the earth. In his word, likewise he is inimitable. He has a style and manner peculiarly his own. What he is pleased to declare of himself by the prophet, may be prefixed as a proper motto to the whole revelation of his will in the Bible. ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,’ Isa. lv. 8, 9. This superiority of his thoughts to ours, causes a proportionable difference in his manner of operation. His ways are above our conceptions, and often contrary to them. He sometimes produces great effects, by means which, to us, appear unsuitable and weak. Thus he gave Gideon a complete victory, not by providing him an army equal to that of the enemy, but by three hundred men furnished with earthen pitchers and lamps, Judges, vii. 19, 20. At other times the greatness of his preparations, intimates that there are difficulties in the case, insuperable to any power but his own, where our narrow apprehensions, until enlightened and enlarged by his teaching, can scarcely perceive any difficulty. It is eminently so with respect to the restoration of fallen man to his favour. We have but slight thoughts of his holiness, and, therefore, are but slightly affected by the evil of

sin. But though he be rich in mercy, no wisdom but his own could have proposed an expedient, whereby the exercise of his mercy towards sinners might be made to correspond with his justice and truth, and with the honour of his moral government. His Gospel reveals this expedient, and points out a way in which mercy and truth meet together; and his inflexible righteousness is displayed in perfect harmony with the peace of sinners who submit to his appointment; and thus God appears, not only gracious, but just, in receiving them to favour. This is the greatest of all his works, and exhibits the most glorious discovery of his character and perfections. The means are answerable to the grandeur of the design, and are summarily expressed in my text.

I shall not take up your time with attempting to clear the difficulties which have been observed in the context. It may suffice for my purpose to affirm, that this passage expressly and exclusively refers to MESSIAH; for which my warrant is, the authority of the evangelists Matthew and Luke, (Matth. i. 23. Luke, i. 31, 32.) who directly apply it to him, and assure us that it was accomplished in him. If sinners are to be saved, without injury to the honour of his law and government, (and otherwise they must perish,) two things are necessary.

I. That 'a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son.'

II. That this son of the virgin shall have a just right to be called *Immanuel, God with us*.

1. 'A virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son.' The Mediator, the surety for sinful men, must himself be a man. Because those whom he came to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, he therefore took part of the same. Had not MESSIAH engaged for us, and appeared in our nature, a case would have occurred, which I think we may warrantably deem incongruous to the Divine Wisdom. I mean, that while fire and hail, snow and vapour, and the stormy wind fulfil the will of God; while the brutes are faithful to the instincts implanted in them by their Maker; a whole species of intelligent beings would have fallen short of the original law and design of their creation, and, indeed, have acted in direct and continual opposition to it. For the duty of man, to love, serve, and trust God with all his heart and mind, and to love his neighbour as himself, is founded in the very nature and constitution of things, and necessarily results from his relation to God, and his absolute dependence on him as a creature. Such a disposition must undoubtedly have been *natural* to man before his fall, as it is for a bird to fly, or fish to swim. The prohibitory form of the law delivered to Israel from Mount Sinai,

is a sufficient intimation that it was designed for *sinners*. Surely our first parents, while in a state of innocence, could not stand in need of warnings and threatenings to restrain them from worshipping idols, or profaning the name of the great God whom they loved. Nor would it have been necessary to forbid murder, adultery, or injustice, if his posterity had continued under the law of their creation, the law of love. But the first act of disobedience degraded and disabled man, detached him from his proper centre, if I may so speak, and incapacitated him both for his duty and his happiness. After his fall it became impossible for either Adam or his posterity to obey the law of God. But MESSIAH fulfilled it exactly as a man, and the principles of it are renewed, by the power of his grace, in all who believe on him. And though their best endeavours fall short, *his* obedience to it is accepted on their behalf; and he will at length perfectly restore them to their primitive order and honour. When they shall see him as he is, they will be like him, and all their powers and faculties will be perfectly conformed to his image.

Again, MESSIAH must not only be a man, but a partaker of our very nature. It had been equally easy to the power of God to have formed the body of the second Adam, as he formed the first, out of the dust of the earth. But though, in this way he would have been a true and perfect man, he would not have been more nearly related to us than to the angels. Therefore, when 'God sent forth his Son to be made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of children,' (Gal. iv. 4. 5.) and be re-admitted into his happy family, 'he was made of a woman.' Thus he became our *Goel*, our near kinsman, with whom the right of redemption lay.

But further, if he had derived his human nature altogether in the ordinary way, from sinful parents, we see not how he could have avoided a participation in that defilement and depravity which the fall of Adam had entailed upon all his posterity. But his body, that holy thing conceived and born of a virgin, was the immediate production of God. Therefore he was perfectly pure and spotless, and qualified to be such 'a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,' Heb. vii. 26 : who needed not, as the typical high priest of Israel, 'to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people,' Heb. vii. 27. These difficulties were obviated by a virgin's conceiving and bearing a son. His obedience was without defect, his nature without blemish, and having no sin of his own, when he voluntarily offered himself to make an atonement for

the sins of his people, his sacrifice was, so far, answerable to the strict and extensive demands of the law and justice of God.

Let us make a solemn pause, and call upon our souls to admire and adore the wisdom and power of God in this appointment. Thus, 'the Lord created a new thing upon the earth!'

II. But surely our admiration and gratitude will be raised still higher, if we rightly understand the latter part of my text. This son of the virgin shall be called 'Immanuel, God with us.' Though the human nature of Christ was absolutely perfect, his obedience commensurate to the utmost extent of the law, and his substitution and sufferings for sinners voluntary; yet, had he been no more than a man, he would not have been equal to the great undertaking of saving sinners. A due consideration of the majesty, holiness, authority, and goodness of God, will make sin appear to be, as the apostle expresses it 'exceedingly sinful,' Rom. vii. 13. Whoever has a right sense of the nature and effects of that rebellion against the Most High, which the Scripture intends by the term *Sin*, will not need many arguments to convince him, that the Mediator between God and man, must be possessed of such dignity and power, as cannot be attributed to a creature, without destroying the idea of a created and dependent being, by ascribing to him those perfections which are incommunicably divine.

If MESSIAH had been a sinless and perfect man, and no more, he might have yielded a complete obedience to the will of God, but it could have been only for himself. The most excellent and exalted creature cannot exceed the law of his creation. As a creature, he is bound to serve God with his all, and his obligations will always be equal to his ability. But an obedience acceptable and available for others, for thousands and millions, for all who are willing to plead it, must be connected with a nature which is not thus necessarily bound. A sinner, truly convinced of his obnoxiousness to the displeasure of God, must sink into despair, notwithstanding the intimation of a Saviour, if he were not assured by the Scripture, that it was a divine person in the human nature who engaged for us. It is this alone affords a solid ground for hope, to know that he who was before all, by whom all things were made, and by whom they consist, assumed the nature of man; that the great Lawgiver himself submitted to be under his own law. This wonderful condescension gave an immense value and dignity to all that he did, to all that he suffered; thus he not only satisfied but honoured the law. So that we may, without hesitation, affirm, that the law of God was more honoured by MESSIAH, in his obedience to it, during the few

years of his residence upon earth, and terminated by his last and highest acts of obedience in submitting to the death of the cross, than it could have been by the unsinning obedience of all mankind, to the end of time.

But MESSIAH was not only to obey the law for us, he was likewise to expiate, to sustain, and to exhaust, the curse due to sin, Gal. iii. 13. In this attempt, no mere creature could have endured. Nor could the sufferings of a creature have been proposed to the universe, to angels and men, as a consideration sufficient to vindicate the righteousness and truth of God in the remission of sin, after he had determined and solemnly declared that 'the wages of sin is death.' The apostle assures us, that 'it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin,' Heb. x. 4. They who differ from the apostle in their judgment, who think it very possible for God, if he pleased, to forgive the sinner who should offer a bull or a goat, or even without any offering, by the sovereign exercise of his mercy, may be reminded, that the question is not simply what God *can* do, but what it *becomes him* to do, agreeable to his perfections, and to his character as governor of the world. Of this his infinite wisdom is the only competent judge; and we learn, from his word, that it is impossible any blood, but that of his own Son, can cleanse us from guilt, or save us from misery. The blood of a bull or a goat, of a man or an angel, (if angels could bleed,) are all equally insufficient to the great purpose of declaring his righteousness, of manifesting to all intelligent creatures his inflexible displeasure against sin, in the very act of affording mercy to sinners. But since the atoning blood is the blood of Immanuel, of him who is God with us; the sinner who makes it his plea, builds his hope upon a rock which cannot be removed, and obtaining forgiveness in this way, he likewise obtains by it such a knowledge of the heinousness of sin, as disposes him, from that hour, to fear, hate, and forsake it.

But though forgiveness be an essential part of salvation, it is **not** the whole. We cannot be happy, except the power of sin be likewise destroyed. A well-grounded hope in the mercy of God is connected with a thirst for sanctification, and a conformity to his image. But neither this hope nor this desire are natural to us. Our case requires the help of an almighty arm, of the power which can cause the 'blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to arise; which can take away the heart of stone, and create a heart of flesh. So, likewise, the difficulties attendant on our Christian profession, arising from the spirit of the world around us, the

snare to which we are exposed in every situation; our weakness, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the subtilty, vigilance, and power of our spiritual enemies, are so many and great, that unless he, on whom we depend for salvation, be able to save to the uttermost, we can have no security, either for our progress, or our perseverance, in the grace of God. Unless the Saviour of sinners be omnipresent, omniscient, unchangeable, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' that is unless he be God, how can he answer the prayers, satisfy the wants and relieve the distresses of all who trust in him in every age, and of all who, in every place, equally need his support at the same moment? Or how can he engage to give rest to every weary soul, to secure them from perishing, and to bestow upon them eternal life? David comfortably concluded, that because the Lord was his shepherd, he should not want, and had no reason to fear, Psal. xxiii. 1, 4. not even when passing through the valley of the shadow of death. To us Jesus is made known as the great Shepherd of the sheep; but how can we place the like confidence in him, unless we likewise are assured that our shepherd is the Lord?

I shall not attempt to vindicate this doctrine largely from the exceptions of those who call themselves men of reason. It is a point of revelation, and is expressly revealed. It demands our assent upon the authority of God, who requires us to receive this record which he has given us of his Son. Thus far it approves itself to our reason, that however difficult it may be to our conceptions, yet thus it must be, upon a supposition that sinners can be saved without prejudice to the honour of the divine government. If we affirm that he who was born in a stable, and suffered as a malefactor on Mount Golgotha, is the true God and eternal life, many will think it a hard saying. But it is the doctrine of Scripture, the very pillar and ground of the truth; the only foundation of hope for an awakened conscience, the only standard by which we can properly estimate the evil of sin, the worth of the soul, and the love of God. We do not however, say that the human nature of Christ, considered in itself, possesses the attributes of Deity, or is the proper object of worship; nor do we suppose that God could suffer, bleed, or die. But we say, with the apostle, 'that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. We believe that the human nature was so intimately and indissolubly united to the divine, that the properties and actings of each nature are justly ascribed to the one person of Christ, God-man, 'Immanuel, God with us.' Thus we read

that the final judgment of the world is committed to a man, and that 'God hath purchased his church with his own blood, Acts xvii. 21, xx. 28.

Behold, then, the character of MESSIAH in this prophecy! a man! a God! a divine person in the human nature. 'God manifest in the flesh! Immanuel, God with us.'

As fallen creatures, we had lost the true knowledge of God, and were unable to form such conceptions of his greatness and goodness, as are necessary to inspire us with reverence, to engage our confidence, or produce obedience to his will. His glory shines in the heavens, and fills the earth; we are surrounded by the tokens of his power and presence; yet, till we are instructed by his word, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit, he is to us an *unknown God*. The prevalence of idolatry was early, and (with an exception to the people of Israel) soon became universal. Men who boasted of their reason, worshipped the sun and moon, yea, the works of their own hands, instead of the Creator. And even where revelation is vouchsafed, the bulk of mankind live without God in the world. But he is known, trusted, and served, by those who know MESSIAH. To them his glory is displayed in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. His agency is perceived in the creation, his providence is acknowledged, and his presence felt, as *God with us*.

As fallen creatures, God is against us, and we are against him. The alienation of our hearts is the great cause of our ignorance of him. We are willingly ignorant. The thoughts of him are unwelcome to us, and we do not like to retain him in our knowledge. Guilt is the parent of atheism. A secret foreboding, that if there be a God, we are obnoxious to his displeasure; and that if he takes cognizance of our conduct, we have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from him, constrains many persons to try to persuade themselves that there is no God; and many more to think, or at least to wish, that if there be a God, he does not concern himself with human affairs. What a proof is this of the enmity of the heart of man against him! that so many persons who would tremble at the thought of being in a ship, driven by the winds and waves, without a compass or a pilot, should yet think it desirable, if it were possible, to be assured, that in a world like this, so full of uncertainty, trouble, and change, all things were left at random, without the interference of a supreme governor. But this enmity, these dark apprehensions, are removed, when the Gospel is received by faith. For it brings us the welcome news, that there is forgiveness with him; that God is reconciled in his Son to all who seek his mercy. In this sense, likewise, MESSIAH

is 'Immanuel, God with us,' on our side, no longer the avenger of sin, but the author of salvation.

'Immanuel' is 'God with us,' God in our nature still. He suffered as a man, and as a man he now reigns on the throne of glory; exercising all power and authority, and receiving all spiritual worship both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions. Thus man is not only saved, but unspeakably honoured and ennobled. He is brought into the nearest relation to him, who is over all, blessed forever. 'The angels adore him; but only redeemed sinners can say, 'He loved us and gave himself for us; he has washed us from our sins in his own blood;' Gal. ii. 20. Rev. i. 5. he is our Saviour, our Shepherd, our Friend, our, 'Immanuel, God with us.'

I shall conclude with a few obvious reflections which offer from this important subject.

What a cold assent is paid to the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ by many who profess and receive it as a truth! They have received from education, from books or ministers, what is called an orthodox scheme of religious sentiments, and with this they are contented. They have not been accustomed to doubt of it, and therefore take it for granted that they really believe it. But as I have already hinted, it is so contrary to our natural apprehensions, that no man can, from his heart, say that 'Jesus Christ is Lord,' unless he be taught of God. And a cordial belief of this point will and must produce great and abiding effects. They who know the Saviour's name, will so trust in him, as to renounce every other ground of confidence. They will love him supremely, and forsake every thing that stands in competition with his favour. They will glory in his cross, they will espouse his cause, and devote themselves to his service. They will make continual application to him, that they may receive, out of his fulness, grace according to their need. They will obey his precepts, and walk in his Spirit. Happy were it, indeed, if all who join in repeating the Creed, and who bow their knee at the mention of his name, were thus minded. But the lives, tempers, and pursuits of thousands, give too sure an evidence, that when they express their assent with their lips, they neither know what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Their acknowledgment of his character has no more salutary influence, than that of the evil spirits when he was upon earth, who said, and perhaps with a much fuller conviction, 'We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God,' Mark i. 24.

2. What a strong foundation does this doctrine afford for the faith and hope of those who indeed know MESSIAH, and have put their trust in him. This truth is the rock upon which the church is built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 'If God be for us, who shall be against us?' The difficulties of our warfare are great, the enemies of our peace are many. The world may frown, and Satan will rage; but Jesus has overcome the world, and is greater than all our foes. He will guide his people with his unerring wisdom, support them with his almighty arm, supply them out of the inexhaustible riches of his grace, revive them when fainting, heal them when wounded, plead for them above as their great high priest, manage for them upon earth as their great shepherd, and at last make them more than conquerors, and give them a crown of life!

3. On the contrary, how dreadful must be the state of those who finally reject him, and say in their hearts, 'We will not have this man to rule over us!' He is now proposed as a Saviour, he invites sinners to come to him, that they may have life; and assures us, that 'him that cometh he will in no wise cast out,' John vi. 37. Happy are they who hear and obey his voice to-day, while it is called to-day. To-morrow is uncertain. Death may be at the door, and at death our state will be fixed for eternity. They who refuse him now, in the character of a Saviour, must then appear at his tribunal, and stand before him as their Judge; and must answer, in their own person, for all their transgressions of the holy law, and for their contempt of the Gospel of the grace of God!

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## SERMON VI.

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SALVATION PUBLISHED FROM THE MOUNTAINS

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ISAIAH, xl. 9.

*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

It would be improper to propose an alteration, though a slight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my tes-

timony to the great value of our English version, which, I believe, in point of simplicity, strength, and fidelity, is not likely to be excelled by a new translation of the *whole* Scripture. But there are, undoubtedly, particular passages, where a small change in the expression might render the sense clearer, and be equally answerable to the original Hebrew or Greek. The address of this verse, as it stands in the *Messiah*, is, *O thou that tellest good tidings*, &c. as the bishop of London has lately translated it. Zion and Jerusalem are considered, by the prophet, as not bringing, but as receiving good tidings; and the publisher of these good tidings is written with a feminine construction. The sense may be thus expressed, 'Let her that bringeth good tidings to Jerusalem and Zion get up into the high mountains and lift up her voice.' But the apostrophe is more animated. That it was the custom in Israel for the women to publish and celebrate good news with songs and instruments, is well known. We have an early instance in the book of Exodus. When the Lord had delivered them from the power of Pharaoh, and they saw their enemies, who had so lately threatened them, dead upon the sea-shore, 'Miriam, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea,' Exod. xv. 20, 21. So, afterwards, 'when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out to meet him and Saul, with tabrets and instruments of music; and they answered one another as they played, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,' 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. Thus, likewise, Deborah, in her sublime song, represents the mother of Sisera, (Judges v. 28, 29.) and her women singing alternately, from a confident, though vain expectation, that Sisera would return a conqueror. In my text, the prophet, in prospect of MESSIAH'S appearance, speaks of it as an event suited to excite a general joy. The Gospel (as the word imports) is good news, glad tidings indeed! the best news that ever reached the ears, or cheered the heart of man. The women are, therefore, called upon to proclaim his approach, on the tops of the hills and mountains, from whence they may be seen and heard to the greatest advantage, for the spreading of the tidings throughout the whole country. Zion is a besieged city; but let her know that relief is at hand; say unto her, 'behold your God!' The Lord God will come with a strong hand, or against the strong one, and his people shall know him as their shepherd, full of care, kindness and power.

The promise of 'Immanuel, God with us,' is now to be spread like the morning from the tops of the mountains. The day is breaking, and this passage prepares for the following. 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come!' The welcome news is to be dispersed from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Jew to Gentile, from one kingdom to another people, till all the nations and ends of the earth 'shall see the salvation of God,' Psalm xlviii. 3.

The cause of this exultation arises from the character of MESSIAH, compared with the design of his appearance, and this is answerable to the condition in which he finds mankind.

The deplorable state of fallen man by nature, is largely described both in the Old Testament and in the New. It may suffice to take notice of three principal features which characterize our whole species, and apply to every individual of the race of Adam, until the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, affords relief. These are Guilt, Alienation of Heart, and Misery.

1. *Guilt.* All have sinned. We are the creatures of God. He made us, and he preserves us. Our life, faculties, and comforts, are all from him. He is, therefore, our great Lord, our supreme Benefactor. Of course we belong to him. His we are, and not our own. It follows, that dependence, gratitude, submission, and obedience, are incumbent on us, as they must be upon all intelligent creatures, from the very nature of things. The relation which subsists between an infinitely wise and good Creator and his creatures, if capable of knowing him, necessarily implies the subjection; and the obligation is indissoluble. But we have evidently broken this law of our creation. We have violated the order of God's government. We have implicitly, if not formally, renounced our allegiance, disowned his right over us, and set up for ourselves. A dependent creature affecting independence; a worm presuming upon its own power, making itself its own end; a rebel against the divine government, boasting of morality and goodness, and trusting to his own conduct to recommend him to the favour of his Maker; a being formed for immortality, proposing his whole happiness in things which he feels to be unsatisfying, knows to be uncertain, and from which he is conscious he must, in a few years at most, be finally removed; these are solecisms which strongly prove the depravity, degeneracy, and demerit of man. It is possible, that had we been wholly left to ourselves, we should never have been aware, while in this world, of the just and inevitable consequences of our rebellion. Having lost all right thoughts of God, and conceiving of him, as if he were altogether like ourselves, we might have felt

neither fear nor remorse. But there is a revelation, by which we are informed of his determined purpose to avenge disobedience, and to vindicate the honour of his government; and we are assured, that he is not an indifferent spectator of our opposition to his established order. His justice and truth are engaged to punish transgressors, and our obnoxiousness to punishment, is what we mean by *guilt*. If the Scripture be true, there is no way of escape, unless he himself be pleased to appoint one. This he has done; and the declaration of this appointment is a part of the good tidings contained in my text. Proclaim it from the tops of the mountains, that there is forgiveness with him. Say unto Jerusalem, Behold MESSIAH, Behold your God! He comes to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. He *can* do it, for he is God; and he *will* do it, for he has taken on him our nature for this very purpose, 2 Cor. v. 21. 'Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!'

2. *Alienation of mind.* Not only is it true that we have sinned against the Lord, but a principle of aversion from him is deeply rooted in our hearts. Therefore one part of our natural character is, 'haters of God, Rom. i. 30. This is thought a hard saying. Many who will admit that their conduct is blameable, and that they are not altogether what they ought to be, will by no means plead guilty to this charge. If they fall short of their duty, and in some instances transgress his commandment, they say, it is their infirmity; they are sorry, and hope to do better some time or other. However, they are willing to think that their hearts are tolerably good, they mean well, and are shocked at the idea of hating God. They rather presume that they love him, though they are not so careful to please him as they should be. I do not assert that we hate God under that character which our vain imaginations form of him. If we can persuade ourselves, in direct contradiction to the testimony of Scripture, that he is not strict to mark what is amiss; that he will dispense with the strictness of his law; that he will surely have mercy upon us, because we are not openly abandoned and profligate in our conduct; that he will accept of lip-worship in which the heart has no concern, reward us for actions in which we had no intention of pleasing him, permit us to love and serve the world with all our mind, and soul, and strength, while we live, and make us happy in another world, when we can live in this no longer; if we form such an image of God, it is too much like our own to provoke our enmity, for it is destitute of holiness, justice, and truth. But 'the carnal mind is,' and must be, 'enmity against

God,' Rom. viii. 7. according to the character he has given of himself in his word. We have an inbred dislike to all his moral attributes, to the rule of his government, and to the methods of his grace. We cannot, that is, we will not, propose either his glory as our chief end, or his favour as our chief good. The proof is plain. The ends which we actually pursue, and the supposed good which we deliberately prefer, are utterly inconsistent with the plan which he has prescribed for us. His ways, though truly pleasant in themselves, appear displeasing to us, and we think we can plan better for ourselves. We do not like 'to retain God in our thoughts,' Rom. i. 28. which is a sure sign of enmity. Nay, this enmity is so strong in us naturally, that we cannot bear others should think more highly of God than we do, or be more attached to him than we are. This was the ground of the first murder. Abel loved God, and God was pleased to testify his approbation of Abel, and therefore Cain killed him, 1 John iii. 12. This has been the great cause of the opposition and ill-treatment which the servants of God have met with from the men of the world in all succeeding ages; a cause which still subsists, and will continue to operate upon posterity yet unborn. Can we show a stronger mark of dislike to a person, than by hating all who profess a regard to him, and when that is the only cause of our resentment? Such is the prevailing enmity against God. For how often do we see that when his grace enables a sinner to forsake the spirit and practice of the world, his former friends are immediately offended; and, perhaps, those of his own household become his inveterate enemies?

But, 'O thou that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice.' Say to poor sinners, 'Behold your God!' He comes to take this enmity away! The cross of Christ subdues it, when every other expedient has been found ineffectual. The heart, too hard to be softened by a profusion of temporal benefits, and too stout to be subdued by afflictions, is melted by the dying love of a Saviour, and by that discovery of the divine perfections which is exhibited in redemption. We have a striking instance of this effect, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, Acts ix. 1—20. His misguided conscience, under the influence of prejudice, persuaded him 'that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth.' Instigated with rage, and not satisfied with the injuries he had offered to his disciples at Jerusalem, but 'still breathing out threatenings and slaughter,' he journeyed towards Damascus, designing to harrass and persecute them wherever he found them. In this temper of mind, he was suddenly arrested on his way, by a light, and a voice from

heaven. He fell to the ground. But Jesus, whom he had ignorantly persecuted, instructed him in the knowledge of his person and love, pardoned his sin, and commissioned him to preach the faith he had laboured to destroy. How sudden, how evident, how abiding, was the change which then took place in his heart and in his conduct! From that moment he accounted 'all things loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord,' Phil. iii. 8. Unwearied by labour and hardship, undismayed by opposition and danger, he spent the remainder of his life in the cause of his master; and, like Cæsar, accounting nothing done while any thing remained to do, his active and intrepid spirit was continually meditating new services, Acts, xix. 21. And, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place, he was always upon the wing to publish to his fellow-sinners the grace and glory of him whom he had so long opposed, only because he knew him not. And although the circumstances attending the apostle's case were extraordinary, the case itself, as to the substance, is not singular. I trust many persons in this assembly have been the subjects of a like change. The doctrine which Paul preached, has enlightened your understandings, has inspired you with hopes and desires to which you were once strangers, and given a new direction to the conduct and aims of your life. You were once afar off from God, but you are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. You once lived to yourselves, but now you feel that you are no longer your own, and have devoted yourselves to him who died to save you from the present evil world, and from the wrath to come.

3. *Misery.* If we are guilty in the sight of God, and alienated from him in our hearts, we must be miserable. Guilt entails a burden, and a foreboding of evil upon the conscience. And our alienation from the fountain of living waters, (Jer. ii. 13.) compels us (for we are insufficient to our own happiness) to seek our resources from broken cisterns, and pits which will hold no water. Further, sin has filled the world with wo. The whole creation travails and groans; and natural evil is inseparable from moral, as the shadow from the body. Though the earth be filled with tokens of the goodness, patience, and forbearance of God, it likewise abounds with marks of his displeasure. I think we have sufficient reason to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, and pestilence, to sin, as their original and proper cause. We can hardly conceive, that if mankind had continued in that happy state of love and obedience to God in which our first parents were created, they would have been exposed to such calamities. When God at the beginning, surveyed every thing that he

had made, 'behold it was very good,' Gen. i. 31. All was beauty and harmony, till sin introduced disorder and a curse. But far worse than what we suffer immediately from the providence of God, are the evils which we bring upon ourselves and upon each other. The dreadful consequences of war, rapine, discord, hatred, ambition, avarice, and intemperance, furnish part of every page in the mournful history of human life, and are felt in every nation, city, village, and family. Want, cares, and diseases, prey upon individuals. Disappointment, dissatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of spirit, are experienced by persons of every rank and in every stage of human life. How much more desirable would it be, were it not for the hope of the Gospel, to share with the brute creation, than to bear the name of man in his fallen state! The brutes have few wants; their propensities, and the means of gratifying them, are suited to their natures, adapted to their powers, and conducive to the preservation of the species. They neither regret the past, nor tremble under apprehensions of the future. It is far otherwise with man. His boasted pleasures end with a sting, and often he cannot bear his own reflections on them. He suffers almost as much from imaginary fears, as from real afflictions. The more he possesses, the more are the sources of his anxieties multiplied and enlarged. And after having been long wearied with a train of mortifications, pains, and inquietudes, he must, at last, however unwilling, yield to that stroke of death, the thought of which, when strongly realized to his mind, was always sufficient to embitter the happiest hours of his life.

But publish the glad tidings from the mountains, and let the joyful sound diffuse over the plain—'Your God cometh.' MESSIAH establishes a new, a spiritual kingdom upon the earth; and his happy subjects are freed from the misery in which they were involved. They commit all their concerns to him, and he manages for them. Their fears are removed, their irregular desires corrected, and all that is really good for them is secured to them by his love, promise and care. Afflictions still await them, but they are sanctified. To them the nature of afflictions is changed. They are appointments graciously designed for their advantage. Their crosses, no less than their comforts, are tokens of God's favour, Heb. xii. 6, 7; they have them only because their present situation requires discipline, and they could not be so well without them. They are assured of support under them, (2 Cor. xii. 9.) and a final deliverance out of them all, for there is a happy hour approaching, when all their troubles shall cease, and they shall enter upon a state of eternal, uninterrupted, inconceivable joy, Isa. lx. 20. Rev. xxi. 4.

For these purposes the Son of God was revealed. The prophets saw his day afar off, and proclaimed his approach—‘Thy God cometh!’ Though truly a man, he is truly God. Neither man nor angel could remove our guilt, communicate to us a spiritual life, relieve us from misery, and give us stable peace in a changing world, hope and triumph in death, and eternal life beyond it. But his wisdom and power are infinite, and his purpose unchangeable. He would not have invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him, if he was not able and determined to give them rest. None that seek him are disappointed, or sent empty away: a sufficient proof that his compassion, his bounty, his fulness, are properly divine. Therefore the apostle, speaking of the riches of his grace, uses the epithet, ‘Unsearchable,’ Ephes. iii. 8. His treasure of life and salvation is inexhaustible, like a boundless, shoreless, bottomless, ocean; like the sun, which having cheered the successive generations of mankind with his beams, still shines with undiminished lustre, is still the fountain of light, and has always a sufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes in the same instant.

Does the language of my text cause joy to spring up in your hearts? or is it nothing to you? If you heard the *Messiah*, you were, perhaps, affected by the music of the passage; how much are you to be pitied, if you are hitherto unaffected by the sentiment! Yet, once more, hear—‘Thy God cometh!’ He did come in the fulness of time, according to the prophecy; and the word of prophecy assures us that he will come again. ‘Behold he cometh in the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him,’ Rev. i. 7. Prepare to meet thy God,’ Amos, iv. 12.

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## SERMON VII.

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### THE MORNING LIGHT.

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ISAIAH, lx. 1—3.

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

ONE strong internal proof that the Bible is a divine revelation, may be drawn from the subject matter; and particularly that it

is the book, and the only book, which teaches us to think highly and honourably of God. I say the only book, for there is no right knowledge of God where the Bible is not known. What is the Jupiter of Homer, compared with the God of Israel, as he is represented to us by his servants the prophets? And if the Heathen Philosophers, in some detached passages, have sentiments not altogether unworthy of him, history honestly tells them how they obtained them. They travelled, and they are generally said to have travelled into Phœnicia or Egypt to the confines of that people who alone thought rightly of God, because to them only he had made himself known by a revelation. If such a description as we have in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the twelfth verse to the end, had been known only of late years, recovered, we will suppose, out of the ruins of Herculaneum, there is little doubt but it would have engaged the attention and admiration of the learned world. For the most admired writings of antiquity, upon a candid comparison, are unspeakably inferior to it. The inimitable sublimity of the prophets is natural, just, and unforced, and flows from the grandeur of their subjects, because they were influenced by him who alone can speak worthily of himself.

A song so vast, a theme so high,  
Calls for the voice that tun'd the sky.

With them, the whole compass of the creation is but as dust upon the balance, in respect of the great Creator. His purpose is fate, his voice power. He speaks, and it is done. Thus he called the universe into being; and thus, as the great Lord and Proprietor of all, he still maintains and governs it, directing the frame of nature, and every particular event and contingency, to the promoting of his own glory, the last and highest end of all his works.

The principal of these is, the exhibition of his perfections in the person of his Son. The prophecies we have already considered, announce this event with a gradual increase of clearness and precision, as the period of accomplishment is supposed to draw nigh. We lately heard the command to proclaim his approach from the hills and tops of the mountains. Here the prophet begins to contemplate the effects of his actual appearance. The earth is considered as involved in a state of gross darkness; but the sun, the Sun of Righteousness, is about to arise, and to fill it, by his beams, with light, life, and glory. These effects, indeed, will not extend to all, for many will love darkness rather

than light. But he will not shine in vain. There will be a people prepared to receive him, and to rejoice in his light. They shall arise as from sleep, as from the grave, and his light, reflected upon them, shall cause them to shine likewise. Darkness shall still cover those who reject him; yea, their darkness will be increased. But the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon all who believe, and their numbers from age to age, shall be enlarged. Nations shall come to him; and kings shall be subservient to the spreading of his kingdom. Such is the scope of the passage before us. I shall briefly consider a few of the leading particulars contained in it.

I. As the sun is the source of light to the natural world, so is MESSIAH to the moral and spiritual world. Light, and its opposite darkness, are figuratively used in Scripture. The latter is applied to a state of ignorance, sin, and misery, as in the following texts: 'He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth,' John xii. 35. 'If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,' 1 John i. 6. 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' Matt. xxv. 30. The former, therefore signifies true knowledge, holiness, and happiness. 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light,' Eph. v. 8. When 'I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me,' Micah vii. 8. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart,' Psal. xevii. 11. I select but one instance of each kind; an attentive reader of the Scripture will meet with many expressions of a like import. But there is, likewise, an intermediate state; light advancing from the early dawn to the perfect day. This twilight, no less than day-light, is from the sun. Such was the state of the Old Testament Church. MESSIAH was the source of their knowledge, hope, and joy; but he was (if I may so speak) below the horizon, as to them. Though believers, under that dispensation, were a people saved of the Lord, they were trained up under types and shadows, were influenced by a spirit of comparative bondage and distance like children under age; and rather longed for, than actually possessed, the gracious liberty which the children of God enjoy under the Gospel. But the Sun arose, and the shadows vanished, when the Son of God incarnate dwelt and conversed with men, honoured his temple with his personal presence, and superseded all the Levitical sacrifices, by the one offering of himself upon the cross. 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' But more especially we date the beginning of his visible kingdom from the

day of Pentecost, which followed his ascension. Then he signally bestowed the gifts which, as Mediator, he had received for men, and, by the power of his Holy Spirit, authorized and qualified his servants to go forth and preach salvation in his name. Then the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken away, 'and his righteousness was openly shown in the sight of the Heathen.' Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and other servants of God, had been highly favoured and highly honoured; but we are assured, by our Lord himself, that none born of woman had been greater than John, his fore-runner; and yet, he added, 'the least in the kingdom of heaven,' that is, in the New Testament or Gospel church, 'is greater than he,' Matt. xi. 11. The apostles were happy in the peculiar privilege of attending on his person; yet he told them, 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' John xvi. 7. There were still greater privileges depending upon the influence of the promised Comforter, who was to abide with the church for ever. By the power of his Holy Spirit, the Lord is now present with all his ministers and people in every place, whether retired in secret from the view of men, or assembled together in his name, Matt. vi. 6. xvii. 20.; and though the great events upon which their hopes are founded, his life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, took place long ago, he so realizes the declaration of them in his word to their hearts, that they are no less assured of what they read, than the apostles who saw him with their own eyes. Thus the Gospel-state is a dispensation of light. The Sun is risen with life and healing in his beams; and they who have the eyes of their understanding opened, enjoy a bright and marvellous day. They see, admire, adore, rejoice, and love.

II. The subjects of MESSIAH'S kingdom, the living members of his church, are so irradiated by him, that they shine likewise; as the moon shines, but with a borrowed light derived from the sun. 'Beholding, in this glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. according to the measure and growth of their faith. Two points may be observed under this head.

1. *The fact*, that they do thus shine. Though they were once darkness, they are now light, Eph. v. 8. A dark, ignorant, wicked, selfish Christian, is a contradiction in terms. There *may* be such, there *are* too many such, amongst those who make profession of the name of Christ; but they who truly know him, 'walk in the light, as he is in the light.' They have knowledge, 'a good understanding,' Psal. cxi. 10. Perhaps the greater part

of real Christians have little acquaintance with the literature and science of the world; their moral capacities may be weak, and not improved by education; they may be in the esteem of men, as they are in their own, but babes; yet they know more than the wisest philosophers who are destitute of the grace of God. They know themselves, they know the Lord, they know the evil of sin, and the way of salvation; what their proper happiness consists in, and how it is to be obtained. They have learned to endure affliction, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good. They have attained a just sense of the vanity of the world, and the importance of eternity. They are instructed to be contented and useful in their stations, to discharge their duties in relative life with propriety, and to meet death with comfort. In all these particulars, many who have dazzling talents, and are celebrated for abilities and endowments, are miserably at a loss. True believers are conformed to the spirit and temper of their Saviour, and therefore are different and distinguished from the world around them. And they have, at least, the beginnings of true peace and solid happiness, in communion with him whom they serve.

2. *The cause.* They shine wholly by his light. If their own words may be taken, the proof of this is easy. They are free to confess that they are only wise by his wisdom, strong by his power working in them; and that, without him, they 'have not sufficiency to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. iii. 5. Experience has taught them that they cannot stand unless he upholds them, nor watch, unless he watcheth with them, nor be safe or happy a single day, without fresh communications from him. But this their experience and acknowledgment, is the express and current doctrine of Scripture. There is a real, though mystical union between Christ and his people. 'He is the vine,' John xv. 1. they the branches: he is their head, they the members of his body. They dwell in him by faith, he dwells in them by his Spirit. He is their root and their life; all their springs are in him, and it is out of his 'fulness that they receive,' John i. 16. Therefore the apostle says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Gal. ii. 20. 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me,' 2 Cor. xii. 9. And our Lord himself, who comforted Paul with that promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' apprised all his followers of their entire dependence upon him, by saying, 'Without me ye can do nothing,' John xv. 5. The language of the Old Testament is to the same purport, 'they looked unto him, and were enlightened,' Psal. xxxiv. 5. 'In the Lord *Jehovah* I have righteousness and strength,' Isa. xlv. 24. 'He giveth pow-

er to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,' Isa. xl. 29. Thus things are constituted and conducted, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord,' 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

III. They who wilfully refuse and turn from this light, do thereby involve themselves in double darkness, and become more infatuated and wicked than those to whom the light has not been proposed. Their evils, likewise, are more aggravated than they would have been if the light had not visited them. Thus our Lord, MESSIAH, speaks of the Jews; 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin,' John xv. 22. And again, 'For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind,' John ix. 39. He came to make the ignorant wise unto salvation; but they who, from a proud conceit of their own wisdom and sufficiency, disdain his instruction, being left to themselves, give abundant evidence that the light they boast of, is but gross and palpable darkness. The grossest errors, the greatest obduracy of heart, the most extreme profaneness of spirit, and the most abominable wickedness in practice, may be expected, and will certainly be found, where the Gospel is despised.

It is evident that the morality which is so highly admired by the Christian world, and set in opposition to the Gospel of Christ, is much leaner, and more scanty, than the morality of the heathens. I speak of the idea only; for neither have the Heathens of old, nor of the present day, acted up to their own rules. But I do not hesitate to affirm, that none of your modern moralists who have disowned the Gospel revelation, have given us a system of morality equal to that of Tully the Pagan. Many of the Heathens acknowledged the desirableness and necessity of revelation; though infidels, born in a Christian land, think it a high mark of their wisdom to despise it; and avowed atheists, that is, men who deny either the Being or the Providence of God, or the obligations mankind are under to obey him, are seldom to be met with but in countries where the Bible is known. The heart must have obstinately and repeatedly resisted light and conviction, before it can ordinarily proceed to these dreadful lengths. But while the blind stumble in the noon of day, MESSIAH'S people shall walk in confidence and peace, Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16, and shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. ii. 15.

IV. The third verse of this chapter foretels, and therefore se-

cures, the conversion of the Gentiles or Heathens. The times and the seasons are in the disposal of God, but the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Much was done in the first age of Christianity. A single instrument, the Apostle Paul, as he himself informs us, preached the faith, which he formerly laboured to destroy, 'from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum,' Rom. xv. 19. and probably much further afterwards. And the Lord, who appointed him to this service, accompanied this message with his own power; so that he had signal success in turning men from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God; and in planting the Gospel, and gathering churches in every province. The Gospel found an early reception at Rome, which facilitated its spread into the different parts of the Roman empire. And we have reason to believe it was introduced into our island in a few years after our Lord's ascension. And though what was called the conversion of Heathen nations, in some following ages, went little further than to prevail on them to assume the name of Christians, and left them, considered as nations, as destitute of the spirit and blessings of Christianity as it found them; yet, I cannot doubt, that wherever the New Testament, and the sufferings of MESSIAH, were known, some individuals, at least, experienced a real and saving change. And we are warranted to hope for still greater things; for a time when the gross darkness, which as yet covers a great part of the world, shall be dispelled; and the Redeemer's kingdom spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as 'a stone cut out without hands, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.' Dan. ii. 35. But this pleasing subject will come more directly under our consideration hereafter.

V. The call in my text may be taken in a general sense, like that of the apostle, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,' Eph. v. 14. Natural light requires eyes to perceive it. It would be absurd to point out the beauties of an extensive prospect to a blind man. To him the face of nature presents only a universal blank. But the light of the Gospel not only discovers the most important objects to those who can see, but has a marvellous efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. It is the appointed instrument of Divine power for this purpose. In vain would be the labour and expectation of the husbandman, if God will not afford the rain and the snow, to water the earth, and the enlivening influences of the sun, to draw forth the tender blade, and to ripen the corn. Equally unsuccessful would the preaching of the Gospel prove to sinful men, though in itself it be eminently the truth and wisdom of God, ex-

actly suited to their state, and of the highest importance to their welfare, if he had not promised that his word, where simply and faithfully delivered, in dependence upon his blessing, shall not be spoken in vain, but shall certainly accomplish the end for which he has sent it, Isa. lv. 10, 11. This promise, together with the experience of its truth in our own case, and our knowledge of its uniform effects in every age and country where the doctrine of the cross has been preached, encourages ministers to persevere in publishing the glad tidings, in defiance of all the opposition and disappointment we meet with. We lament, but cannot wonder that the Gospel is so generally neglected. As a dispensation of grace, it offends the pride of man; as a dispensation of holiness, it contradicts his desires and passions. His spirit is degraded, his heart is pre-engaged, he loves the present world, and has no more taste or inclination for a life of communion with God here, and such a heaven as the Scripture proposes hereafter, than the beasts of the field. But the Lord has said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Isa. xliii. 13. When he is pleased to clothe the word preached, with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to apply it to the conscience, it is quick, powerful, penetrating, and irresistible as lightning; it conveys a voice which the deaf, yea, the dead, must hear: it forces a light upon the mind which cannot be evaded. Then things are seen as they are. The nature and desert of sin is apprehended, and then the Gospel is found to be the only balm for a distressed and wounded conscience. Therefore, having the Lord's command and promise, we are not to be discouraged by the carelessness or obstinacy of those who know not what they do. We are aware of the difficulty, yea, the impossibility of succeeding in our endeavour to save the souls of our hearers, if we had only to depend upon our own arguments or earnestness. We are not to reason but to obey. Our business is to deliver our message, and, in our happier moments, to water it with our prayers and tears. When we have done this, we can do no more. The event must be left with him in whose name we speak. We must not suppress nor disguise what we are commanded to declare; nor wilfully make any additions of our own, to accommodate it to the taste or prejudice of our hearers, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Let those preach smooth things who will venture to answer, at the great tribunal, for the souls that have miscarried under their ministry; *we dare not*. Let those be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, Rom. i. 16. who feel no obligations to him for his dying love; *we cannot*, and, by the grace of God, *we will not*. We will glory in it. 'God forbid that we should glory in anything' else! Gal. vi. 14. Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to

preach and prophecy to dry bones; and he who sends us can cause the dry bones to live. 'O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord,' Ezek. xxxvii. 4. The word of his salvation is sent to you. The Lord is risen indeed!' 'Arise, shine; for your light is come.' In his name we proclaim pardon and peace to all who will seek him. But seek him to-day, while it is called to-day; to-morrow is not yours. Seek him now, while he may be found. Harden not your hearts. Tremble, 'lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,' Heb. iv. 1.

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## SERMON VIII.

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### THE SUN RISING UPON A DARK WORLD

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ISAIAH, ix. 2.

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

CONTRASTS are suited to illustrate and strengthen the impression of each other. The happiness of those who, by faith in MESSIAH, are brought into a state of peace, liberty, and comfort, is greatly enhanced and heightened by the consideration of that previous state of misery in which they once lived, and of the greater misery to which they were justly exposed. They are not only made 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' Col. i. 12, 13. but they have been delivered from the powers of darkness. Thus, while they have communion with God as a Father, they contemplate the privilege with a greater pleasure than they probably could do if they had never known a difference. They remember a time when they were 'afar off, without hope, and without God in the world; and they remember how carelessly they then trifled upon the brink of destruction. In this deplorable and dangerous situation they were 'found of the Lord, when they sought him not,' Isa. lxxv. 1. He convinced, humbled, and pardoned them, and brought them near to himself, into a state of adoption and communion by the blood of Jesus. The admiration, gratitude, and love, which they feel for this undeserved grace, gives them a more lively sense of the blessings they enjoy. Yea, the thought of what they have been

redeemed from, (of which they will then have a much clearer perception than at present,) will add to their joys in heaven, and inspire such a song of praise as will be peculiar to themselves, and in which the holy angels, who never felt the stings of guilt, nor tasted the sweetness of pardoning mercy will not be able to join them. They are accordingly represented, in the prophetic vision, as standing nearest to the throne, and uniting in the noblest strains of praise to him who sitteth upon it; Rev. v. 9—12. while the surrounding angels can only take part in the chorus, and admire and adore, when they behold the brightest displays of the glory of the wonder-working God, manifested in his love to worthless, helpless sinners.

These opposite ideas are joined in my text. The people who are spoken of as rejoicing in a great light, were, till this light arose and shone upon them, *in darkness*; walking, sitting, living in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death. That this passage refers to MESSIAH, we have a direct proof. The evangelist (Matth. iv. 15, 16.) refers it expressly to him, and points out the time and manner of its literal accomplishment. I shall first consider the literal sense and completion of the prophecy, and then show how fitly it applies to the state of mankind at large, and to the happy effects of the Gospel of salvation, which by the blessing of God has been the instrument of bringing multitudes of many nations, peoples, and languages, out of a state of gross 'darkness into marvellous light,' 1 Pet. ii. 9.

I. Hebrew words (like many in our own language) have often more than one signification. But only one sense can be expressed in a version. And therefore interpreters and translators frequently differ. Which of the different words, used to express the meaning of the same original term, is most happily chosen, may be sometimes decided by the context. The two words in the first verse of this chapter, rendered 'lightly afflicted,' and 'grievously afflicted,' signify, likewise, the one, to think lightly of, to account vile; and the other, to honour, to render honourable and glorious. Both these words occur in one verse, and are used in these senses, in the Lord's message to Eli, 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed,' 1 Sam. ii. 30. Had the same words been thus rendered in the passage before us, the sense of both verses would, I think, have been more plain, connected, and consistent, to the following purport, agreeable to the translation given by Vitringa, and the present bishop of London. 'Nevertheless, there shall not be dimness [or darkness] as in the time of her vexation or distress. He formerly debased [made

light or vile] the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, even [the land] by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [For] The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light,' &c. Such was the afflicted and low state of Galilee previous to the coming of MESSIAH; such was the exaltation and honour it derived from his appearance.

1. The land allotted to the tribes of Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, was chiefly included in the province, which upon a subsequent division of the country, obtained the name of Galilee. The northern part of it, the inheritance of Naphtali, was the boundary or frontier towards Syria, and had been frequently vexed and afflicted when the sins of Israel brought the armies of their enemies upon them, as frontier countries usually suffer most in times of invasion and war. Particularly this part of the land, called Galilee of the Gentiles, was the first and most immediately exposed to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileser, and Sennacherib. And as the people there were likewise more mixed with foreigners, and at the greatest distance from the capital, Jerusalem, on these accounts Galilee was lightly esteemed by the Jews themselves. They thought 'no prophet could arise in Galilee,' John, vii. 52. It even prejudiced Nathaniel against the first report he received of Jesus as MESSIAH, that he lived, and was generally supposed (by those who were content to be governed by popular rumour, without inquiring attentively for themselves) to have been born in Galilee. He asked, with an appearance of surprise, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' John, i. 46. They were accounted a rude, unpolished, provincial people. And therefore, when Peter would have denied any acquaintance with his Lord, he was discovered to be a Galilean by his dialect and manner of speech, Mark, xiv. 70.

2. The despised and least valued part of the land of Israel was the principal scene of MESSIAH's life and ministry, insomuch, that, as I have observed, he was supposed to have been born there; a mistake, which his enemies industriously supported and made the most of; for those who could persuade themselves that it was so in fact, would think themselves justified in rejecting his claim; it being one undeniable mark of MESSIAH, given by the prophet Micah, 'that he was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah,' Micah, v. 2. He was, however, brought up at Nazareth, and lived, for a time, in Capernaum, towns in Galilee; but both of so little repute, that had they not been connected with his history, it is not probable that their name would have been transmitted to posterity.

3. But by his residence there, Galilee was honoured and ennobled. He himself declared, that, on this account, 'Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum,' (though probably none of them were more than inconsiderable fishing towns,) 'were exalted even to heaven,' Matth. xi. 21—23. Those were highly privileged places which our Lord condescended to visit in person; so, likewise, are those places where he is pleased to send his Gospel. I have observed formerly, and make no apology for repeating a truth so very important, and so little attended to, that 'the glorious Gospel of the blessed God,' (1 Tim. i. 11.) when faithfully preached and thankfully received and improved, renders an obscure village more honourable, and of more real consequence, than the metropolis of a great empire, where this light shineth not. For what are the 'dark places of the earth,' (Psalm lxxiv. 20.) however celebrated for numbers and opulence, for the monuments of ambition and arts, but habitations of cruelty, infatuation, and misery!

4. Though Galilee was favoured with the Scripture, and with Synagogue-worship, and the inhabitants were a people who professed to know the God of Israel, it was a land of darkness at the time of MESSIAH'S appearance. Though they were not idolaters, ignorance prevailed among them. The law and the prophets were read in the synagogues; but we may believe to little good purpose, while they were under the direction of perverse teachers, who substituted the traditions of men for the commands of God. The single circumstance of keeping herds of swine, as the Gadrenes did, seems a proof that the law of Moses was but little regarded by them. They, as well as the people of Judea, were under the guidance of the Scribes and Pharisees in their religious concerns, who were, if I may use a modern phrase, the clergy of that time; and these, we are assured by him who knew their hearts were generally corrupted, 'blind leaders of the blind.' Yet, they were held in ignorant admiration, and implicitly submitted to. From the character of the public ministers of religion, we may, without great danger of mistake, infer the character of the people, who are pleased and satisfied with their ministrations. 'As the disciple cannot,' ordinarily, 'be expected to be superior to his master,' Luke, vi. 40; the religion of the Scribes may be taken as a standard of that of the Galileans, who were instructed by them; yet these were the people among whom MESSIAH chiefly conversed; so that his enemies styled him a Galilean, and a Nazarene, as a mark of reproach and contempt. Many of his apostles, perhaps the most of them, were Galileans likewise. 'He seeth not as man seeth,' 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The most of his im-

mediate followers, while upon earth, were such as men despised, on account of their situations, rank, or callings; publicans and sinners, fishermen and Galileans. This was, among other reasons, for the encouragement of the poor, the destitute, the despised, the miserable, and guilty, in succeeding ages, who should desire to put their trust in his name, and to implore his mercy. To those who received him, he was the light, the true light; he relieved them from the ignorance, wickedness, and distress in which he found them. They, on their parts, bore testimony to him. They, saw and acknowledged his glory. They felt his power, and devoted themselves to his service. Thus much for the literal sense.

II. But this prophecy is not to be restrained to the first and more immediate season of its accomplishment. The Lord speaks thus of MESSIAH in another place, 'It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth,' Isa. xlix. 6. And there are many declarations of a like import. He is still 'the light of the world,' (John, viii. 12,) though no longer visible and conversant with men. By the influence and power of his Spirit, he is still present wherever his Gospel is known. This his word of grace and truth he sends where he pleases, and with a discrimination not unlike that which he observed when he was upon earth. The Gospel is preached to the poor. Courts and palaces are seldom favoured with it. But while he passes by many great cities, many habitations of the wise and wealthy, he is known in villages and cottages. His condescension and favour to those who are unnoticed by the world cannot be too highly extolled. That the others are excluded from the same benefits, is more properly to be ascribed to their obstinacy than to his will. They exclude themselves. 'He stands at the door and knocks,' Rev. iii. 20. His word is within their reach; his ministers are within their call. They might easily enjoy every means and help which the Gospel provides for sinners, if they pleased; but they do not please. They are either engaged in a round of sensual pleasure, or engrossed by studies and pursuits, which possess their hearts, and fill up their thoughts and time, so that they have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to the things which pertain to their peace. Instead of inviting his Gospel to them, they too frequently employ their power and influence to discountenance, and, if possible to suppress it. They have their choice. The great and the gay will not receive his message; it is therefore sent to the poor, and to the wretched, and they will hear it. Yet as he visited

Jerusalem in person, and taught there, so London, likewise, is favoured with the light of his Gospel. But, alas ! ‘how few believe the report !’ They who do, experience the change described in my text. Their darkness is changed into marvellous light.

Mankind, till enlightened by the word and spirit of grace, are truly in a state of darkness. Thick darkness is a veil which conceals from us, not only distant, but the nearest objects. A man in the dark cannot perceive either friend or enemy ; he may be in great danger, yet think himself in safety, or, if he thinks himself in danger, be unable to take any step for his preservation, from a want of light. Thus, though God be our maker and preserver, though ‘in him we live, and move, and have our being,’ though we are surrounded with his presence, and proofs of his wisdom and goodness are before us wherever we turn our eyes, yet we live without him in the world. Equally ignorant we are of ourselves, of the proper happiness of our nature, or how it is to be attained. We know neither the cause, nor the cure, nor the consequences of our proneness to cleave to the dust, and of placing our affection on inadequate and unsatisfying objects.

And if we suppose a person awakened to a conviction of the evil of sin, and to understand that nothing less than the favour of God can make a rational and immortal creature happy, still without the Gospel he ‘would be in darkness and the shadow of death.’ His case may be compared to that of a person shipwrecked upon some desert, inhospitable coast, suffering great horrors and anxiety, from his exposedness to perish by hunger, by enemies, or wild beast—who, if he saw, at no very great distance, an island, and was, by some means, informed and assured that island was the seat of safety, plenty and pleasure ; and that if he was once there his dangers would all cease, and his utmost wishes be satisfied ; still, if there were neither bridge, nor boat, nor any means by which he might arrive thither ; to know that happiness was so near him, yet inaccessible to him, would but aggravate his misery, and make his despair more emphatically pungent. Miserable, indeed, must we be, if we clearly perceived that only He whose creatures we are, can make us happy ; and that, as sinners, we have forfeited his favour, and are utterly incapable of regaining it, if we were left under these views without any hope of relief. Such must have been our situation sooner or later, if ‘God, who is rich in mercy,’ had not himself provided the means of reconciliation. For though a hope of pardon is easily taken up by those who are ignorant of the holiness of God, and the malignity of sin ; yet nothing but a declaration from himself, that there is forgiveness with him, can give peace to a

truly awakened conscience. But Jesus dispels this darkness, and 'brings life and immortality to light by the Gospel.' For,

1. The office and agency of the Holy Spirit, so absolutely necessary to make us duly sensible, either of our danger or of the possibility of escaping it, is entirely the effect of his mediation. The soul of man, originally formed to be the temple of the living God, when defiled by sin, was justly forsaken by its great inhabitant; and, since the fall, answers the prophetic description given of Babylon; it 'is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird, Rev. xviii. 2. If we ask, as with good reason we may, How can the wise and holy God, 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' and with whom evil cannot dwell, return to his sanctuary thus polluted and profaned? an answer is afforded in that gracious promise, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; and I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and,' in order to do this, 'I will put my spirit within you,' Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. But the source of this mercy is in his sovereign love and purpose, to give the seed of the woman, his only Son, to be the mediator of sinners. By his atonement to be manifested in due time, but which had a virtual influence from the beginning, the Holy Spirit returned to dwell with men.

2. His obedience unto death, when revealed by the Holy Spirit to the enlightened conscience, affords a clear and satisfactory discovery of reconciliation with God: it shows, that on his part every hindrance to the free exercise of mercy is thereby removed, the honour of his law vindicated, and the demands of his justice answered. On our parts, by opening a door of hope, it removes that enmity and obduracy of heart which are nourished by a consciousness of guilt, and a secret foreboding of deserved punishment. But when the dignity of the Redeemer's person, the causes, nature and design of his sufferings are understood, emotions of admiration, love and gratitude, till then unknown, are felt; and obstinate sinners 'are made a willing people in this day of divine power.'

3. The doctrine of the cross pours a light upon every subject and circumstance in which we are concerned. It enlarges the mind, and forms the judgment and taste, agreeable to the standard of truth, and the real nature of things. It rectifies those prejudices and prepossessions which dispose us to mistake 'good for evil, and evil for good,' Isa. v. 20. to pursue trifles with earnestness, and to trifle with things of the greatest importance. In Jesus Christ crucified, 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'

are at once both hidden and exhibited. This object, the holy angels, whose knowledge of the wonders in creation, without doubt, greatly surpasses our conceptions, incessantly contemplate with delight, as affording the brightest displays 'of the manifold wisdom of God,' Eph. iii. 10. It is especially the fountain of wisdom to sinners. They look unto him and are enlightened. The slight and partial thoughts they once entertained of the great God, the mistaken judgment they formed of themselves, of their state, and their conduct, are corrected by their knowledge of the cross; from thence they derive a solid hope, a humble spirit, just views of their duty and obligations, and motives and prospects which animate them in a course of cheerful, persevering obedience to the will of God.

4. In this way, God, as revealed in Christ, is apprehended and chosen as the chief and proper good of the soul. Thus the poor are enriched with 'the pearl of great price,' and the weary obtain rest. The mind, no longer burdened with anxiety, nor mortified with a succession of disappointments, which attended the vain pursuit of happiness in earthly things, possesses present peace, and rejoices in the expectation of future glory. It is released from the slavery of 'hewing out broken cisterns,' and introduced to the 'fountain of living waters.' Or, to close with the beautiful image in my text, 'the people who once walked in darkness and the region of the shadow of death,' are translated into the kingdom of life and salvation, Col. i. 13.

How greatly are they to be pitied who reject the light of the Gospel! It is true, they cannot see it; but it is equally true they will not. But may I not hope that this is a day of divine power, in which some of you shall be made a willing people? Do not reason against your own life, but repent and believe the Gospel. The light shines around you, whether you perceive it or not; and it has an efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. Where the Gospel is preached, the Lord is present. If you call upon him, he will hear, and you shall receive your sight. If the grace and the glory of the Saviour have hitherto made no impression upon your heart, you are spiritually blind. Could you be sensible of your disorder, the remedy is at hand. If now, at last, you are willing to seek him, he will be found of you. But if you deliberately prefer darkness, your state is awfully dangerous; and if you persist in your obstinacy your ruin is unavoidable. God is gracious and long-suffering, but he will not be mocked, Gal. vi. 7. Humble yourselves at once, and implore his mercy, or else prepare to meet him in judgment. But be assured he will not meet you as a man. You must either bend or break. The Lord

forbid that he should say to any of you, in the great day of his appearance, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!'

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## SERMON IX.

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### CHARACTERS AND NAMES OF THE MESSIAH.

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ISAIAH, ix. 6.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

SUCH was the triumphant exultation of the Old Testament church! Their noblest hopes were founded upon the promise of MESSIAH; their sublimest songs were derived from the prospect of his advent. By faith, which 'is the substance of things hoped for,' they considered the gracious declaration of the faithful, unchangeable God, as already accomplished, though the actual performance respected a period, as yet, future and distant; especially as believers under that dispensation, already felt the influence of the redemption which MESSIAH was to consummate in the fulness of time. It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of sinners, that gave life and significancy to all the institutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwise, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy and burdensome yoke, Acts, xv. 10. Isaiah, therefore, prepares this joyful song for the true servants of God who lived in his time; and, though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a sufficient compensation for all their sufferings, in being warranted to say, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder,' &c.

This ancient song is still new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New Testament church, with superior advantage. I trust, many of you understand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for something wherein to rejoice and glory. Little reason have the wise (Jer. ix. 23.) to glory in their supposed wisdom, or the strong in their fading strength, or the rich in their transitory wealth; but this is a just and unfailling ground of glory to true Christians, that 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,' &c.

When a sinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to understand the character and offices of MESSIAH, his ability and willingness to save those who are ready to perish, and the happiness of all who are brought into subjection to his gracious government; and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name, then this song becomes his own, and exactly suits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many persons will despise and pity him as a weak enthusiast. And yet, perhaps, they do not think so unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that having suddenly discovered the solution of a difficult problem, while he was bathing, he was so transported with joy, that he forgot his situation, sprung instantly from the bath, and ran through the streets crying, 'I have found it! I have found it!' He is not usually charged with madness on this account, though the expression of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cause. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to ecstasy, on almost any occasion, but on that alone which above all others, will justify it. A person who would be thought destitute of taste, if he was unaffected by the music to which this passage is set, would, at the same time, hazard his reputation for good sense, with some judges, if he owned himself affected by the plain meaning of the words. Incompetent judges, surely! who are pleased to approve of warmth and emotion of spirit, provided the object be trivial, and only condemn it in concerns of the greatest importance! But, I trust, the character of my auditory is very different, and that the most of you desire to enter into the spirit of this passage, and to have a more lively sense of your own interests in it. May the Lord grant your desire, and accompany our meditations upon it with his power and blessing!

Every clause in this passage might furnish subject for a long discourse; but my plan will only permit me briefly to touch upon the several particulars, which will lead to a recapitulation or summary of what has been already considered more largely concerning the person, offices, and glory of MESSIAH. We have,

I. His incarnation. 'Unto us a child is born;' in our nature, born of a woman, 'Unto us a son is given,' not merely a man-child, but, emphatically, *a son*, the son of God. This was the most precious gift, the highest proof and testimony of divine love. The distinction and union of these widely-distant natures, which constitute the person of Christ, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apostle, the 'great mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. the pillar and ground of truth.

I shall not repeat what I have already offered on this point in the fifth sermon. It is the central truth of revelation, which, like the sun, diffuses a light upon the whole system, no part of which can be rightly understood without it. Thus the Lord of all humbled himself, to appear in the form of a servant, for the sake of sinners.

II. His exaltation. 'The government shall be upon his shoulder.' In our nature he suffered, and in the same nature he reigns. When he had overcome the sharpness, the sting of death, he took possession of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can say, He who governs in heaven and on earth, and whom all things obey, is 'the child who was born, the son who was given for us.' Some subsequent passages will lead us, hereafter, to contemplate, more directly, the glory of the Redeemer's administration in the kingdoms of providence and grace. At present, therefore, I shall only observe, that the exaltation of the Redeemer infers the dignity and security of the people who are united to him by faith. They have, in one respect, an appropriate honour, in which the angels cannot share. Their best friend, related to them in the same nature, is seated upon the throne of glory. Since he 'is for them, who can be against them?' What may they not expect, when he who has so loved them as to redeem them with his own blood, 'has all power committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth!' For,

III. The names and characters here ascribed to him, are not only expressive of what he is in himself, but of what he is engaged to be to them.

1. 'His name shall be called Wonderful.' In another place the word is rendered 'Secret,' Judges, xiii. 18. It is true of him in both senses. He is *Wonderful* in his person, obedience, and sufferings; in his grace, government, and glory. So far as we understand his name, the revelation by which, as by a name, he is made known, we may, we must believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge! His name is *Secret*. Who can, 'by searching, find him out?' Job, xi. 7. His greatness is incomprehensible, his wisdom untraceable, his fulness inexhaustible, his power infinite. 'No one knoweth the Son, but the Father.' But *they* have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who trust, love, and serve him; and, in their view, he is *Wonderful*! The apostle expresses the sentiment of their hearts, when he says, 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.'

2. Another of his names is 'Counsellor.' The great councils of redemption, in which every concern respecting the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, was adjusted, were established with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counsellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cause, and manages all our affairs in perfect righteousness, and with infallible success; so that no suit can possibly miscarry which he is pleased to undertake. To him, likewise, we must apply, (and we shall not apply in vain,) for wisdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty and the honour of our profession in the present life. In all our difficulties, dangers, and cares, we must look to him for guidance and support. This is to be wise unto salvation. His secret is with them that consult him; so that, though the world may deem them weak and ignorant as babes, (and he teaches them to think thus of themselves,) they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important subjects, which are entirely hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.

3. He is 'The mighty God.' Though in the office of Mediator, he acts in the character of a servant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the Mighty God could make a provision capable of answering the demands of the holy law, which we had transgressed. Only the Mighty God could be a suitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak, helpless creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies they are exposed to in their passage. Add to this, the honour, dependence, and obedience which this great Shepherd claims for his sheep, are absolute and supreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the *Mighty God*. Though real Christians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit, may, and do differ in their views and explanations of some revealed truths, I conceive they must be all agreed in this point. It is not only necessary to be known as the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, but it immediately respects the object of divine worship. For if the Redeemer is not possessed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Testament, in its most obvious and literal signification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expressly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Further, he shall be called 'The Everlasting Father.' 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren,' (Heb. ii. 11.) having condescended to assume their human nature. But they are also his *children*. They are born into his family by the efficacy of his

own word and Spirit. From him they derive their spiritual life, being united to him by faith, and receiving, from first to last, out of his fulness. And he is an 'Everlasting Father.' Our fathers, according to the flesh, are subject to death. But his relation to them subsists unchangeably, and, therefore, they cannot be destitute; and he is thus equally to them all. *They* live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long succession of ages; but *He* is the Father of the everlasting age, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' 'All generations shall call him blessed.' To him, therefore, the apostle teaches us to apply that sublime passage of the Psalmist, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, Psalm cii. 25—27. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they 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,' Heb. i. 10—12.

5. Lastly, He shall be called 'The Prince of Peace,' whose sovereign prerogative it is to 'speak peace to his people,' Psalm lxxxv. 8; and there is no peace deserving the name, but that which he bestows. The Scripture expressly declares, 'There is no peace to the wicked,' Isa. lvii. 21. By whatever name we call that thoughtless security and insensibility, in which mankind generally live, while ignorant of God and themselves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindness and hardness of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be said to possess peace, however fatally regardless they may be of futurity, who are at present under the dominion of restless, insatiable, and inconsistent passions and appetites? But the kingdom of MESSIAH is a kingdom of peace, and in him his happy subjects enjoy 'a peace which passeth all understanding,' (Phil. iv. 7.) such as the world can neither give nor take away. He has made 'peace by the blood of his cross,' (Col. i. 20.) for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and distress, until they feel the bitterness and fear the consequences of their sins, and see the impossibility of helping themselves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do seek him thus 'weary and heavy laden,' he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a season, are like the sea in a storm; they are distressed with guilt, fears, and temptations: but when he reveals his mighty name and boundless grace to their hearts, and says, 'Peace, be still,' (Mark, iv. 39.) there is a great calm. 'Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' He gives them peace, likewise, in a changing, troublesome world,

by inviting and enabling them to cast all their cares upon him, and to trust all their concerns in his hands, upon the assurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and overrule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promises, they feel a composure and satisfaction. Knowing 'that the hairs of their head are numbered,' that their afflictions, no less than their comforts, are tokens of his love, 'that he will give them strength according to their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death,' they are not greatly moved by any events, or disturbed by apprehensions, because their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psalm cxii. 7. Further, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to seek and maintain peace among men. His love subdues the power of self, and forms them to a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence, which has often such an effect, that they who dislike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and would willingly speak evil of them, are ashamed and put to silence, by their perseverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increases as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader stream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then strongest and most unshaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of resigning their souls into his hands. This is the time when, if not before, the false peace of the worldling will give way to terror and dismay. 'But mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace,' Psalm xxxvii. 37. It must be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at some seasons, uncomfortable fears concerning a dying hour? but when the time of their dismissal actually arrives, we seldom see them afraid of the summons. There is a strength necessary to support the soul at the approach of death, which is usually withheld till the time of need. But then it is vouchsafed. They who have frequent access to the beds of dying believers, can bear testimony, as eye witnesses, to the faithfulness of their Lord. How often have we seen them triumphing in the prospect of immortality! as happy, in defiance of pain and sickness, as we can well conceive it possible to be while in the body, and as sure of heaven as if they were already before the throne.

Such is the character of MESSIAH! This is the God whom we adore; our almighty, unchangeable Friend! His greatness and goodness, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart, no more to rove, and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and desire. From hence spring a cheerful unreserved obedience to

his commands, and a deliberate, voluntary submission to his holy will. For his people do not serve him or yield to him by constraint; at least, it is only the pleasing constraint of love, which makes their duty their delight; and their burden and grief is, that they can serve him no better.

May we be all thus minded. I dare not hope it is so with us all at present. But this is the day of his grace. For this cause he came into the world, that he might draw many hearts to himself, John xii. 32. And for this purpose he favours us with his Gospel, by which he still says, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, Isa. xlv. 22.; 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest,' Matt. xi. 28. To be found among his faithful followers, in the great day when he shall come to judge the world, is the one thing which, above all others, deserves our solicitude.

Hear, then, his voice to-day. Perhaps you are apprised of the necessity of a change of heart and life, at some future period, in order to die safely. Such a change is equally necessary, if you wish to live comfortably. While you are unfit to die, you can have no true enjoyment of life. It were easy to prove, at large, that procrastination is highly dangerous. Admitting that, according to your present feelings, you really think yourself determined to seek the Lord at some future time, do you consider how many uncertainties you presume upon? Are you sure that you shall not be suddenly cut off, by an unexpected and unthought of stroke; or visited by a fever, which may quickly bring you into a state of delirium or stupefaction, and render your projected repentance impracticable? Yea, it will, in any circumstances, be impracticable, unless God is pleased to influence your mind by his good Spirit. If you grieve this Spirit *now*, by resisting his operations, what reason have you to expect that he will *then* return? Do we not see many instances of what the poet, with great propriety, calls, 'A slow, sudden death?' How many people, while pining away under the power of incurable disease, amuse themselves with the hope of recovery to the last gasp; and though their acquaintance read death in their countenance for weeks or months, in defiance of such repeated and long-continued warnings, they die as suddenly, with respect to their own apprehensions, as if killed by lightning. Tremble, lest such be your last end, if you trifle with God, who now calls you, by his Gospel, to seek him to-day, 'while it is called to-day.'

But I would lead you to consider your delay not only as dangerous, but as unreasonable. Why are you afraid of being

happy too soon? What strange and hard thoughts have you of God, if you suppose you can find more pleasure in living according to your own wills, than in obedience to his commands? Can the world give you such peace and satisfaction as I have attempted to describe? Do you think a real persuasion that God is your friend, and that heaven will be your home, will spoil the relish of your earthly enjoyments, or make your lives uncomfortable? What hard thing does the Lord require of you, that you are so unwilling to comply? If we set aside, for a moment, the consideration of a future state and a final judgment, yet, even in a temporal view, you would be a great gainer, if your spirit and your conduct were regulated by the Gospel. What heart-breaking troubles, what losses, contests, pains of body, and remorse of conscience, would some of you have avoided, if you had believed and obeyed the word of God! What distresses may your headstrong passions soon plunge you into, if you presume to go on in your sins! For that the way of transgressors is hard, is not only declared in Scripture, but proved by the history and observation of every day. Forsake the foolish, therefore, and live. And, while the door of mercy is still open before you, pray to him who is able to bless you indeed, by delivering you from the guilt, and from the power of your iniquities; lest, if being 'often reprov'd,' Prov. xxix. 1. and still 'hardening your hearts, you shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.'

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## SERMON X.

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### THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND SONG.

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LUKE ii. 8—14.

*There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will toward men.*

THE gratification of the *great*, the *wealthy*, and the *gay*, was chiefly consulted in the late exhibitions in Westminster-Abbey.

But, notwithstanding the expense of the preparations, and the splendid appearance of the auditory, I may take it for granted, that the shepherds who were honoured with the first information of the birth of MESSIAH, enjoyed at free cost, a much more sublime and delightful entertainment. How poor and trivial is the most studied magnificence and brilliancy of an earthly court, compared with that effulgence of glory which surrounded the shepherds ! The performers of this Oratorio, if I may be allowed the expression, were a multitude of the heavenly host. And though I do not suppose that the angel delivered his message in the cadence which we call *Recitative*, I have no doubt but the chorus was a *song*, sweetly melodious as from blest voices. A song which the redeemed and the angels of the Lord are still singing before the throne. A new song, Rev. v. 9. A song which will be always new. We are made acquainted with the subject, yea, with the very words of this song. May our hearts be suitably affected by the consideration of them to-day ! The melody and harmony of heaven are far above our conceptions. The music of that happy land has no dependence upon the vibrations of the air, or the admirable structure of the human ear. But we have reason to believe there is, in the world of light and love, something analogous to what we call music, though different in kind, and vastly superior in effect, to any strains that can be produced by the most exquisite voices or instruments upon earth ; as we readily judge the glory of an angel to be unspeakably more excellent, both in kind and degree, than any thing that is deemed glorious among mortals.

To consider this passage at large, would require many discourses. I shall confine myself at present to a few brief reflections on the circumstances of this heavenly vision, the message of the angel, and the concluding chorus or song.

#### I. The circumstances.

1. 'Lo, an angel came upon them,' &c. Suddenly, when they had no expectation of such a visit, without any thing that might previously engage their attention, all at once, like a flash of lightning, a glory shone around them, and an angel appeared. We do not wonder that they were impressed with fear. We live near, perhaps in the midst of, an invisible world, full of great and wonderful realities, which yet, by too many persons, are considered and treated as non-entities, because they are not perceived by our bodily senses. But the Scripture assures us of the fact ; and to reject this testimony, because it is not confirmed by our senses, is no less irrational and unphilosophical, than impious. A man

born blind can have no more conception of light and colours, than we have of what passes in the world of spirits. And a nation of blind men, if there were such a nation, would probably treat a seeing person as a visionary madman, if he spoke to them of what he saw. But he would be sure of his own perceptions, though he could not satisfy the inquiries and cavils of the blind. Our senses are accommodated to our present state; but there may be a multitude of objects, as real in themselves, and as near to us as any that we behold with our eyes, of which we, for want of suitable faculties, can have no idea. To deny this, and to make our senses the criteria of the existence of things which are not within their reach, is exactly such an absurdity, as a blind man would be guilty of, who should deny the possibility of a rainbow, because he never heard it nor felt it. However, 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' And they who believe the word of God, cannot doubt of the existence of an invisible state, and invisible agents. The barrier between the inhabitants of that state and us, is too strong to be passed; for the will of the great Creator seems to be the barrier. Otherwise it is probable they could easily surprise us, since, upon special occasions, they have been permitted to discover themselves. We have a natural dread of such visitants, even though they should appear to us, as they did to the shepherds, as messengers of peace and mercy from God. Yet we must shortly mingle with them. Death will introduce us into the world of spirits; and what we shall then meet with, what *beings* will be ready to accost us upon our first entrance into that unknown, unchangeable state, who can say? It deserves our serious thought. We are now encompassed by the objects of sense, but we must soon be separated from them all. We live in a crowd, but we must die alone. Happy are they, who, like Stephen, shall be able to commend their departing spirits into the hands of Jesus! He is Lord of all worlds, and has the keys of hades, of the invisible state.

2. The angel spoke. The Gospel was preached by an angel to Zacharias, to the virgin mother of MESSIAH, now to the shepherds; and, perhaps, to none but these. The angel who appeared to Cornelius said nothing to him of Jesus, but only directed him to send for Peter, Acts x. 4, 5. The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, with respect to its dignity, depth, and importance, may seem a fitter theme for the tongue of an angel than of a man; but angels never sinned; and though they might proclaim its excellency, they could not, from experience, speak of its efficacy. In this respect sinful worms are better qualified to preach to others,

concerning him by whom they have, themselves, been healed and saved. Their weakness, likewise, is better suited to show that the influence and success of the Gospel is wholly owing to the power of God. It has, therefore, pleased God to 'put this treasure into earthen vessels,' and to commit the ministry of his word, not to angels, but to men. They whom he is pleased to employ in this office, however weak and unworthy in themselves, derive an honour and importance from the message intrusted to them, and are, so far, worthy of the same attention as if an angel from heaven spoke. They are sinful men, and have reason to think humbly of themselves; nor should they as the servants of a suffering, crucified Master, either wonder or complain, if they meet with unkindness from those whom they wish to serve; but they may 'magnify their office,' Rom. xi. 13. and it is at the peril of their hearers to despise it. What the world accounts in us 'the foolishness of preaching,' is made to those who simply receive it; 'the wisdom and power of God.' To others, even angels would preach in vain. They 'who hear not Moses and the prophets,' who submit not to the ordinary methods and means of grace which God has appointed, 'would not be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.'

3. The angel was sent with the most interesting news that could be made known to mankind; not to Caesar, or to Herod, or to the high priest; but to obscure and lowly shepherds. 'The Lord seeth not as man seeth:' the petty distinctions that obtain among men are not regarded by him. He is equally near to them that fear him in every situation of life; as the sun shines as freely and fully upon a cottage as upon a palace. These shepherds were, doubtless, of the number of the happy few, who in that time of degeneracy, were waiting and longing 'for the consolation of Israel.' The heads of the Jewish people found their consolation in their rank and wealth, and in the respect paid them by the vulgar. These things usually add to the idea of self-importance, and feed those tempers which are most displeasing to the Lord, and which indispose the mind to the reception of the Gospel, or to any due inquiry concerning it. And thus, in fact, from age to age, it has generally been 'hidden from the wise and the great, and revealed unto babes.' The magi, or wise men, who lived in the east, where the knowledge of astronomy obtained, but where the Scripture was not known, were guided to MESSIAH by the appearance of a new star or meteor. The shepherds, who were acquainted with the prophecies concerning MESSIAH, were informed of their accomplishment, by an

angel. Thus the Lord was pleased to suit the different manner of making known his will, to the previous situation of the persons.

II. The message of the angel, though concise, was comprehensive and full. It contained, The fact, 'Unto you is born this day;'—The place, 'In the city of David,' that is, in Bethlehem, so called, because David likewise had been born there, Luke ii. 4. The office of MESSIAH, 'A Saviour;'—His name, honour, and character, 'Christ, or the Anointed; the Lord,' the head and king of Israel, and of the Church, the Lord of all. I do but recite these particulars now, as they will repeatedly offer to our consideration in the series of subject before me. The description of the state in which they would find him, was such as could only be reconciled to his titles and honours, by that simple faith which without vain reasoning, acquiesces in the declarations of God. For how unlikely would it seem to a merely human judgment, that the Saviour of sinners, the promised MESSIAH, the Lord of all, should be 'a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.' Yet thus it was. 'Though rich in himself, he became poor for our sakes,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. On this account, as the Scripture had foretold, 'he was despised and rejected of men.' Though he came to his own, as a Lord or Master to his own house; yet, coming in this manner, his own professed servants, who pretended that they were longing and waiting for him, slighted and opposed him; preferred a notorious malefactor to him, and put him to death as an impostor and blasphemer. But the shepherds reasoned not through unbelief, and therefore they were not staggered; they obeyed the message, they went, they saw, they believed.

The seeming repugnance between the greatness of MESSIAH'S claims, and the state of humiliation in which he appeared when upon earth, was the great stumbling-block then, and continues to be so at this day. Because he stooped so low and made himself of no reputation, too many still refuse to acknowledge his divine character. But they who are willing to be taught by the word and Spirit of God, see a beauty and propriety in his submitting to be born in a stable, and to live as a poor man, destitute of house or property. Hereby he poured contempt upon worldly pomp and vanity, sanctified the state of poverty to his followers, and set them an encouraging example to endure it with cheerfulness. They, like the shepherds and his first disciples, are delivered from their natural prejudices, and are enabled 'to behold his glory,' through the veil of his outward humiliation, 'as the glory of the only begotten of the Father.' And his condescension in 'becoming poor for their sake, that they through his poverty

might be made rich,' affects their hearts with admiration and gratitude.

But though too many, who are governed by the spirit and maxims of this world, are far from admiring his love in assuming our nature under those circumstances, which, from his infancy to his death, exposed him to the contempt of his enemies, it is otherwise thought of in yonder world of light. For we read, that when the angels had declared to the shepherds the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host expressed their joy by a song; which is the next subject that offers to our consideration.

III. Their highest praise was excited by a view of the effects which this unexampled love would produce.

1. 'Glory to God in the highest.' In the highest heaven, in the highest degree, for this highest instance of his mercy. At the creation, these 'morning stars sung for joy,' Job, xxxviii. 7. But redemption was a greater work than they had yet seen, and a work by which his goodness, wisdom and power, would be still more abundantly magnified. The glory of God, the exhibition of his adorable perfections, to the view of intelligent creatures, is the last and highest end of all his works. Nor would it be worthy of the infinite, eternal God, in comparison with whose immensity the aggregate of all created good is no more than a point compared with the universe, or a single ray of light compared with the sun, to propose any thing short of his own glory, as the ultimate, final cause of his designs. And in proportion as any finite intelligences are conformed to the will of their Creator, and impressed with a sense of his pre-eminence, their highest end and aim will be the same with his. If, therefore, we compare the glory of God and the good of his creatures together we may refer to them what our Lord was pleased to declare of the two great commandments. The former is incomparably the first and greatest of his ends; the second, in its proper place and subordination, is like unto it, and inseparably connected with it, or rather derived from it. The former is, if I may so speak, the essential difference of the divine operations; the latter, so far as consistent with it, is the result of a glorious and efficacious property of his consummate excellence. In the redemption of fallen man, both are displayed to the highest advantage. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.'

The glory of his *goodness*; this shines bright in the capacities and happiness he has communicated to angels; but it shines with greater brightness in the mercy afforded to mankind; whether we consider the objects, who are sinners, rebels, and enemies: or

his purpose in their favour, not only to restore the life they had forfeited, but to bestow 'it more abundantly,' John x. 10. with respect to title, security, and honour; or, lastly and principally, the means by which their deliverance from everlasting misery, and their possession of everlasting happiness, is procured; and which could only be procured by the humiliation and death of the Son of his love.

The glory of his *wisdom*, in adjusting the demands of his holiness, justice, and truth, with the purposes of his mercy: in providing such a method for the exercise of his mercy, as renders his displeasure against sin more conspicuous by pardoning, than by punishing it; in abasing the sinner's pride, by the very considerations which inspire his hope and confidence; so that, while he confesses himself unworthy of the very air that he breathes, he is encouraged and warranted to claim a participation in all the blessings of grace and glory: and finally, in proposing motives which, when rightly understood, are always found sufficient to influence the heart, even though it has been habitually hardened in sin, long deaf to the voice of reason, conscience, and interest, and equally unaffected by the judgments or the mercies of God, till enlightened to perceive the excellency of the Gospel.

The glory of his *power*, in making all the acts of free agents, through a long succession of ages, subservient to this great purpose, not excepting those who most laboured to obstruct it; in changing the disposition of the sinner, however obstinate; and in carrying on his work of grace, when once begun, in such feeble, inconsistent creatures as men are, in defiance of all difficulties and opposition arising from within or without.

There are subjects which 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Pet. i. 12. which fills the most exalted intelligences with admiration. The glory of God was manifested, was celebrated in the highest heavens, when MESSIAH was born of a woman.

2. The great design and effect of his appearance, with regard to mankind is peace. 'On earth peace.' Man, as a fallen creature, is in a state of war and rebellion against his Maker. He has renounced his allegiance and dependence, is become his own end. He is now against God, disobedient to his laws, and disaffected to his government. And his conscience, if not stupified and cauterized by frequent resistance of conviction, suggests that God is against him. He feels he is not happy here; he fears he shall be miserable hereafter. This apprehension strengthens his aversion from God. And, indeed, without an express assurance from the Lord himself, whom he has offended, that there is

forgiveness with him, he would not only fear, but sink into despair, if he rightly understood the horrid enormity of a state of alienation from the blessed God. But infinite wisdom and mercy have provided and propounded a method by which the honour of the divine perfections and government is secured, and pardon and peace vouchsafed to rebels. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' The knowledge of this mercy, when revealed to the sinner's heart, subdues his enmity, constrains him to throw down his arms, and to make an unreserved submission and surrender of himself: forms him to a temper of love and confidence, and disposes him to habitual and cheerful obedience. Now 'mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other,' Psalm lxxxv. 10; and God is glorified in the highest, for peace proclaimed upon earth.

The expression of 'good-will toward men' seems to rise upon the former. Not only peace, but acceptance and adoption in the Beloved. Sinners who believe in the Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they deserved, but are united to their Saviour; considered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life and his glory. God is their portion, and heaven is their home. The Lord's satisfaction in this, as in the greatest of all his works, is expressed by the prophet in such astonishing terms of condescension, as surpass our utmost conceptions; and we can only say, 'Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him!' We believe, admire, and adore. 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing,' Zeph. iii. 17.

Assuredly this song of the heavenly host is not the language of our hearts by nature. We once sought our pleasure and happiness in a very different way. We were indifferent to the glory of God, and strangers to his peace. And some of us are still blind to the excellencies of the Gospel, and deaf to its gracious invitations. But we must not expect to sing with the great company of the redeemed hereafter, before the throne of glory, unless we learn and love their song while we are here, Rev. xiv. 3. They who attain to the inheritance of the saints in light, are first made meet for it in the present life, and in this way. They believe the testimony of the Scripture respecting their own guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness; then they receive the record which God has given of his Son. They renounce 'all confidence in the flesh,' Phil. iii. 3; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and from his fulness they derive grace to worship God in the Spirit. A sense of their

obligations to the Saviour, disposes them to praise him now as they *can*; and they rejoice in hope of seeing him ere long as he is, and that then they shall praise him as they *ought*. For heaven itself, as described in the word of God could not be a state of happiness to us, unless we are like minded with the apostle, to 'account all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.'

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## SERMON XI.

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### MESSIAH'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

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ZECH. ix. 9, 10.

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. And he shall speak peace unto the heathen.*

THE narrowness and littleness of the mind of fallen man, are sufficiently conspicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence, and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eastern monarch, as described in history, exhibit him to us in what he himself accounts his best estate. If you suppose him seated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in splendid apparel, wearing a crown or tiara ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, surrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you see the poor worm at the summit of his happiness. He has no conception of any thing greater than this. And the spectators are generally of the same mind. They admire, they envy his lot; and there is hardly a person in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place, were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would surely be mortified, if, at the height of his self-complacence, he could consider that he had the very same regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the same desire to be admired and envied, and felt the same kind of satisfaction in distinction above his fellows, when he was a child of ten years old. He is, in effect, a child still, only he has changed his play things, and now acts upon a larger scale, but with the same trifling and contracted views.

How different was MESSIAH'S entry into Jerusalem foretold in this prophecy, the accomplishment of which we read in the evangelists! And how differently was he affected by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This 'King of kings, and Lord of lords, was meek and lowly, riding upon an ass's colt,' Luke, xix. 35—38. And though a secret divine influence constrained the multitude to acknowledge his character, and, with some accommodation to the customs of the times, 'to strew their garments in the way,' as they proclaimed the King who came in the name of Jehovah; yet he appeared unmoved by their applause. Had the history of Jesus, like those which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the most splendid qualities of a philosopher or a hero, we should never have known how his mind was engaged in this situation. The Saviour must be divine, his historian must be inspired, the fact must be true; for man could not have invented such a circumstance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, because his heart was filled with compassion for his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood. For it was then, amidst the acclamations of his disciples, that he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. 'Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes.'

An angel proclaimed his birth to the shepherds; and wise men from the east paid such attention to the new-born Saviour, that the jealousy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to destroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a state of obscurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher description than that of 'The carpenter's son.' In the course of his ministry, he appeared, and was treated as a poor man; he had no certain dwelling-place, he submitted to receive supplies, for his support from contributions of a few of his followers, for the most of them were poor like himself. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the necessitous and miserable, he admitted no alteration in his own external state, but was content to be poor and despised, for our sakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occasion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his person and character, was when he fulfilled this prophecy. And still, he was the same meek and lowly Saviour. As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his procession. He approached Jerusalem, attended indeed by a concourse of people, but riding upon an ass, and weeping for his enemies.

The passage of the *Messiah* which follows the chorus of the heavenly host, is taken from these verses. It does not include the whole of them. In one clause there is a small alteration in the expression, but it does not affect the sense. Instead of, 'He is just, having salvation,' it is, 'He is a righteous Saviour.'

We may notice,

I. The prophet's address. 'To the daughters of Zion and Jerusalem'

II. The exhortation to joy. 'Rejoice and shout.'

III. The cause assigned for this joy. 'Thy king cometh.'

IV. The character of the King. 'A righteous Saviour.'

V. His great design. 'To speak peace to the Heathen.'

I. 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' are indifferently used as emblems of the church, or professing people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradistinguished from each other, Zion, the city of David the seat of government, and of the temple-worship, may denote the principal persons of the ecclesiastical and civil state; and Jerusalem may be expressive of the people at large, the daughters of a place signifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boasted that they were the Lord's peculiar people: they had the prophecies and promises concerning MESSIAH in their hands, and were professedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are therefore called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though 'he came to his own,' to his own nation, city, and temple; his own people, to whose affection and allegiance he had the justest claim, 'received him not,' John, i. 11. But there were a few who truly waited for him, as the hope and consolation of Israel, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that 'he only had the words of eternal life,' and became his followers. By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge *that* prophet whom Moses had foretold, 'God would raise up among them like unto himself,' Deut. xviii. 15—19. Acts, vii. 37; that is, to be as he had been, a lawgiver, to institute a new dispensation of the true religion: and their refusal involved them, as a nation, in the punishment which Moses had likewise denounced against those who should refuse to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in possessing a divine revelation, while the rest of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obstinacy more inexcusable, and their condemnation more severe. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the striking parallel in this respect, between the Jewish nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, since that period, have admitted the New

Testament as a revelation from God. By assuming the Christian name, and so far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the spirit and design of the Gospel, and treat the ministers of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the steps, and share in the guilt, of those who pretended to expect MESSIAH, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In person he could be crucified but once; but the Scripture speaks of those who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. How far this is the case of the persons who can bear to hear of his passion and his kingdom when made the subject of a musical entertainment, but upon no other occasion, deserves their serious consideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by those who are sensible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to save. To these the prophet brings a joyful message, and they will 'rejoice and shout.' The joy of harvest (Isa. ix. 3.) and of the victors in war when dividing the spoil of the vanquished, is celebrated with shouting. But sinners, who, by the knowledge of MESSIAH, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far superior, in kind and degree, to any satisfaction that any temporal things can afford. It is 'a joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8. Jesus, when known and received by faith, is, in the highest sense, light to those who sat in darkness, health to the sick, food to the hungry, and rest to the weary soul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodness when he was upon earth; and he still has people, and will have to the end of time, who do and shall rejoice in him upon these accounts, though every spring of temporal joy shall be dried up. They who know his name, and put their trust in him, are warranted to appropriate those strong expressions of another prophet, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation,' Hab. iii. 17, 18.

III. The ground and cause of this joy is assigned. 'The King cometh.' MESSIAH is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate, Mark xv. 2. by whose order it was fixed over him upon his cross. That this was not a slight and arbitrary circumstance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangelists to preserve the remembrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of Kings, King and

Lord of nations, King of worlds ; but he is here spoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to establish upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, interests, and aims of it, are peculiar to itself. His power and providence rule over all ; but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, who, though they are *in* the world, are not *of* it, but 'strangers and pilgrims upon earth.' There (Phil. iii. 20.) πολιτευμα, their true citizenship is in heaven. These are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their several departments and duties assigned them according to his will, as members of society, and it does not yet appear what they shall be, 1 John iii. 2. ; they are even now the children and servants of the Lord, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to others. Happy are these his subjects who dwell under his shadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruises and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden sceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free consent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times access ; and from whence they receive, in answer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their sins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed supply answerable to all their wants, cares, services, and conflicts. So that, though they are surrounded with snares, and fiercely opposed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himself is their King and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this King. 'He is just, having salvation,' or, as it is in the passage of the *Messiah*, 'He is a righteous Saviour.'

1. 'He is righteous.' His kingdom is founded in righteousness. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, so, likewise, for his sake. Such is his command, and such is his promise. 'If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,' John xiv. 14. In pleading their cause, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And therefore, because his intercession is founded upon a righteous stipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not say 'Father' I ask, but, 'I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,' John xvii. 24.

2. He is a 'Saviour!' having salvation in himself; yea, 'He is their salvation,' Isa. xii. 2. His wisdom, power, compassion, and determined purpose, are all engaged to save them fully, freely, and for ever; to save them from guilt, from Satan, and from sin, through all the dangers and trials of this life; to save them to the uttermost, till he fixes them finally out of the reach of all evil, and puts them in possession of all the happiness of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great design was not confined to Israel after the flesh. 'He shall speak peace to the heathen' also. His kingdom comprises, besides the believing posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidst all nations, people, and languages, 'from the east and the west, from the north and the south,' Luke xiii. 28, 29. Though the Heathen were universally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conscience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring those near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their prison shall be opened, their chains broken, Isa. xlv. 14. their condemnation reversed, and they shall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He shall likewise conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make of both one people, Eph. ii. 13—16. pulling down the walls of separation and prejudice, that with one heart and mind they may love, serve, and praise him. For where faith in him obtains, all distinctions are lost and superseded. 'There is,' then, 'neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all,' Col. iii. 11.

Much has been already done by the Gospel. Multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promise will be more extensively and literally fulfilled; when the kingdom shall be the Lord's to the end of the earth; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, all Israel be saved, and the nations shall learn war no more.

From these characters of the Saviour, we may collect the character of his people. For they, beholding his glory, are changed (according to the measure of their faith) into the same image. The incommunicable perfections of God, such as his sovereignty and all-sufficiency, can only produce in his people correspondent impressions of reverence, submission, and dependence; an attempt to be like him in these respects would be highly impious, and was, indeed, the original source of our apos-

tasy from him. Man, by indulging a desire of being like God, rebelled against him, aspired at independence, and preferred the gratification of his own will to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable consequence of this madness is misery. It is not possible that he should be happy till he be reduced to his proper state of subordination. But that light of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the Gospel, has a transforming effect upon those who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and resemble him, whose they are, and whom they serve, 'in righteousness, goodness, and truth,' Eph. v. 9.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I speak not of their relative state, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to 'love righteousness and hate iniquity,' Psal. xlv. 7. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themselves as becomes weak and unworthy sinners, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenour of their conduct is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the most endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tempers, desires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are in deed and in truth, a saved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in their hearts by faith, teaches them likewise to love one another, and to exercise benevolence to all men. When they understand the true nature of his spiritual kingdom, which consisteth not in external distinctions and forms, 'but in righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost; Rom. xiv. 17. and that it is his great design to form to himself a people from amongst the nations of the earth, who shall be one body, enlivened by one and the same spirit, they acquire a large and comprehensive mind. They rise above the influence of names, parties, and divisions; are freed from the narrow views and interests of self; and 'put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness,' Col. iii. 12. In conformity to the pattern and will of their great Exemplar. Thus he speaks peace to them, and hushes all their angry, tumultuous passions into a calm. Such is the spirit and tendency of the Gospel. Let us try ourselves by this touchstone, measure ourselves by this rule, and weigh ourselves in these balances of the sanctuary. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. If he be indeed your King, your consciences will bear

you witness that you revere, imitate, and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly must be sensible yourself, and others must observe, that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you should be convinced, that hitherto you have been a Christian only in name and in form, but destitute of that which constitutes the life and power of real godliness, this will be a good beginning. For though it be high time that you should, in good earnest, attend to these things, blessed be God, it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour: seek him as such, and he will speak peace to you also. His sure promise is recorded for your encouragement. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' John, vi. 37.

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## SERMON XII.

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### EFFECTS OF MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE.

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ISAIAH, xxxv. 5, 6.

*The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.*

How beautiful and magnificent is the imagery, by which the prophet, in this chapter, represents the effects of MESSIAH'S appearance! The scene, proposed to our view, is a barren and desolate wilderness. But when he, who in the beginning said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' condescends to visit this wilderness, the face of nature is suddenly changed by his presence. Fountains and streams of water burst forth in the burning desert, the soil becomes fruitful, clothed with verdure, and adorned with flowers. The towering cedars, which were the glory of Lebanon, and the richest pastures, which were the excellency of Carmel, present themselves to the eye, where a little before, all was uncomfortable and dreary. How is it that so few of those who value themselves upon their taste, and who profess to be admirers of pastoral poetry in particular, are struck with the elegance and beauty of his description? Alas! we can only ascribe their indifference to the depravity of the human heart. They would, surely, have admired this picture, could they have

met with it in any of their favourite authors; but descriptive paintings in this style, so exquisitely combining grandeur with simplicity, are only to be found in the Bible, a book which their unhappy prejudices and passions too often lead them to depreciate and neglect. But they who have a scriptural and spiritual taste, not only admire this passage as a description of a pleasing change in outward nature, but consider it as a just and expressive representation of a more important, a moral change, of which they have themselves been, in a measure, the happy subjects. The barren wilderness reminds them of the state of mankind by the fall, and of their own hearts before MESSIAH, the Sun of Righteousness, arose upon them with healing, with light, power, and comfort in his beams. In that memorable hour old things passed away, and all things became new. The Lord, by shining into their hearts, and showing them his glory in the person of Christ, has created for them a new heaven and a new earth. The works of God around them in his creation and providence assume a different appearance. Before, they lived without him in the world; but now they see his hand wherever they look, they hear his voice in every event; for now the principles of his grace are planted in their souls, and they are no longer barren nor unfruitful, but are 'filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to his praise,' Phil. i. 11.

The verses which I have read exhibit the effects of MESSIAH'S power and goodness, by another image equally pleasing. Not only the wilderness, but the inhabitants of the wilderness, partake of the virtue of the great Redeemer. He finds them in circumstances of distress, which he only can relieve. But when he comes, the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb have voices given them to resound his praise. These mighty works, in their literal sense, marked his character, and confirmed his claims, when he was upon earth; and to these he himself appealed, in proof of his being the promised Saviour, whom the prophets had foretold, and that no other was to be expected, Matth. xi. 3—6.

But the words have a still more sublime and important sense. As the great Physician, he cured all manner of bodily diseases and infirmities. But this was not the principal design for which he came into the world. The maladies to which sin has subjected the body are but emblems of the more dreadful evils which it has brought upon the soul. He came to open the eyes of the mind; to make the obstinate will attentive and obedient to the voice of God; to invigorate our benumbed and paralytic faculties, that

we may be active and cheerful in his service; and to open our lips that our mouths may show forth his praise. I have a good hope that I may warrantably say, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears,' Luke, iv. 21. Some of you who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord.

These different effects are produced by one simple, but powerful operation. While Lazarus lay in the grave all his natural powers were inactive. But when the voice of the Son of God restored him to life, John, xi. 43. he was, of course, immediately enabled to see, to hear, to move, and to speak. Thus, while we were spiritually dead, we were necessarily blind, deaf, dumb, and motionless, with respect to all the objects and faculties of that life of God in the soul, which is the perfection and honour of our nature. When we are made partakers of this life, by a new and heavenly birth, then our spiritual senses are brought into exercise; then the eyes of the blind are opened to see the beauty and glory of divine truths; we hear the voice of God, we feel a liberty to walk and act in his service, and our tongues are taught to praise him. Here are four chief effects of a work of grace upon the heart, which distinguish believers from the rest of mankind.

And these effects are all to be ascribed to MESSIAH. For they are all wrought by the agency of his Holy Spirit. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which are absolutely necessary, as well for the perpetuating of his Gospel from age to age, as for making it efficacious and successful, are bestowed upon sinners wholly upon the account of his mediation. It was when 'he ascended on high and led captivity captive,' Psalm lxxviii. 18. that he procured these blessings for 'rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' And it was only for his sake, and on the account of what he was to accomplish in the fulness of time, as intimated in the promise of the seed of the woman appointed to bruise the serpent's head, that there were any gracious communications afforded to fallen man, from the first entrance of sin into the world. But now the Redeemer's great work is fulfilled, his salvation is more openly revealed and applied, by the publication of the Gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and sinners hear the voice of God and live. Then all the changes prefigured and predicted in my text take place, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.

They were once blind, but now they see. The religion of true believers is not the effect of imagination and blind impulse, but is derived from a solid knowledge which will bear the strictest scrutiny, and is the reasonable service of an enlightened understanding. They see God, their apprehensions of him are, in

some measure, answerable to his greatness and his goodness, and inspire them with reverence and love. Their conceptions, of other things in which they are most nearly interested, are agreeable to the truth. Sin appears to them hateful in itself, as well as mischievous in its consequences; and holiness, not only necessary by the ordination of God, but desirable for its own sake, as essentially belonging to the dignity and happiness of man. They know themselves; they see and feel that they are such creatures as the Bible describes them to be, weak, depraved, and vile. Of course, they see the folly of attempting to recommend themselves to God, and can no longer place any dependence on what they once accounted their wisdom, power, or righteousness; and therefore they see the absolute necessity of a Saviour. They see, likewise, and approve the method of salvation proposed by the Gospel, as worthy of the wisdom and justice of God, and every way adapted to the exigencies of their sins, wants, and fears. They see and admire the excellence, dignity, and sufficiency of him, on whom their help is laid. His power and authority engage their confidence, his love captivates and fixes their hearts. They see the vanity of the present state, and the vast importance of eternity. In these respects they have all of them a good understanding, however inferior in natural capacity, or acquired knowledge to the wise men of the world.

2. Their knowledge, so far as they have attained, is not merely speculative, cold, and indistinct, like the light of the moon. The Sun of Righteousness has shined into their hearts. The light they enjoy is vital, cheering, and effective. Because they thus see, they *hear* likewise. They were once deaf to the voice of God, whether he spoke by his word or his providence; whether in the language of mercy or judgment. But now their deaf ears are unstopped. They are now attentive, submissive, and willing to receive his instructions, and to obey his commands. With them, one 'Thus saith the Lord,' has the force of a thousand arguments. They desire no further proof of a doctrine, no other warrant for their practice, no other reason for any dispensation, than Thus the Lord has said, This he requires, and This is his appointment. Thus their wills are brought into subjection; and they so understand as to believe and obey.

3. Further, with their sight and hearing they receive power and activity. Once they were tried and bound in the chain of their sins, or, like a man benumbed with a dead palsy, unable to move. If they sometimes seem to express desires that might be called *good* with respect to their object, they were faint and ineffectual. But now their fetters are broken, the health and strength of their souls are restored, and God has wrought in them not only

to 'will,' but also 'to do according to his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13. It is not more wonderful that a cripple should suddenly recover the use of his limbs, than that a person who has long been fettered in sinful habits, should be enabled to move and act with alacrity in the service of God. But in the day of divine power, sinners are made both willing and able. How burdensome was that which they once accounted their religion! how little comfort did it yield them! how little did it assist them against their passions, or against their fears? But all things are become new, since they have attained to a life of faith in the Son of God. Their religious service is now pleasant, and their warfare against sin and the world, victorious. Their obligations, motives, resources, encouragements, and prospects, inspire them with a holy vigour, to run, with patience and perseverance the race that is set before them.

4. Having their sight and hearing thus restored, and their hearts enlarged to walk at liberty in the ways of wisdom; they are no longer dumb, silent, and sullen, but out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak the language of gratitude, praise, and joy. For though most people have the faculty of speech, and can use, or rather abuse, their tongues fluently; though we are sufficiently expert from our childhood in the dialects of falsehood, profaneness, and folly; yet, by nature, we are dumb with respect to the language that becomes us, as the creatures of God, and as those who have sinned against him, and yet are invited to seek his mercy. But when grace teaches the heart, then the heart teaches the mouth, Prov. xvi. 23. When we believe, then we speak, yea, we sing and greatly rejoice; as it is written, 'In that day I will praise thee; though thou wast angry, thine anger is turned away,' Isa. xii. 1. And again, 'The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous,' Psalm cxviii. 15. 'Let the redeemed of the Lord say, that he is good, and his mercy endureth forever,' Psalm, cvii. 1, 2.

It is of great importance to examine ourselves by this test, and not to be satisfied with our knowledge of the Gospel, any further than our consciences bear us witness, that it has produced a real, moral change in our tempers, conduct, and pursuits. For there is a knowledge, which is falsely so called. It puffeth up, but edifieth not. Our Lord's declaration deserves our most serious attention: 'For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not may see; and that they which see might be made blind,' 1 John, ix. 39. It is very possible, yea, very easy, by the

help of books, sermons, and converse, to acquire an orderly and systematic knowledge of divine truths ; it may be learnt thus, like any other branch of human science, and the head will be well stored with orthodox sentiments ; and there may be an ability to prove and defend them, in a way of argumentation, while the heart is utterly a stranger to their salutary influence. Such characters are too common. None make a greater parade and boast of seeing, than these persons. None are more fatally blinded. They smile, with disdain, when they speak of a self-righteousness founded upon prayers, alms-deeds, and sacraments ; but are not aware that they themselves live in the very spirit of the Pharisees, (Luke, xviii. 11, 12.) so clearly described, and so expressly condemned, in the New-Testament. Their supposed knowledge of the doctrines which they misunderstand and abuse, is the righteousness on which they build their hopes ; and trusting to this, they despise all those who are stricter in practice than themselves, as ignorant and legal ; and discover almost as great dislike to close and faithful preaching, as they could do to poison. Though the doctrines of the Gospel, when rightly received, are productive of godliness, it is to be feared, there are people who espouse and plead for them, to quiet their consciences, by furnishing them with excuses for the sins they are unwilling to forsake. It is not surprising, that they who are displeased with the yoke of our Lord's precepts, should seem friendly to the idea of salvation without the works of the law. The notion of the final perseverance of believers, may afford a pillow for those to rest on, who, being at present destitute of all feeling of spiritual life, labour to persuade themselves that they are Christians, because they had some serious thoughts, and made some profession of the truth, many years ago. So likewise, in what the Scriptures teach, of the total inability of fallen man, they think they have a plea to justify their negligence and sloth, and therefore are not disposed to contradict the testimony. The invitation and command to wait, and watch, and strive, in the ways and means of the Lord's appointment, they evade, as they think, with impunity, by confessing the charge, and saying, I am a poor creature indeed, I can do nothing of myself aright, and therefore to what purpose should I attempt to do any thing ? A minister may preach upon these points, in general terms, and obtain their good word. But if he speaks plainly and faithfully to conscience ; if he bears testimony not only against dead works, but against a dead faith ; against spiritual pride, evil tempers, evil speaking, love of the world, and sinful compliances ; if he insists that the branches of

the true vine should bear grapes, and not the same fruit as the bramble; hearers of this stamp will think they do God service by censuring all he can say, as low and legal trash. How awful! that people should be blinded by the very truths which they profess to believe! Yet I fear such cases are too frequent. God grant a delusion of this kind may never be found amongst us! 'For if the salt' itself 'should lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' Matth. v. 13. May we come simply to the light, with a desire of seeing more of ourselves, and more of our Saviour; that we may be more humble and spiritual, more afraid of sin, more watchful and successful in striving against it? and, in our whole conversation, more conformable to our glorious Head!

But to return. From what has been offered upon this subject, we may observe,

1. That true Christianity is friendly to society, and to the common interests of Mankind. It is the source of peace, tenderness, benevolence, and every humane temper. It is calculated to sooth the fierce disposition, to enlarge the selfish spirit, and to transform the lion into the lamb. What then must we think of those pretended friends to liberty and free inquiry, whose unhappy zeal is employed to rob us of the only light and balm of life? who, by their misrepresentations and cavils, endeavour to persuade others, though they cannot effectually persuade themselves, that the Gospel, a scheme so wise in its constitution, so salutary in its design, so powerful in its effects, is no better than an imposition, the contrivance of superstitious or artful men! Why should they attempt to take away the foundation of our hope, and the spring of our comfort, (if they were able,) when they know they have nothing to substitute in their place! Let us think of them with that compassion which their state calls for; and pray for them, 'if, peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,' Tim. ii. 25.

2. The change thus wrought is great, marvellous, and, if not so frequent, might be styled miraculous. It is more than education, example, persuasion, or resolution can perform. It is the work of God alone, to open the blind eyes, to change the heart of stone into flesh, and to raise the dead.

This thought should exclude boasting. The happy subjects of this change were no better by nature or practice than others. They have nothing but what they have received. The glory and praise is due to the Lord alone. It should likewise soften their censure of those who are still in a state of alienation from God, or at least prevent the emotion of anger and resentment to-

wards them. They know not what they do. Their danger should excite our pity, and our friendly endeavours to recover them from the error of their way. And especially, we should be careful, so to regulate our behaviour, 'that if they obey not the word, they may, without the word, be convinced and won,' (1 Pet. iii. 1.) by the force of our example. If the Lord be pleased to do that for them which he has done for us, their dislike of us, and their opposition to us, will be quickly at an end; and though they set out after us, they may possibly make a swifter progress in the Christian life than we have done. Thus, though Saul of Tarsus approached Damascus as an enemy and a persecutor, when the scales fell from his eyes he not only immediately joined the disciples, but in a little time became a pattern to them.

That the change is the work of God, should likewise be considered by those who, from a sense of the greatness of their sins, and the strength of their sinful habits, are ready to sink into despair. Whatever apparent difficulties there may be in your case, it is easy to divine power. 'All things are possible with God,' (Mark, x. 27.) and 'all things,' likewise, 'are possible to him that believeth,' Mark, ix. 23. The promises invite you to apply to him who is the Author and Finisher of faith, and who has said, for your encouragement, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'

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## SERMON XIII.

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### THE GREAT SHEPHERD

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ISAIAH, xl. 11.

*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

It is not easy for those whose habits of life are insensibly formed by the customs of modern times, to conceive any adequate idea of the pastoral life, as it obtained in the eastern countries, before that simplicity of manners, which characterized the early ages, was corrupted by the artificial and false refinement of luxury. Wealth, in those days, consisted principally in flocks and herds; and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, who were, to

speak in modern language, persons of high distinction, were likewise shepherds. The book of Genesis, which is an authentic and infallible history of the most ancient times, exhibits a manner of living so different from our own, that, perhaps, few persons are qualified to enter fully into the spirit of the description. The poets seem to have derived the idea of the golden age from some imperfect tradition of this primitive state; and if we compare it with the state of things around us, methinks we have reason to say, 'How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed?' Lam. iv. 1. The opulence of Jacob may be conjectured from the present he sent to his brother Esau,' Gen. xxxii. 14, 15. Yet Jacob attended his flocks himself, 'in the drought by day, and in the frost by night,' Gen. xxxi. 40. The vigilance, the providence, the tenderness, necessary to the due discharge of the shepherd's office, have been frequently applied in describing the nature and ends of government; and it has been esteemed a high encomium of a good king, to style him the shepherd of his people. This character MESSIAH, the Saviour condescends to bear; and happy are they, who, with a pleasing consciousness, can say, 'We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,' Psal. c. 3.

This passage will lead me to speak of the shepherd, the flock, and his care and tenderness over them.

I. Our Lord expressly styles himself the 'Shepherd,' the good Shepherd of the sheep,' John x. 11, 14. and the apostle Peter styles him 'the chief Shepherd,' 1 Pet. v. 4. His faithful ministers have the honour to be under-shepherds; he appoints and qualifies them to feed his flock. They are the messengers of his will, but they can do nothing without him; they can only communicate what they receive, and cannot watch over the flock, unless they are themselves watched over by him,' Psal. cxxvii. 1. For, with respect to efficacy, he is the chief, and, indeed, the sole Shepherd. The eyes of all are upon him, and *his* eye is upon and over all his flock. The Old Testament church had a Shepherd, and their shepherd was Jehovah,' Psal. xxiii. 1. Unless, therefore, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls likewise be Jehovah, we fall unspeakably short of the privilege of ancient Israel, if their Shepherd was almighty, and if ours could be but a creature. Surely we could not then say, what yet the apostle affirms, that we have a better covenant, established upon better promises; Heb. viii. 6. since MESSIAH himself is expressly declared to be the surety and the Mediator of this covenant. But would it not be better, upon this supposition, with David, who could say, Jehovah is my Shepherd, than with us, who are intrusted to the care of a delegated and inferior keeper, if Jesus be not Jehovah?

Besides, who but Jehovah can relieve the necessities of multitudes in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to them in every age? The sinner, who is enlightened to know himself, his wants, enemies, and dangers, will not dare to confide in any thing short of an almighty arm; he needs a shepherd who is full of wisdom, full of care, full of power; able, like the sun, to shine upon millions at once, and possessed of those incommunicable attributes of Deity, omniscience and omnipresence. Such is our great Shepherd; and he is eminently the good Shepherd also, for he laid down his life for the sheep, and has redeemed them to God by his own blood.

II. A *Shepherd* is a relative name; it has reference to a *flock*. This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom he loved from everlasting, and whom having loved, he will love to the end, John xiii. 1.

*Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse!*

He humbled himself for their sakes, submitted to partake of their nature and their sorrows, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died for his sheep, 'the just for the unjust,' 1 Pet. iii. 18. to redeem them from the curse of the law, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan, and bring them to God. They, by nature, are all 'gone astray, every one to his own way;' Isa. liii. 6. but having thus bought them with his blood, in his own appointed time, he seeks, finds, and restores his sheep. By the power of his word and Spirit, he makes himself known to their hearts, causes them to hear and understand his voice, and guides them into his fold. Then they become his sheep in the sense of my text. They are all under his immediate protection and government.

Considered as individuals, they are fitly described by the name of *sheep*. A sheep is a weak, defenceless, improvident creature; prone to wander, and if once astray, is seldom known to return of its own accord. A sheep has neither strength to fight with the wolf, nor speed to escape from him; nor has it the foresight of the ant to provide its own sustenance. Such is our character, and our situation: unable to take care of ourselves, prone to wander from our resting place, exposed to enemies which we can neither withstand nor avoid, without resource in ourselves, and taught, by daily experience, the insufficiency of every thing around us. Yet if this Shepherd be our shepherd, weak and helpless as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can say, with David, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' we may make the

same inferences which he did, 'Therefore I shall not want: therefore I need not fear.'

Collectively, they are a *flock*. They are not indeed, in one place. They are scattered abroad, dispersed through different ages and countries, separated by seas and mountains, and too often, by misapprehensions and prejudices, by names and forms; and only a very small part of the flock are known to each other. But they are all equally known to him, and equally under his eye. In his view they are one flock, one body; they are animated by one and the same spirit; their views, hopes, and aims, are the same; and yet a little while, they shall be all brought together, a number without number, to rejoice and to join in worship before his throne of glory. For they have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. and they shall be safely kept, while they are sojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Israel is their keeper.

III. 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.' The word is not restrained to feeding. It includes all the branches of the shepherd's office. He shall act the part of a shepherd to his flock. We have a beautiful miniature description of what he has engaged to do, and what he actually does, for his people, as their Shepherd, in the twenty-third Psalm. And the subject is more largely illustrated in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. His sheep, from age to age, have been witnesses to the truth of his promises. He has a flock at present who rejoice in his care; and greater multitudes, as yet unborn, shall successively arise in their appointed seasons, 'and call him blessed,' Psal. lxxii. 17. For he is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

'He feeds them.' He leads them into green and pleasant pastures. These pastures are, his word and ordinances, by which he communicates to them of his own fulness; for, in strict propriety of speech, he himself is their food. They eat his flesh and drink his blood, John vi. 54. This was once thought a hard saying (John vi. 60.) by some of his professed followers, and is still thought so by too many. But it is his own saying, and therefore I am not concerned, either to confirm or to vindicate it. The knowledge they receive by faith, of his incarnation and sufferings unto death, of the names he bears, and of the offices and relations in which he is pleased to act for them, is the life and food of their souls. The expression of feeding them, is agreeable to the analogy he has been pleased to establish between the natural and the spiritual life. As the strength of the body is maintained and renewed by eating and drinking; so they who, in this sense, feed

upon him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving, even *they* live (John vi. 57.) by him; 'for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.'

'He guides them.' First by his example. He has trodden the path of duty and trial before them; and they perceive and follow his footsteps. Again, by his word and Spirit, he teaches them the way in which they should go; and both inclines and enables them to walk in it, Isa. xxx. 21. He guides them, like-wise, by his providence; he appoints the bounds of their habitations, the line and calling in which they are to serve him, and orders and adjusts the circumstances of their lives according to his infinite wisdom, so as finally, to accomplish his gracious designs in their favour.

'He guards them.' It is written concerning him, 'He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God,' Micah v. 4. If we conceive of a flock of sheep feeding in the midst of wolves, who are restrained from breaking in upon them, not by any visible enclosure, but merely by the power of the shepherd's eye, which keeps them in awe and at a distance, it will give us some idea of the situation of his people. He provides them food in the midst of many and mighty (Psal. xxiii. 3.) enemies, who envy them their privileges, but cannot prevent it. If he should withdraw his attention from the flock, for a single minute, they would be worried. But he has promised to keep them night and day, Isa. xxvii. 3. and every moment; therefore their enemies plot and rage in vain. Their *visible* foes are numerous; but if we could look into the *invisible world* and take a view of the subtilty, malice, machinations, and assiduity of the powers of darkness who are incessantly watching for opportunities of annoying them, we should have a most striking conviction, that a flock so defenceless and feeble in themselves, and against which such a combination is formed, can only be kept by the power of God.

'He heals them.' A good shepherd will examine the state of his flock. But there is no attention worthy of being compared with his. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns escapes his notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their spirits, he seasonably revives them. Nor are they in heaviness without a need-be for it. All his dispensations towards them are medicinal, designed to correct, or to restrain, or to cure, the maladies of their souls. And they are adjusted, by his wisdom and tenderness, to what they can bear, and to what their case requires. It is he, likewise, who heals

their bodily sickness, and gives them help in all their temporal troubles. He is represented to us as counting their sighs, Psalm lvi. 8. putting their tears into his bottle, recording their sorrows in his book of remembrance; and even, as being himself 'touch-ed with a feeling of their infirmities,' Heb. iv. 15. as the head feels for the members of the body.

'He restores them.' The power and subtilty of their enemies are employed to force or entice them from his rule; and too often prevail for a season. The sheep turn aside unto forbidden paths; and whenever they do, they would wander further and further, till they were quite lost again, if he were not their Shepherd. If he permits them to deviate, he has a time to convince them 'that it was an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord their Shepherd,' Jer. ii. 19. and to humble them, and to bring them back. Thus they become more sensible of their own weakness, and of their obligations to his gracious care; for he will not suffer their enemies to triumph over them. He will not lose one of his true flock; not one convinced sinner, who has in deed and in truth, surrendered and intrusted his all to him. They must, and they shall, smart and mourn for their folly; but he will, in due season, break their snares, and lead them again into the paths of peace, for his own name's sake.

The flock are not all *sheep*. There are among them *lumbs*. These are especially mentioned, and for these he expresses a peculiar tenderness. 'He will gather them with his arm and carry them in his bosom.' Though they are weaklings, they shall not be left behind. This is a beautiful and pathetic image. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, it shall be carried. This clause affords encouragement,

1. To young people. Early serious impressions are often made upon the hearts of children, which we are to cherish by directing their thoughts to the compassion of the good Shepherd, who has said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,' Mark x. 14. This high and holy One, who humbles himself to notice the worship of the heavenly host, hears the prayers of worms upon the earth; and his ear is open to the prayers of a child, no less so, than to the prayer of a king.

2. To young converts. These, at whatever age, are children in the Lord's family, lambs in his flock. They are, as yet, weak, unsettled, and unexperienced. Almost every day brings them into a new and untried situation. They often meet with opposition and discouragement, where they have promised themselves help and

countenance. Perhaps their nearest friends are displeas'd with them. They are liable, likewise, while they are inquiring the way to Zion, to be perplexed by the various opinions and angry contentions prevailing among the different religious persons or parties to whom they may address themselves. They are frequently discourag'd by the falls and miscarriages of professors, some of whom, it is possible they may have admir'd and look'd up to, as patterns for their own imitation. Add to these things, what they suffer from new and unexpected discoveries of the evil and deceitfulness of their hearts; the mistakes they commit in judgment and practice, for want of a more solid and extensive knowledge of the Scriptures; and the advantage the great enemy of their souls derives from these their various difficulties to assault their peace and obstruct their progress. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promis'd to lead and uphold them with the arm of his power?

There is, likewise, particular mention made of 'those who are with young.' These he will gently lead. If we take the word according to our version, it may signify a state of conviction or trouble. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous,' Psalm xxxiv. 19. by which they are often wearied and heavy laden. But when their spirits are overwhelm'd within them, he knoweth their path. Jacob would not permit his cattle that were with young to be over-driven for one day, lest they should die. Gen. xxxiii. 13. Much less will this good Shepherd suffer the burdened among his flock to be hurried and tempted beyond what they are able, or what he will enable them to bear.

But the word signifies, those that *have young* rather than those that *are with young*. The two sorts of persons in the Lord's flock, who come under this description, feel an especial need of his compassion, tenderness, and patience.

1. He only knows the feelings of the hearts of *parents*; what solicitude and anxiety they have for their young ones, the sucklings, if I may so speak, of the flock, which mingle with all their endeavours, to manage rightly the important charge committed to them, and to bring their 'children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

2. Ministers, likewise, have painful exercises of mind. The apostle Paul speaks of 'travailing in birth again till Christ be formed in our hearers,' Gal. iv. 19. When we know of any newly awakened, and beginning to seek their salvation, how solicitous is our care to bring them forward, to comfort them, to

warn them against the devices of their hearts, and of their enemies! And how piercing our grief and disappointment, if they miscarry! How much is felt in sympathy for the trials of the flock! What wisdom, faithfulness, courage, meekness, and unction from on high are necessary to the due discharge of what we owe to the flocks of which we have the oversight? Who is sufficient for these things? And when we have done our best, our all, what defects and defilements have we to mourn over? But this is our great consolation, that he, who knows us, and leads us, considers 'our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.'

In this delineation of the character and conduct of the 'Great Shepherd of the sheep,' Heb. xiii. 20. we have an affecting exemplar and pattern, for the imitation of those who act in the honourable office of under-shepherds, and are called by their profession and engagement, to feed his sheep and lambs. Whether there be any ministers in our assembly or not, you will at least permit me to speak a word to my own heart; which may, I hope at the same time, impress your minds with a sense of our great need of your prayers. 'Brethren, pray for us,' 1 Thess. v. 25. and 'pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth more faithful labourers into his harvest,' Matth. ix. 38. For it is his work alone. It is not necessary that a minister of the Gospel should be in the first line of those who are admired for their abilities or literature; much less that he should be distinguished by such titles, honours, and emoluments, as this world can give. But it is necessary, and of the last importance to his character and usefulness here, and to his acceptance in the great day of the Lord, that he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart. He must serve the flock, 'not for filthy lucre, or by constraint,' 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. (that constraint which the apostle attributes to the love of Christ, only excepted,) 'but willingly,' and with a view to their edification. And he must, indeed, *serve* them, not acting as a 'lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock.' Not preaching 'himself,' 2 Cor. iv. 5. perverting his sacred office to the purposes of ambition or vain glory, or the acquisition of wealth; but preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn sinners from the error of their ways. 'He who winneth souls is wise,' Prov. xi. 30. If it be wisdom to propose the noblest end, the faithful minister is wise; the end at which he aims, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the salvation of souls; and the recovery of one immortal soul to the favour and image of God, is and will at length be found a greater and more important event, than the deliverance of a

whole kingdom from slavery or temporal ruin. If it be wisdom to pursue a right end by the fittest means, he is wise ; he knows the Gospel of Christ to be the power of God, the appointed, the effectual, the only sufficient mean for accomplishing his great purpose ; therefore, however unfashionable it may be, he is not ashamed of it, he preaches it, and he glories in it. If it be an effect of wisdom, not to be deterred from the prosecution of a great and noble design, by the censure and dislike of weak and incompetent judges, the faithful minister is truly wise. He loves his fellow-creatures, and would willingly please them for their good, but he cannot fear them because he fears and serves the Lord. He looks forward, with desire, to the day of that solemn and general visitation, when the ‘ Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall himself appear,’ 1 Pet. ii. 25. v. 4. And if he may then stand among those who are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved, and receive the ‘ crown of life, which his Lord has promised to them that love him’ 2 Tim. iv. 8.—this thought fully reconciles him to the trials of his situation ; and however depreciated, misrepresented, opposed, or ill-treated here, he can say, ‘ None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God,’ Acts xx. 24.

There is a counterpart to this character, described in strong and glowing language by the prophets. There are idle shepherds, who feed not the flock, but themselves, Ezek. xxxiv. 2. ; who neither attempt to heal the sick, to strengthen the feeble, to bind up that which is broken, nor recover that which has been driven away ; shepherds, Isa. lvi. 10, 11. who cannot understand, greedy lovers of gain—and who, by a change of metaphor, are compared to slumbering watchmen, and dumb dogs that cannot bark. The New Testament teaches us to expect that such persons, under the name of ministers, will be found likewise in the visible church of Christ ; men of corrupt minds, 1 Tim. iv. 5. Rom. xvi. 18. destitute of truth, who serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own belly ; men who are of the world, 1 John iv. 5. and speak of the world ; and therefore the world heareth and favoureth them. But, alas ! neither the wretched slave who toils at the galley-oar, nor he that is doomed to labour in a deep mine, where the light of the sun never reaches him, nor the lunatic who howls in a chain, are such emphatical objects of our compassion, as the unhappy man who prostitutes the name and function of a minister of Christ to the gratification of his pride and avarice ; and whose object is not the welfare of the flock, but the posses-

sion of the fleece ; who intrudes into the post of a watchman, but gives no alarm of the impending danger, Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8. If the Scriptures be true ; if the Gospel be not, indeed, as pope Leo the tenth profanely styled it, a lucrative fable ; the more he accumulates riches, the more he rises in dignity, the more his influence extends, the more he is to be commiserated. He may have the reward he seeks ; he may be admired and flattered ; he may, for a season, be permitted to withstand and discountenance the efforts of the Lord's faithful servants ; he may shine in the accomplishments of a scholar or a courtier ; but nothing less than repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, whose name and cause he has dishonoured, can finally screen him from the full effect of that terrible denunciation—' Wo to the idle shepherd that forsaketh, or neglecteth the flock ! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye : his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened,' Zech. xi. 17.

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## SERMON XIV.

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### REST FOR THE WEARY

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MATTH. xi. 28.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

WHICH shall we admire most ; the majesty or the grace, conspicuous in this invitation ? How soon would the greatest earthly monarch be impoverished, and his treasures utterly exhausted, if all that are poor and miserable had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promise of relief fully answerable to their wants and wishes ! But the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible. If millions of millions of distressed sinners seek to *him* for relief, he has a sufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all their sins ; his grace is infinite to answer and exceed their utmost desires ; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number without number, have been thus waiting upon him from age to age ; and not one of them has been sent away disappointed and empty. And the streams of his bounty are still flowing, and still full. Thus the

Sun, his brightest material image, has been the source of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants from the creation; and will be equally so to all succeeding generations, till time shall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour when the sun shall cease to shine, and the course of nature shall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, (Mal. iv. 2. James, i. 17.) has no variableness nor shadow of turning; and they who depend upon him while in this world, shall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we hesitate to accept of these words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour, supposing only that he meant what he said, and that he is able to make his promise good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, use this language? Can a creature discharge the debts, sooth the distresses, and satisfy the desires of every individual who looks to him? Who but the Lord God can raise up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn? Psalm cxlvi. 8. Isa. lxi. 2.

Again; as is his majesty, so is his mercy. In acts of grace amongst men there are always some limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are still exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obstinacy or influence are supposed to be too great to render their safety consistent with the safety of the state. But the Saviour excludes none but those who wilfully exclude themselves. As no case is too hard for his power, so no person who applies to him is shut out from his compassion. 'Him that cometh to him,' whatever his former character or conduct may have been, 'he will in nowise cast out,' John, vi. 37. This glorious exercise of sovereign mercy is no less a divine attribute, than the power by which he created the heavens and the earth. It is the consideration of his mercy in pardoning sin, and saving sinners, which causes that admiring exclamation of the prophet, 'Who is a God like unto thee?' Micah, vii. 18.

This passage, (including the two following verses,) closes the first part of the Oratorio. In tracing the series of the Scriptures thus far, we have considered several signal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have seen their accomplishment in his birth, and have, I hope, joined with the heavenly host, in ascribing glory to God in the highest, for this unspeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets his characters, as the great Restorer, and the great Shepherd. The evangelist proposes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commission, proclaiming

his own sovereign authority and power, and declaring his compassionate purpose and readiness to give refreshment and rest to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the *invitation* and the *promise*.

1. The *invitation* is expressed in very general terms. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' There is no qualifying or restraining clause, to discourage any person who is willing to accept it. 'Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. 'Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely,' Rev. xxii. 17. I cannot doubt but these words authorize me to address myself to every person in the assembly. I speak first to you who are 'spending your money for that which satisfieth not;' Isa. lv. 2. who are wearied in seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and 'in digging pits, and hewing out cisterns for yourselves, which will hold no water,' Jer. ii. 13. and have hitherto been regardless 'of the fountain of living waters,' which is always near you. While you are pursuing the wealth or honours of this world, or wasting your time and strength in the indulgence of sensual appetites, and look no higher, are you, indeed, happy and satisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the 'paths of pleasantness and peace?' Prov. iii. 17. With what face can you charge the professors of religion with hypocrisy, if you pretend to satisfaction in these ways? We have trodden them far enough ourselves, to be assured that there are feelings in your heart which contradict your assertion. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewise. Are you quite strangers to a secret wish, that you had never been born? or that you could change condition with some of the brute creation? 'Are you not heavy laden,' burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings; harassed with crosses, disappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at least sometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone; unable to support the reflections which are forced upon you in a solitary hour, when you have nothing to amuse you? And while you seem so alert, and upon the wing, after every kind of dissipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a desire, if possible, of hiding yourselves from yourselves, and of calling off your attention from those thoughts which, like vultures, are ready to seize you, and prey upon you, the moment they find you unemployed? And how often do your poor expedients fail you, especially in a time of trouble or on a sick bed? What comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions

of your vain and gay hours? Most probably, at such a season, they stand aloof from you; the house of mourning, or the chamber of sickness, are no less unpleasing to them than to yourself. They do not choose the pain of being reminded, by a sight of your distress, how soon the case may be their own. Or, if they visit you, you find them miserable comforters. But I have to speak to you of one who is able to comfort you, in all seasons, and under all circumstances; whose favour is better than life. And will you still refuse to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him, for that peace and rest to which you have hitherto been strangers. But, though you are invited, I know that of yourselves you will not come; you *will* not, and therefore, you cannot. Be assured, however, the invitation does not mock you; and if you finally refuse it, the fault will lie at your own door. But may I not hope you will refuse no longer? The preaching of the Gospel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make 'a willing people in the day of his power.'

There are others, however, to whom this invitation speaks more directly. The convinced sinner is 'heavy laden' with the guilt of sin, and 'wearied' with ineffectual strivings against it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither answer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor see any way of escaping the penalty which is due to transgressors. He sighs earnestly and anxiously for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from some occasional fervour and liveliness in the frame of his spirit, than from the exercise of faith; and therefore, as that fervour abates, (and it will not always remain at the same height,) his fears return. If, in such a favoured moment, he feels little solicitation or trouble from the evil propensities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are subdued, and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is short, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the supplies of his Spirit, can give stable peace to the mind, or victory over sin. A representation of these disappointments and changes fixes a heavy burden and distress upon the mind. But here is help provided exactly suited to the case. Comply with his invitation. 'Come to him, and he will surely give you rest.'

But what is it 'to come to Christ?' It is, to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promise our ground and warrant for putting our trust in him. On another occasion, he said, 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that

believeth in me shall never thirst,' John vi. 35. The expressions are of the same import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a season, received no saving benefit from him. Some came to him from motives of malice and ill-will, to ensnare or insult him. Some followed him for loaves and fishes; and of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life,' John v. 40. But they who were distressed, and came to him for relief, were not disappointed. 'To come to him,' therefore, implies a knowledge of his power, and an application for help. To us he is not visible, but he is always near us; and as he appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee (Matth. xxviii. 16.) previous to his ascension, so he has promised to be found of those who seek him, and wait for him in certain means of his own institution. He is seated upon a throne of grace; he is to be sought in his word, and where his people assemble in his name, for he has said, 'There will I be in the midst of them,' Matth. xviii. 20. They, therefore, who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a desire that they may know him, and 'be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people,' Psalm cvi. 4. answer the design of my text. 'They come to him, and he assures them, that whoever they are, he will in no wise cast them out. If they thus come to him, they will of course 'come out from the world and be separate,' 2 Cor. vi. 17. If they apply to him for refuge and dependence, and trust in him alone; according to the words of the prophet, 'Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless, the helpless, and comfortless, findeth mercy,' Hos. xiv. 3.

II. The *promise* is, 'I will give you rest.'\* The word signifies both rest and refreshment. He gives a relief and cessation from former labours and bondage, and superadds a peace, a joy, a comfort, which revives the weary spirit, and proves itself to be that very satisfaction which the soul has been ignorantly and in vain seeking amongst the creatures and the objects of sense.

This 'rest' includes a freedom from the forebodings and distressing accusations of a guilty conscience; from the long and fruitless struggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconsistent appetites: and from the dominion of pride and self, which makes us unhappy ourselves, and hated and despised by others: a freedom likewise from the cares and anxieties, which, in such an

\* Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 18. 2 Cor. vii. 13. Philem. vii. 20.

uncertain world as this, disquiet the minds of those who have no solid Scriptural dependence upon God, and especially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In these and other respects, the believer in Jesus enters into a present rest. He is under the guidance of infinite wisdom, and the protection of Almighty power; he is permitted to cast all his cares upon the Lord,' 1 Pet. v. 7. and is assured that the Lord 'careth for him.' So far as he possesses, by faith, the spirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful description and illustration of the rest of a believer, Jer. xvii. 5—8.; which is rendered more striking by being contrasted with the miserable state of those who live without God in the world. 'Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited.' But, 'blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.'

But, besides *rest*, there is *refreshment*. There are pleasures and consolations in that intercourse and communion with God to which we are invited by the Gospel, which, both in kind and degree, are unspeakably superior to all that the world can bestow, and such as the world cannot deprive us of; for they have no necessary dependence upon outward situation of circumstances; they are compatible with poverty, sickness, and sufferings. They are often most sensibly sweet and lively when the streams of creature-comforts are at the lowest ebb. Many have been able to say, with the apostle, 'As the sufferings of Christ,' those which we endure for his sake, or submit to from his hand, 'abound in us, so our consolation in Christ also aboundeth,' 2 Cor. i. 5. The all-sufficient God can increase these communications of comfort from himself, to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions, so as not only to support his people under the most exquisite pains, but even to suspend and overpower all sense of pain, when the torment would otherwise be extreme. And he has sometimes been pleased to honour the fidelity of his servants, and to manifest his own faithfulness to them by such an interposition. One well-attested instance our own martyrology affords, that of Mr. Bainham, who suffered in the reign of queen Mary. When he was in the fire he addressed

himself to his persecutors to this effect : ' You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine, now behold one ; I feel no more pain from these flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roses.' But in ordinary cases, and in all cases, they who taste how good the Lord is to them that seek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what supports he affords them in the hour of need, can without regret, part with the poor perishing pleasures of sin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profession of his name, and their attachment to his cause may have cost them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come therefore unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you shall find rest to your souls ! Can the world outbid this gracious offer ? Can the world promise to give you rest when you are burdened with trouble ? when your cisterns fail, and your gourds wither ? or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulse intermits, when you are about to take a final farewell of all you ever saw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view ? Such a moment most certainly awaits you ; and when it arrives, if you die in your senses, and are not judicially given up to hardness and blindness of heart, you will assuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. Oh ! be persuaded ; may the Lord himself persuade you to be timely wise ; to seek him now, while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near ; lest that dreadful threatening should be your portion : ' Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh,' Prov. i. 24, 26.

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## SERMON XV.

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### MESSIAH'S EASY YOKE.

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MATTH. xi. 29, 30.

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

THOUGH the influence of education and example may dispose us to acknowledge the Gospel to be a revelation from God, it

can only be rightly understood, or duly prized, by those persons who feel themselves in the circumstances of distress which it is designed to relieve. No Israelite would think of fleeing to a city of refuge, (Josh. xx. 2, 3.) till by having unwittingly slain a man, he was exposed to the resentment of the next of kin, the legal avenger of blood; but then, a sense of his danger would induce him readily to avail himself of the appointed method of safety. The skill of a physician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many; but he is applied to only by the sick, Matth. ix. 12. Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to him for rest, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourselves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reason why the Gospel is heard with so much indifference. For though sin be a grievous illness and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a strange stupidity and infatuation, which renders us (like a person in a delirium) insensible of our true state. It is a happy time when the Holy Spirit, by his convincing power, removes that stupor, which while it prevents us from fully perceiving our misery, renders us likewise indifferent to the only mean of deliverance. Such a conviction of the guilt and desert of sin is the first hopeful symptom in a sinner's case; but it is necessarily painful and distressing. It is not pleasant to be weary and heavy laden; but it awakens our attention to him who says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest,' and makes us willing to take his yoke upon us.

Oxen are yoked to labour. From hence the *yoke* is a figurative expression to denote servitude. Our Lord seems to use it here, both to intimate our natural prejudices against his service, and to obviate them. Though he submitted to sufferings, reproach, and death, for our sakes; though he invites us, not because he has need of us, but because we have need of him, and cannot be happy without him; yet our ungrateful hearts think unkindly of him. We conceive of him as a hard master; and suppose, that if we engage ourselves to him, we must bid farewell to pleasure, and live under a continual restraint. His rule is deemed too strict, his laws too severe; and we imagine, that we could be more happy upon our own plans, than by acceding to his. Such unjust, unfriendly, and dishonourable thoughts of him, whose heart is full of tenderness, whose bowels melt with love, are strong proofs of our baseness, blindness, and depravity; yet still he continues his invitation, 'Come unto me;'—as if he had said, Be not afraid of me. Only make the experiment, and you shall find, that what you have accounted my '*yoke*' is true liberty; and that in my service, which you have avoided as bur-

desome, there is no burden at all ; for, ' my ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' I have a good hope, that many of my bearers can testify, from their own happy experience, that (according to the beautiful expression in our liturgy) ' his service is perfect freedom.'

If we are really Christians, Jesus is our Master, our Lord, and we are his servants. It is in vain to call him, ' Lord, Lord,' Luke vi. 46. unless we keep his commandments. They who know him will love him, and they who love him will desire to please him, not by a course of service of their own devising, but by accepting his revealed will as the standard and rule, to every part of which they endeavour to conform in their tempers and in their conduct. He is likewise our Master in another sense ; that is, he is our great Teacher ; if we submit to him as such, we are his ' disciples' or ' scholars.' We cannot serve him acceptably unless we are taught by him. The philosophers of old had their disciples, who imbibed their sentiments, and were therefore called after their names, as the Pythagoreans and Platonists, from Pythagoras and Plato. The general name of Christians, which was first assumed by the believers at Antioch, Acts xi. 26. (possibly by divine direction,) intimates that they are the professed disciples of Christ. If we wish to be truly wise, to be wise unto salvation, we must apply to him. For, in this sense, the ' disciple' or ' scholar' cannot be ' above his Master,' Luke vi. 40. We can learn of men no more than they can teach us. But he says, ' Learn of me ;' and he cautions us against calling any one master upon earth. He does, indeed, instruct his people by ministers and instruments ; but unless he is pleased to superadd his influence, what we seem to learn from them only, will profit us but little. Nor are the best of them so thoroughly furnished, nor so free from mistake, as to deserve our implicit confidence. But they whom *he* condescends to teach, shall learn what no instruction merely human can impart. Let us consider the peculiar, the unspeakable advantages of being his scholars.

1. In the first place, this great Teacher can give the capacity requisite to the reception of his sublime instructions. There is no prospect of excelling in human arts and sciences, without a previous natural ability, suited to the subject. For instance, if a person has not an ear and a taste for music, he will make but small proficiency under the best masters. It will be the same with respect to the mathematics, or any branch of science. A skilful master may improve and inform the scholar, if he be rightly disposed to learn, but he cannot communicate the disposition. But

Jesus can open and enliven the dullest mind; he teaches the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. By nature we are untractable, and incapable of relishing divine truth, however advantageously proposed to us by men like ourselves. But happy are his scholars! he enables them to surmount all difficulties. He takes away the heart of stone, subdues the most obstinate prejudices, enlightens the dark understanding, and inspires a genius and a taste for the sublime and interesting lessons he proposes to them. In this respect, as in every other, there is none 'teacheth like him,' Job xxxvi. 22.

2. He teacheth the most important things. The subjects of human science are comparatively trivial and insignificant. We may be safely ignorant of them all. And we may acquire the knowledge of them all, without being wiser or better, with respect to the concerns of our true happiness. Experience and observation abundantly confirm the remark of Solomon, that 'he who increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing,' Eccles. i. 8, 18. Unless the heart be seasoned and sanctified by grace, the sum total of all other acquisitions is but 'vanity and vexation of spirit,' Eccles. ii. 17. Human learning will neither support the mind under trouble, nor weaken its attachment to worldly things, nor control its impetuous passions, nor overcome the fear of death. The confession of the learned Grotius, towards the close of a life spent in literary pursuits, is much more generally known than properly attended to. He had deservedly a great name and reputation as a scholar; but his own reflection upon the result of his labours expresses what he learnt, not from his books and ordinary course of studies, but from the Teacher I am commending to you. He lived to leave this testimony for the admonition of the learned, or to this effect: *Ah, vitam prorsus perdidi nihil agendo laboriose*: 'Alas, I have wasted my whole life in taking much pains to no purpose!' But Jesus makes his scholars wise unto eternal life, and reveals that knowledge to babes, to persons of weak and confined abilities, of which the wisdom of the world can form no idea.

3. Other teachers, as I have already hinted, can only inform the *head*, but his instructions influence the *heart*. Moral philosophers, as they are called, abound in fine words and plausible speeches, concerning the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, temperance, benevolence, and equity; and their scholars learn to talk after them. But their fine and admired sentiments are mere empty notions, destitute of life and efficacy, and frequently leave

them as much under the tyranny of pride, passion, sensuality, envy, and malice, as any of the vulgar whom they despise for their ignorance. It is well known to the disgrace of morality which the world applauds, that some of their most admired sentimental writers and teachers have deserved to be numbered among the most abandoned and despicable of mankind. They have been slaves to the basest and most degrading appetites, and the tenor of their lives have been a marked contradiction to their fine-spun theories. But Jesus Christ effectually teaches his disciples to forsake and abhor whatever is contrary to rectitude or purity; and inspires them with love, power, and a sound mind. And if they do not talk of great things, they are enabled to perform them. Their lives are exemplary and useful, their deaths comfortable, their memory is precious.

4. The disciples of Jesus are, or may be, *always learning*. His providence and wisdom have so disposed things, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace, that the whole world around them is as a great school; and the events of every day, with which they are connected, have a tendency and suitableness, if rightly improved, to promote their instruction. Heavenly lessons are taught and illustrated by earthly objects; nor are we capable of understanding them at present, unless the mode of instruction be thus accommodated to our situation and weakness. The Scripture (John, iii. 12.) points out to us a wonderful and beautiful analogy between the outward visible world of nature, and that spiritual state which is called the kingdom of God; the former is like a book written in cypher, to which the Scripture is the key, which, when we obtain, we have the other opened to us. Thus, wherever they look, some object presents itself, which is adapted, either to lead their thoughts directly to Jesus, or to explain or confirm some passage in his word. So, likewise, the incidents of human life; the characters we know, the conversation we hear, the vicissitudes which take place in families, cities, and nations; in a word, the occurrences which furnish the history of every day, afford a perpetual commentary on what the Scriptures teach concerning the heart of man, and the state of the world, as subject to vanity, and lying in wickedness; and thereby the great truths which it behoves us to understand and remember, are more repeatedly and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and brought home to our bosom. It is the peculiar advantage of the disciples of Christ, that their lessons are always before them, and their master always with them.

5. Men who are otherwise competently qualified for teaching in the branches of science they profess, often discourage and intimidate their scholars, by the impatience, austerity, and distance of their manner. They fail in that condescension and gentleness which are necessary to engage the attention and affection of the timid and the volatile, or gradually to soften and to shame the perverse. Even Moses, though eminent for his forbearance towards the obstinate people committed to his care, and though he loved them, and longed for their welfare, was at times almost wearied by them, Numb. xi. 11, 12. But Jesus, who knows beforehand the weakness, the dulness, and the refractoriness of those whom he designs to teach, to prevent their fears, is pleased to say, Learn of me, 'for I am meek and lowly.' With what meekness did he converse among his disciples while he was with them upon earth! He allowed them, at all times, a gracious freedom of access. He bore with their mistakes, reprov'd and corrected them with the greatest mildness, and taught them, as they were able to bear, with a kind accommodation to their prejudices; leading them on, step by step, and waiting for the proper season of unfolding to them those more difficult points, which, for a time, appeared to them to be hard sayings. And though he be now exalted upon his glorious throne, and clothed with majesty, still his heart is made of tenderness, and his compassions still abound. We are still directed to think of him, not as one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but as exercising the same patience and sympathy towards his disciples now, which so signally marked his character during his state of humiliation. The compliment of the orator to a Roman emperor, though excessive and absurd when addressed to a sinful worm, That they who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness, and they who durst not were equally ignorant of his goodness, is a just and literal truth, if applied to our meek and gracious Saviour. If we duly consider his greatness alone, it seems almost presumption in such creatures as we are, to dare to take his holy name upon our polluted lips; but then, if we have a proportionable sense of his unbounding goodness and grace, every difficulty is overruled, and we feel a liberty in drawing near to him, though with reverence, yet with the confidence of children when they speak to an affectionate parent.

A person may be *meek*, though in an elevated situation of life; but Jesus was likewise *lowly*. There was nothing in his external appearance to intimidate the poor and miserable from coming to him. He was lowly or humble. Custom, which fixes the force and acceptance of words. will not readily allow us to speak of

humility as applicable to the great God. Yet it is said, 'He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth, Psalm cxiii. 6. Humility, in strictness of speech, is an attribute of magnanimity; an indifference to the little distinctions by which weak and vulgar minds are affected. In the view of the 'high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity,' Isa. lvii. 15. all distinctions that can obtain among creatures vanish; and he humbles himself no less to notice the worship of an angel, than the fall of a sparrow to the ground. But we more usually express this idea by the term *condescension*. Such was the mind that was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5. It belonged to his dignity as Lord of all, to look with an equal eye upon all his creatures. None could recommend themselves to him by their rank, wealth, or abilities, the gifts of his own bounty; none were excluded from his regard, by the want of those things which are in estimation among men. And to stain the pride of human glory, he was pleased to assume a humble state. 'Though he was rich, he made himself poor' (2 Cor. viii. 9.) for the sake of those whom he came into the world to save. In this respect he teaches us by his example. 'He took upon him the form of a servant,' Phil. ii. 7. a poor and obscure man, to abase our pride, to cure us of selfishness, and to reconcile us to the cross.

The happy effect of his instructions upon those who receive them, is 'rest to their souls.' This has been spoken of before; but, as it is repeated in the text, I shall not entirely pass it over here. He gives rest to our souls—By restoring us to our proper state of dependence upon God; a state of reconciliation and peace, and deliverance from guilt and fear; a state of subjection; for till our wills are truly subjected to the will of God, we can have no rest—By showing us the vanity of the world, and thereby putting an end to our wearisome desires and pursuits after things uncertain, frequently unattainable, always unsatisfying—By a communication of sublimer pleasures and hopes than the present state of things can possibly afford—and, lastly, by furnishing us with those aids, motives, and encouragements, which make our duty desirable, practicable, and pleasant.

How truly, then, may it be said, that his yoke is easy, and his burden light! such a burden as wings are to a bird, raising the soul above the low and groveling attachments to which it was once confined. They only can rightly judge of the value of this rest who are capable of contrasting it with the distractions and miseries, the remorse and forebodings, of those who live without God in the world.

But we are all by profession, his scholars. Ought we not seriously to inquire, what we have actually learned from him? Surely the proud, the haughty, the voluptuous, and the worldly, though they have heard of his name, and may have attended on his institutions, have not hitherto sat at his feet, or drank of his spirit. It requires no long train of examination to determine whether you have entered into his rest, or not; or, if you have not yet attained, whether you are seeking it in the ways of his appointment. It is a rest for the soul, it is a spiritual blessing, and therefore does not necessarily depend upon external circumstances. Without this rest, you must be restless and comfortless in a palace. If you have it, you may be, at least comparatively, happy in a dungeon. To-day, if not before to-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice; and while he says to you by his word, 'Come unto me, and learn of me,' let your hearts answer, 'Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God,' Jer. iii. 22.

## PART II.

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### SERMON XVI.

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#### THE LAMB OF GOD, THE GREAT ATONEMENT.

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JOHN, i. 29.

*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*

‘GREAT and marvellous are the works of the Lord God Almighty!’ We live in the midst of them; and the little impression they make upon us, sufficiently proves our depravity. He is great in the very smallest; and there is not a plant, flower, or insect, but bears the signature of infinite wisdom and power. How sensibly, then, should we be affected by the consideration of the *whole*, if sin had not blinded our understandings, and hardened our hearts! In the beginning, when all was dark, uninformed, and waste, his powerful word produced light, life, beauty, and order. He commanded the sun to shine, and the planets to roll. The immensity of creation is far beyond the reach of our conceptions. The innumerable stars, the worlds, which however large in themselves, are, for their remoteness, barely visible to us, are of little more immediate and known use, than to enlarge our idea of the greatness of their Author. Small, indeed, is the knowledge we have of our own system; but we know enough to render our indifference inexcusable. The glory of the sun must strike every eye; and in this enlightened age, there are few persons but have some ideas of the magnitude of the planets, and the rapidity and regularity of their motions. Further, the rich variety which adorns this lower creation, the dependence and relation of the several parts, and their general subserviency to the accommodation of man, the principal inhabitant, together with the preservation of individuals, and the continuance of every species of animals, are subjects not above the reach of common capacities, and which afford almost endless and infinite scope for reflection and admiration. But the bulk of mankind regard them not. The vicissitudes of day and night, and of the revolving seasons, are to

them matters of course, as if they followed each other without either cause or design. And though the philosophers, who professedly attach themselves to the study of the works of nature, are overwhelmed by the traces of a wisdom and arrangement which they are unable to comprehend; yet few of them are led to reverential thoughts of God, by their boasted knowledge of his creatures. Thus men 'live without God in the world,' though they 'live and move, and have their being in him,' and are incessantly surrounded by the most striking proofs of his presence and energy. Perhaps an earthquake, or a hurricane, by awakening their fears, may force upon their minds a conviction of his power over them, and excite an occasional momentary application to him; but when they think the danger over, they relapse into their former stupidity.

What can engage the attention, or soften the obduracy of such creatures? Behold, one wonder more, greater than all the former; the last, the highest effect of divine goodness! God has so loved rebellious, ungrateful sinners, as to appoint them a Saviour in the person of his only Son. The prophets foresaw his manifestation in the flesh, and foretold the happy consequences—that his presence would change the wilderness into a fruitful field, that he was coming to give sight to the blind, and life to the dead; to set the captive at liberty; to unloose the heavy burden; and to bless the weary with rest. But this change was not to be wrought merely by a word of power, as when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' Gen. i. 3. It was great, to speak the world from nothing; but far greater, to redeem sinners from misery. The salvation, of which he is the Author, though free to us, must cost him dear. Before the mercy of God can be actually dispensed to such offenders, the rights of his justice, the demands of his law, and the honour of his government must be provided for. The early institution and long-continued use of sacrifices, had clearly pointed out the necessity of an atonement; but the real and proper atonement could be made only by MESSIAH. The blood of slaughtered animals could not take away sin, nor display the righteousness of God in pardoning it. This was the appointed, covenanted work of MESSIAH and he alone could perform it. With this view he had said, 'Lo, I come,' Psal. xl. 7. And it was in this view, when John saw him, that he pointed him out to his disciples, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'

Three points offer to our consideration :

- I. The title here given to MESSIAH, 'The Lamb of God.'
- II. The efficacy of his sacrifice, 'He taketh away sin.'

### III. The extent of it, 'The sin of the world.'

1. He is 'The Lamb of God.' The paschal lamb, and the lambs which were daily offered, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, were of God's appointment; but this lamb was likewise of his providing. The others were but types. Though many, they were all insufficient (Heb. x. 1.) to cleanse the consciences of the offerers from guilt; and they were all superseded, when MESSIAH, 'by the one offering of himself, once for all, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness,' in favour of all who believe in his name.

This title, therefore, 'The Lamb of God,' refers to his voluntary substitution for sinners, that by his sufferings and death they who deserved to die might obtain eternal life through him, and for his sake. Mankind were universally chargeable with transgression of the law of God, and were in a state of alienation from him. A penalty, in case of disobedience, was annexed to the law they had broken; to which they, as offenders, were therefore obnoxious. Though it would be presumptuous in such worms as we are, to determine, upon principles of our own, whether the sovereign Judge of the universe could, consistently with his own glory, remit this penalty without satisfaction, or not; yet since he has favoured us with a revelation of his will upon the point, we may speak more confidently, and affirm, that it was not consistent with his truth and holiness, and the honour of his moral government, to do it, because this is his own declaration. We may now be assured, that the forgiveness of one sinner, and indeed of one sin, by an act of mere mercy, and without any interposing consideration, was incompatible with the inflexibility of the law, and the truth and justice of the Lawgiver. But mercy designed the forgiveness of innumerable sinners, each of them chargeable with innumerable sins; and the declaration that God is thus merciful, was to be recorded and publicly known through a long succession of ages, and extend to sins not yet committed. An act of grace so general and unreserved, might lead men (not to speak of superior intelligences) to disparaging thoughts of the holiness of God, and might even encourage them to sin, with hope of impunity, if not connected with some provision which might show that the exercise of his mercy was in full harmony with the honour of all his perfections. How God could 'be just, and yet justify those' (Rom. iii. 26.) whom his own righteous constitution condemned, was a difficulty too great for finite understandings to solve. But herein is God glorious. His wisdom propounded, and his love afforded, the adequate, the only possi-

ble expedient. He revealed to our first parents his purpose, which in the fulness of time he accomplished, of sending 'forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law,' to redeem sinners from 'the curse of the law,' Gal. iv. 4. by sustaining it for them. Considering the dignity of his person and the perfection of his obedience, his sufferings and death for sins not his own, displayed the heinousness of sin, and the severe displeasure of God against it, in a much stronger light than the execution of the sentence upon the offenders could possibly do. It displays, likewise, the justice of this sentence, since neither the dignity nor the holiness of the surety could exempt him from suffering; and that though he was the Beloved of God, he was not spared. This is what I understand by atonement and satisfaction for sin.

2. The efficacy of this atonement is complete. 'The Lamb of God' thus slain, 'taketh away sin,' both with respect to its guilt and its defilement. The Israelites, by looking to the brazen serpent, Num. xxi. 9. were saved from death and healed of their wounds. 'The Lamb of God' is an object proposed, not to our bodily sight, but to the eye of the mind, which indeed, in fallen man, is naturally blind; but the Gospel-message, enlivened by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to open it. 'He who' thus 'seeth the Son, and believeth on him,' John vi. 40. is delivered from guilt and condemnation, is justified from all sin. He is warranted to plead the sufferings of the 'Lamb of God' in bar of his own; the whole of the Saviour's obedience unto death, as the ground and title of his acceptance unto life. Guilt or obnoxiousness to punishment being removed, the soul has an open way of access to God, and is prepared to receive blessings from him. For as the sun, the fountain of light, fills the eye that was before blind, the instant that it receives sight; so God, who is the fountain of goodness, enlightens all his intelligent creatures according to their capacity, unless they are by sin blinded, and rendered incapable of communion with him. The Saviour is now received and enthroned in the heart, and from his fulness the life of grace is derived and maintained. Thus not only the guilt, but the love of sin, and its dominion, are taken away, subdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned sinner. The blood which frees him from distress, preserves a remembrance of the great danger and misery, from which he has been delivered, warm upon his heart; inspires him with gratitude to his Deliverer, and furnishes him with an abiding and constraining motive for cheerful and universal obedience.

3. The designed extent of this gratuitous removal of sin, by

the oblation of 'the Lamb of God,' is expressed in a large and indefinite manner: he 'taketh away the sin of the world.' Many of my hearers need not be told, what fierce and voluminous disputes have been maintained concerning the extent of the death of Christ. I am afraid the advantage of such controversies has not been answerable to the zeal of the disputants. For myself, I wish to be known by no name but that of a Christian, and implicitly to adopt no system but the Bible. I usually endeavour to preach to the heart and the conscience, and to waive, as much as I can, all controversial points. But as the subject now lies directly before me, I shall embrace the occasion, and simply and honestly open to you the sentiments of my heart concerning it.

If, because the death of Christ is here said to take away 'the sin of the world,' or, (as this evangelist expresses it in another place,) the 'whole world,' (John, ii. 2.) it be inferred, that he actually designed and intended the salvation of all men, such an inference would be contradicted by fact. For it is certain that all men will not be saved, Matth. vii. 13, 14. It is to be feared, that the greater part of those to whom the word of his salvation is sent, perish in their sins. If, therefore, he cannot be disappointed of his purpose, since many do perish, it could not be his fixed design that all men should be finally and absolutely saved.

The exceeding great number, once dead in trespasses and sins, who shall be found on his right hand at the great day of his appearance, are frequently spoken of in appropriate and peculiar language. They are styled his sheep, for whom he laid down his life, John, x. 11, 16; his elect, (Mark, xiii. 27.) his own, John, xiii. 1; those to whom it is given to believe in his name, Phil. i. 29; and concerning whom it was 'the Father's good pleasure to predestinate them to the adoption of children,' Eph. i. 5. By nature, 'they are children of wrath, even as others,' Eph. ii. 3; and no more disposed in themselves to receive the truth, than those who obstinately and finally reject it. Whenever they become willing, they are made so, 'in a day' of divine power,' Psalm cx. 3; and wherein they differ, it is grace, 'that makes them to differ,' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Passages in the Scripture to this purpose are innumerable; and though much ingenuity has been employed to soften them, and to make them speak the language of an hypothesis, they are so plain in themselves, 'that he who runs may read.' It is not the language of conjecture, but of inspiration, that they whom the Lord God 'did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,' Rom. viii. 29. And though some serious persons perplex

themselves with needless and painful reasonings, with respect to the sovereignty of God in his conduct towards mankind, they all, if truly spiritual and enlightened, stand upon this very ground, in their own experience. Many who seem to differ from us in the way of argumentation, perfectly accord with us when they simply speak of what God has done for their souls. They know and acknowledge, as readily as we, that they were first found of him when they sought him not; and that otherwise they neither should nor could have sought him at all; nor can they give any better reason than this why they are saved out of the world, 'That it pleased the Lord to make them his people,' Sam. xii. 22.

But, on the other hand, I cannot think the sense of the expression is sufficiently explained, by saying, that the world, and the whole world is spoken of, to teach us that the sacrifice of 'the Lamb of God' was not confined like the Levitical offerings, to the nation of Israel only; but that it is available for the sins of a determinate number of persons, called 'the elect,' who are scattered among many nations, and found under a great variety of states and circumstances in human life. This is undoubtedly the truth, so far as it goes; but not, I apprehend, fully agreeable to the Scriptural manner of representation. That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet it is not said, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save' the elect, but that he came to save 'sinners,' to 'seek and to save them that are lost,' 1 Tim. i. 15. Luke, xix. 10. Upon this ground, I conceive that ministers have a warrant to preach the Gospel to every human creature, and to address the conscience of every man in the sight of God; and that every person who hears this Gospel has thereby a warrant, an encouragement, yea, a command, to apply to Jesus Christ for salvation; and that they who refuse, thereby exclude themselves, and perish, not because they never had, nor possibly could have, any interest in his atonement, but simply because they will not come unto him that they may have life. I know something of the cavils and curious reasonings which obtain upon this subject, and I know I may be pressed with difficulties, which I cannot resolve to the full satisfaction of inquiring and speculative spirits. I am not disheartened by meeting with some things beyond the grasp of my scanty powers, in a book which I believe to be inspired by Him whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours, 'as the heavens are higher than the earth,' Isa. lv. 8, 9. But I believe, that vain reasonings, self-will, an attachment to names and parties, and a disposition to draw our sentiments from human systems, rather than to form them by a close and humble study of the Bible, with

prayer for divine teaching, are the chief sources of our perplexities and disputes.

The extent of the atonement is frequently represented, as if a calculation had been made, how much suffering was necessary for the surety to endure, in order exactly to expiate the aggregate number of all the sins of all the elect; that so much he suffered precisely, and no more; and that when this requisition was completely answered, he said, 'It is finished, bowed his head, and gave up the Ghost,' John xix. 30. But this nicety of computation does not seem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur which overwhelm the attentive mind in the contemplation of the divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, he waters it 'abundantly,' Psal. lxx. 10. He does not restrain the rain to cultivated or improvable spots, but, with a profusion of bounty worthy of himself, his clouds pour down water with equal abundance upon the barren mountain, the lonely desert, and the pathless ocean. Why may we not say, with the Scripture, that Christ died to 'declare the righteousness of God,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. to manifest that he is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus? And, for any thing we know to the contrary, the very same display of the evil and demerit of sin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally necessary, though the number of the elect were much smaller than it will appear to be when they shall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the residence of one man only; had it been his pleasure to afford him the same kind and degree of light which we enjoy; the same glorious sun, which is now sufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been necessary for the accommodation of that one person. So, perhaps, had it been his pleasure to save but one sinner, in a way that should give the highest possible discovery of his justice and of his mercy, this could have been done by no other method than that which he has chosen for the salvation of the innumerable multitudes who will in the great day unite in the song of praise to the Lamb 'who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.' As the sun has a sufficiency of light for eyes (if there were so many capable of beholding it) equal in number to the leaves upon the trees, and the blades of grass that grow upon the earth; so, in Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, 'there is plenteous redemption;' he 'is rich in mercy to all that call upon him;' Psal. cxxx. 7. Rom. x. 12. and he invites sinners, without exception, to whom the word of his

salvation is sent, even to the ends of the earth, to 'look unto him, that they may be saved,' Isa. xlv. 22.

Under the Gospel dispensation, and by it, God commands 'all men, every where, to repent,' Acts xvii. 30. All men, therefore, every where, are encouraged to hope for forgiveness, according to the constitution prescribed by the Gospel; otherwise repentance would be both impracticable and unavailing. And therefore the command to repent implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jesus, as taking away the sin of the world. Let it not be said, that to call upon men to believe, which, is an act beyond their natural power, is to mock them. There are prescribed means for the obtaining of faith, which it is not beyond their natural power to comply with, if they are not wilfully obstinate. We have the word of God for our authority. 'God cannot be mocked,' Gal. vi. 7. neither does he mock his creatures. Our Lord did not mock the young ruler, when he told him, that if he would sell his possessions upon earth, and follow him, 'he should have treasure in heaven,' Luke xviii. 22. Had this ruler no *power* to sell his possessions? I doubt not but that he himself thought he had power to sell them if he pleased. But while he loved his money better than he loved Christ, and preferred earthly treasures to heavenly, he had no *will* to part with them. And a want of *will* in a moral agent, is a *want of power* in the strongest sense. Let none presume to offer such excuses to their Maker as they would not accept in their own concerns. If you say of a man, he is such a liar that he cannot speak a word of truth; so profane that he cannot speak without an oath; so dishonest that he cannot omit one opportunity of cheating or stealing; do you speak of this disability to good as an extenuation, and because you think it renders him free from blame? Surely you think the more he is disinclined to good, and habituated to evil, the worse he is. A man that *can* speak lies and perjury, that can deceive and rob, but is such an enemy to truth and goodness that he can do nothing that is kind or upright, must be a shocking character indeed! Judge not more favourably of yourself if you *can* love the world and sensual pleasure, but *cannot* love God; if you can fear a worm like yourself, but live without the fear of God; if you can boldly trample upon his laws, but *will* not, and therefore *cannot*, humble yourself before him, and seek his mercy in the way of his appointment.

We cannot ascribe too much to the grace of God; but we should be careful, that under a semblance of exalting his grace,

we do not furnish the slothful and unfaithful (Math. xxv. 16.) with excuses for their wilfulness and wickedness. God is gracious ; but let man be justly responsible for his own evil, and not presume to state his case so, as would, by just consequence, represent the holy God as being the cause of sin, which he hates and forbids.

The whole may be summed up in two points, which I commend to your serious attention ; which it must be the business of my life to enforce ; and which I trust, I shall not repent of having enforced, either at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, when I must give an account of my preaching, and you of what you have heard in this place.

1. That salvation is, indeed, wholly of grace. The gift of a Saviour, the first dawn of light into the heart, all the supports and supplies needful for carrying on the work, from the foundation to the top stone ; all is of free grace.

2. That now ' The Lamb of God ' is preached to you, as taking away the sin of the world ; if you reject him, which may the Lord forbid ! I say, if you reject him, your blood will be upon your own head. You are warned, you are invited. Dare not to say, ' Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will ? ' Rom. ix. 19. If he will save me, I shall be saved ; if not, what can I do ? God is merciful, but he is also holy and just ; he is almighty, but his infinite power is combined with wisdom, and regulated by the great designs of his government. He can do innumerable things which he will not do. What he will do, (so far as we are concerned,) his word informs, ' and not one jot or tittle thereof shall fail,' Matth. v. 18.

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## SERMON XVII.

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MESSIAH DESPISED, AND REJECTED OF MEN

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ISAIAH, liii. 3.

*He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*

THE heathen moralists, ignorant of the character and perfections of God, the true dignity and immortality of the soul, and the root and extent of human depravity, had no better foundation for

what they called virtue, than pride ; no higher aim in their regulations, than the interests of society, and the conduct of civil life. They expressed, indeed, occasionally, some sentiments of a superior kind ; and these, however just and valuable upon the principles of revelation ; were delusive and impracticable upon their own. And Brutus, one of the most admired characters of antiquity, confessed, just before he put an end to his own life, that having long been enamoured of virtue as a real good, he found it, at last, to be but an empty name. But though they had so little satisfaction or success in the pursuit of virtue, they were so pleased with the idea they formed of it, as generally to suppose, that if virtue could become visible, it would necessarily engage the esteem and admiration of mankind.

There was, however, one remarkable exception to this opinion. The wisdom of Socrates seems to have been, in many respects, different from that of the bulk of their philosophers. Socrates having expressed his idea of a perfect character, a truly virtuous man, ventured to predict the reception such a person, if such a one could ever be found, would meet with from the world. And he thought, that his practice would be so dissimilar to that of other men, his testimony against their wickedness so strong, and his endeavours to reform them so importunate and unwelcome, that, instead of being universally admired, he would be disliked and hated ; that mankind were too degenerate and too obstinate to bear either the example or the reproof of such a person, and would most probably revile and persecute him, and put him to death as an enemy to their peace.

In this instance, the judgment of Socrates accords with the language of the Old, and with the history of the New Testament. MESSIAH was this perfect character. As such Isaiah describes him. He likewise foresaw how he would be treated, and foretold that he would be ‘ numbered with transgressors,’ despised and rejected by the very people who were eye-witnesses of his upright and benevolent conduct. And thus, in fact, it proved. When Jesus was upon earth, true virtue and goodness were visibly displayed, and thereby the wickedness of man became signally conspicuous. For they among whom he was conversant, preferred a robber and a murderer to him, John xviii. 40. They preserved Barrabas, who had been justly doomed to die for enormous crimes, and they nailed Jesus, in his stead, to the cross.

When MESSIAH appeared, the Jews professed to blame the wickedness of their forefathers, who had opposed and slain the prophets. If they regretted the ill-treatment the ‘ servants’ of

God had formerly received, might it not be hoped that they would reverence his Son?' Matth. xxi. 37. concerning whom, under this character of MESSIAH, their expectations were raised by the Scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day.

But 'he was despised and rejected of men.' Angels sung praises at his birth, 'but men despised him.' He took not upon him the nature of angels, but of man, 'yet men rejected him.' Sinful, helpless men 'rejected and despised' the only Saviour. 'He came to his own, but his own received him not.' How lamentable and fatal was their obstinacy? Pretended Messiahs were eagerly regarded and followed by them, John, v. 43; but the true MESSIAH 'was despised and rejected of men!'

Let us consider the clauses of the text separately, in the order in which we read them.

I. 'He was despised and rejected of men.' It would be a great mistake to imagine that the Jews were the only people capable of this ingratitude and obstinacy. If any person here thinks, 'Surely I would not have despised him, had I seen his wonderful works, and heard him speak as never man spake;' possibly, that thought may prove you to be of the very same spirit with those who, while they thirsted for his blood, ignorantly presumed that if they had lived in the days of their forefathers, they would not have joined with them in persecuting the prophets, Matth. xxiii. 30. The prejudices which operated so strongly against our Lord's mission and ministry, were not peculiar to the people of one age or country, but such as are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man. The same principles which influenced the Jews to oppose and despise his person, still influence multitudes to slight and oppose the doctrine which he taught, and which he commanded his disciples to preach and perpetuate to the end of the world. In proof of this, it will be sufficient to assign some of the principal causes of the contempt and hatred which he met with from the men of that generation.

1. They 'despised him' for what they accounted the meanness of his appearance. Though rich in himself he became poor for our sakes, and his poverty made him contemptible in their eyes. They expected MESSIAH would appear with external pomp and power. But when they saw him they scorned him, saying 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' Matth. xiii. 55. He who had not money to pay the tribute demanded of him, (Matth. xvii. 27.) nor a house wherein to lay his head, was of small esteem with

those who were covetous, proud of worldly distinctions, and fond of the praise and admiration of men.

2. Their contempt was heightened, when this poor man publicly asserted his proper character and claim, demanded their attention and homage, styled himself, in a peculiar sense, 'the Son of God,' 'the resurrection and the life,' John, v. 18. xi. 25. For this seeming inconsistency between the appearance he made and the honours he assumed, they treated him as a demoniac and a madman, John, x. 20. Their language strongly expressed their sentiments of him, when they asked him, with disdain, 'Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Whom makest thou thyself?' John, viii. 53.

3. They objected to him the low state and former characters of his followers. Some of them were of low rank in life. The most of those who constantly attended him were poor fishermen. Others had been of bad repute, publicans and open sinners. For this they reproached him, and thought they were fully justified in their contempt, while they could say, 'Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?' John, vii. 48.

4. They were further exasperated against him, by the 'authority' and severity with which he taught. It is true, he was gentle and meek to all who felt their need of his help, or sincerely desired his instruction. He received them without exception, and treated them with the greatest tenderness. But he vindicated the honour of the law of God, from the corrupt doctrine and traditions of their professed teachers. He exposed and unmasked the hypocrisy of their most admired characters; and compared the men who were in the highest reputation for wisdom and sanctity, to whitened sepulchres, warning the people against them as blind guides and deceivers.

5. These blind guides strengthened the prejudices of their blind followers against him by misrepresentation. They attempted to avail themselves of the Scripture, when they thought it would answer their purpose. They eagerly made the most of a prevailing mistake, that Jesus was born in Galilee, because he was brought up in Nazareth from his infancy. This they urged as a proof that he could not be the MESSIAH, who, the prophets had declared, was to be born at Bethlehem in Judea. When he healed diseases on the Sabbath-day, they represented the effects of his compassion as a breach of that strict observance of the Sabbath which was enjoined by the law of Moses, and that therefore he could not be of God, John, iv. 16. And when they were not able to deny the reality of his wonderful works, they ascribed them to the agency

of Satan, Matt. xii. 24. We, at this distance of time, can easily perceive the folly and madness of their attempts. But the Scribes and Pharisees were the public authorized doctors and teachers of the people, and were supported by the ecclesiastical and civil power, or, as we should now express it, by church and state. The people were not apt to suspect their leaders, whom they thought wiser and better than themselves. Or, if sometimes they hesitated, were impressed by the majesty of his word, or the evidence of his miraculous works, and constrained to say, 'Is not this the Son of David?' Matt. xii. 23. they were soon intimidated and silenced by canons and laws; for it was carefully enacted, in order to keep them in subjection, that whoever acknowledged him, 'should be put out of the synagogue;' John ix. 22. xii. 42. that is, according to our modern language, excommunicated. This, among the Jews, as it has often since been among Christians, was a punishment which drew after it terrible consequences. A man must be in good earnest, or rather taught and supported by the grace of God, who could resist such arguments as these.

These things are easily applicable to the church history of succeeding times. The Gospel of Christ has often been, and is to this day, rejected and despised upon similar grounds. Its simplicity and plainness, and the manner of its proposal, adapted to the use and capacity of the vulgar, offend those who are wise in their own conceit, and proud of their own understanding and taste. At the same time they are equally disgusted by the sublimity of its doctrines, which will not submit to the test of their vain reasonings, and can only be received by humble faith. The faithfulness and freedom which its ministers are enjoined to use, give great offence likewise: and because they cannot comply with the humours of those who wish them to prophesy smooth things and deceits, they are accounted censorious, uncharitable, and disturbers of the public peace. Again, the dislike and opposition it frequently meets with from persons of great titles and high stations, deter multitudes from pursuing those inquiries which some conviction of the truth would prompt them to, were they not discouraged by the fear of consequences. How often has a dread of the displeasure of doctors, bishops, universities, councils, and popes; or an ignorant, slavish deference to their judgment or decisions, prevented people from following that light which had begun to force itself upon their consciences? How few among those of reputation for wisdom and learning, how few of the great and opulent, have encouraged or espoused the doctrine of the cross? It is, therefore, more properly a subject for

lamentation than for wonder, that this way is despised, 'and almost every where spoken against,' Acts xxviii. 22. Further, as the bulk of those who embrace it are of low condition, so, many of them are as free to confess to the praise of the grace of God, as others can be to urge it to their reproach, that till they knew and received this despised Gospel, their characters and practices were vile. Lastly, what unhappy subtilty has been employed, in a way of reason and argument, with an appeal to detached and perverted passages of Scripture, to misrepresent the work of the Holy Spirit, as folly, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm, and even to charge the Gospel itself with giving encouragement to a licentious conduct! In short, the spirit of the world, the arts and influence of designing men, are so powerful, that what our Lord said in Judea, holds equally true in Christendom, 'Blessed is he who is not offended in me,' Matt. xi. 6.

I have reserved to a distinct paragraph the mention of one cause why the Gospel is frequently despised and reproached; because, though it be no less unjust and unreasonable than those which I have recited, it is more immediately incumbent upon all who name the name of Christ, to prevent it as much as possible; I mean, the scandal which arises from the miscarriages of those who profess it. Offences of this kind must come, 'but wo to them by whom they come,' Matt. xviii. 7. There were pretended Christians, even in the apostles' times, who were 'enemies to the cross of Christ,' Phil. iii. 18. and, by their evil conduct, caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of; and, therefore, we cannot be surprised that there are such persons now. But 'you that love the Lord, hate evil,' Psal. xcvii. 10. There are many who watch for your halting, and are ready to say, 'There, there! so we would have it.' It will be in vain for ministers to declare that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godliness, unless our testimony is supported by the tempers and conduct of our people: the world will probably judge, rather by what they see in you, than by what they hear from us. Nor will it suffice that they cannot say you are an adulterer, a drunkard, a miser, or a cheat. If you espouse our doctrine, they will expect you to be humble, meek, patient, and benevolent; to find integrity in all your dealings, and a punctual discharge of your duty in every branch of relative life. What must the world think of our principles, if they who avow them are fretful, envious, censorious, discontented, slothful, or unfaithful; or if they are niggardly and hard-hearted, or voluptuous and dissolute, or implacable and revengeful?

They who thus 'lay stumbling blocks before the blind,' Lev. xix. 14. and confirm the prejudices of the ignorant, will have much to answer for.

II. It is further said, He was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' He was surrounded with sorrows on every side, and grief was his intimate, inseparable companion. Surely this consideration, if any, will animate us 'to endure the cross, and to despise the shame' we may be exposed to for his sake. The illustration of this subject will offer more fully in the sequel. It shall suffice, at present, to assign three causes for his continual sorrows.

1. The *outward course of life*, to which he submitted, for the sake of sinners, exposed him to want, weariness, contempt, and opposition. And though his resignation and patience were perfect, yet he was truly a man, and partaker of our nature, with all its affections and sensibilities which do not imply sin. His feelings, therefore, were human, similar to our own in similar circumstances, and they were often painfully exercised. Once and again we read that he was hungry and had no food; he was thirsty, and was nearly refused a little water to drink, when wearied with his journeying in the heat of the day, Matth. iv. 2. xxi. 18. John iv. 9. His character was aspersed, his person despised, his words insidiously wrested, his actions misrepresented. He was misunderstood even by his friends, John vii. 5. betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by the rest. It is hardly possible for his followers to meet with any outward trial which may not remind them of some part of the history of their Lord and Master, 'who left them an example of suffering, that they should' cheerfully 'follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21.

2. His *perfect knowledge and foresight* of those sufferings which we emphatically call *his passion*. How often does he speak of them and describe the circumstances as if they were actually present! Futurity is, in mercy, concealed from us. It would often bereave us of all present comfort, if we knew what the next year, or, perhaps, what the next day would bring forth. If some of you could have foreseen, many years ago, what you have since been brought through, you would probably have sunk under the apprehension; or the stoutest of us might sink now, if we were certainly to know what may be yet before us. But Jesus, long before he made atonement for our sins, had counted the cost. And though his love determined him to save us, the prospect which was continually present to his view, of the approaching unutterable agonies of his soul, of all that he must endure from God, from the powers of darkness, and from wicked men, when he

should 'be made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13. ; I say, this tremendous prospect, was, doubtless, a perpetual source of sorrow.

3. *The frame of his spirit.* Whoever has a measure of the mind that was in Christ, must be proportionably burdened and grieved, like righteous Lot in Sodom, 2 Pet. ii. 8. with the wickedness around him, if he lives in society. Who that has any regard for the honour of God, or the souls of men, can bear and see what passes every hour ; how the authority of God is affronted, his goodness abused, and his mercy despised, without emotions of grief and compassion? If we are spiritually-minded, we must be thus affected ; and we should be more so, if we were more spiritual. But the holiness of MESSIAH, and, consequently, his hatred of sin, was absolutely perfect. His view of the guilt and misery of sinners, was likewise comprehensive and clear. How must he be therefore grieved by the wickedness and insensibility of those with whom he daily conversed ! especially as he not only observed the outward conduct of men, but had an intimate knowledge of the evil heart, which is hidden from us. In this sense his sufferings and sorrows began with his early years, and continued throughout the whole of his life. He undoubtedly could say, with an emphasis peculiar to himself, 'I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved ;' 'rivers of waters ran down my eyes, because men keep not thy law,' Psalm cxix. 136, 158.

We call ourselves the servants and followers of him who was despised of men, and encompassed with sorrows. And shall we then 'seek great things for ourselves,' Jer. xlv. 5. as if we belonged to the present world, and expected no portion beyond it? Or shall we be tremblingly alive to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, and think it a great hardship, if it be our lot to suffer shame for his sake, who endured the cross, and despised the shame for us? Rather may we account such disgrace our glory, and every loss and suffering, that we may endure for him, a gain ; while on the other hand, we learn, with the apostle Paul, to esteem every gain and honour this world can afford, 'to be but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord,' Phil. iii. 8.

## SERMON XVIII.

### VOLUNTARY SUFFERING.

ISAIAH, I. 6.

*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

THAT which often passes amongst men for resolution and the proof of a noble, courageous spirit, is, in reality, the effect and mark of a weak and little mind. At least, it is chiefly owing to the presence of certain circumstances, which have a greater influence upon the conduct than any inherent principle. Thus may persons who appear to set death and danger at defiance in the hour of battle, while they are animated by the examples of those around them, and instigated by a fear of the punishment or shame they would incur if they deserted their post, upon a change of situation, as, for instance, on a bed of sickness, discover no traces of the heroism for which they were before applauded, but tremble at the leisurely approach of death, though they were thought to despise it under a different form. It was not true fortitude, it was rather a contemptible pusillanimity, that determined the celebrated Cato to destroy himself. He was afraid of Cæsar; his dread of him, after his victories, was so great, that he durst not look him in the face; and, therefore, he killed himself to avoid him. To the same meanness of sentiment we may confidently ascribe the pretended gallantry of modern duellists. They fight, not because they are not afraid of death, but because they are impelled by another fear, which make a greater impression upon a feeble, irresolute mind. They live upon the opinion of their fellow creatures, and feel themselves too weak to bear the contempt they should meet with from the circle of their acquaintance, if they should decline acting upon the false principles of honour which pride and folly have established. They have not resolution sufficient to act the part which conscience and reason would dictate, and therefore hazard life, and every thing that is dear to them as men, rather than dare to withstand the prevalence of an absurd and brutal custom.

A patient enduring of affliction, and especially of disgrace and contempt, to which the characters the world most admire are con-

fessedly unequal, is a much surer proof of true fortitude, than any of those actions which the love of praise, the fear of man, or even a mercenary attachment to lucre, are capable of producing. True *magnanimity* is evidenced by the real importance of the end it proposes, and by the steadiness with which it pursues the proper means of attaining that end; undisturbed and unwearied by difficulty, danger, or pain, and equally indifferent to the censure or scorn of incompetent judges. This greatness of mind is essential and peculiar to the character of the Christian—I mean the Christian who deserves the name. His ends are great and sublime, to glorify God, to obtain nearer communion with him, and to advance in conformity to his holy will. To attain these ends, he employs the means prescribed by the Lord: he waits at Wisdom's gates, (Prov. viii. 34.) and walks in the paths of dependence and obedience. He therefore cannot conform to the prevailing maxims and pursuits of the many, and is liable to be hated and scorned for his singularity. But he neither courts the smiles of men, nor shrinks at the thought of their displeasure. He loves his fellow-creatures, and is ready to do them every kind office in his power; but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord God.

But this life the Christian lives 'by faith in the Son of God,' Gal. ii. 20. Jesus is the source of his wisdom and strength. He likewise is his exemplar. He is crucified to the world by the cross of Christ; and a principal reason of his indifference to the opinion of the world, is the consideration of the manner in which his Lord was treated by it. He is the follower of him who said, 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.'

We may observe, from the words, that the humiliation of MESSIAH was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. With respect to his engagement, as the Mediator between God and sinners, a great work was given him to do, and he became responsible; and therefore, in this sense, bound, and under obligation. But his compliance was likewise *voluntary*, for he gave himself up freely to suffer, the just for the unjust. Could he have relinquished our cause, and left us to the deserved consequence of our sins, in the trying hour when his enemies seized upon him, legions of angels, (Matth. xxvi. 53.) had they been wanted, would have appeared for his rescue. But if he was determined to save others, then his own sufferings were unavoidable. Men, in the prosecution of their desigus, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way, which, though they encounter with some cheerfulness, in hope of surmounting them, and carrying their point at last, are

considered as impediments; but the sufferings of MESSIAH were essentially necessary to the accomplishment of his great designs, precisely determined, and present to his view beforehand; so that, (as I lately observed,) there was not a single circumstance that happened to him unawares. He knew that no blood but his own could make atonement for sin; that nothing less than his humiliation could expiate our pride; that if he did not *thus* suffer, sinners must inevitably perish; and therefore (such was his love!) he cheerfully and voluntarily 'gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.' Two designs of vast importance filled his mind; the completion of them was that joy set before him, for the sake of which 'he made himself of no reputation, endured the cross, and despised the shame.' These were, the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners.

1. The highest end of his mediation was to display the glory of the divine character in the strongest light, to afford to all intelligent creatures (Eph. iii. 10.) the brightest manifestation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wisdom of God, his holiness, justice, truth, and love, the stability and excellence of his moral government, all mutually illustrating each other, as combined and shining forth in *his* person, and in his mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be seen, by an enlightened eye, in creation; much in his providential rule and care over his creatures; but the *brightness* of his glory, John i. 18. Heb. i. 3. the express and full discovery of his perfections, can only be known by Jesus Christ, and the revelation which God has given of himself to the world by him. And, accordingly, we are assured, that the angels, whose knowledge of the natural world is doubtless vastly superior to ours, desire to look into these things; and that the manifold wisdom of God is supereminently made known to principalities and powers in heaven, by the dispensation of his grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great design, closely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the complete and everlasting salvation of that multitude of miserable sinners, who, according to the purpose of God, and by the working of his mighty power, shall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, shall put their trust in him, upon the warrant of the promise and command of God, and yield themselves to be his willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the present life, but they shall be delivered out of them all; they shall overcome, they shall be

more than conquerors, 'by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony;' Rev. xii. 11. and then they shall shine like the sun, in the kingdom of heaven. The consummation of their happiness is a branch of the joy which was set before him. For their sakes, that they might be happy, that he might be admired in them, and by them, to the glory of God, who is all in all, he voluntarily substituted himself to sufferings and death. He endured the cross, and he despised the shame. 'He gave his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting.'

II. But are we reading a prophecy, or the history of his extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from his history by the evangelists. With what cruelty, with what contempt, was he treated, first by the servants in the hall of the high priest, afterwards by the Roman soldiers! Let us consider him, 'who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself,' Heb. xii. 3. These words of the apostle suggest some preliminary observations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impression from the several particulars here mentioned.

When the apostle would dispose believers, by an argument or motive, (which, if we fully understood it, would render all other arguments unnecessary,) to endure sufferings and crosses patiently; he says, 'Consider him'—he uses a word which is properly a mathematical term, denoting the ratio or proportion between different numbers, or figures, *q. d.* Compare yourselves with him, and his sufferings with your own. Consider who he is, no less than what he endured.

In the apprehensions of men, insults are aggravated in proportion to the disparity between the person who receives and who offers them. A blow from an equal is an offence, but would be still more deeply resented from an inferior. But if a subject, a servant, a slave, should presume to strike a king, it would justly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worship, made himself so entirely of no reputation, that the basest of the people, the servants, the common soldiers, were not afraid to make him the object of their derision, and to express their hatred in the most sarcastic and contemptuous manner. It is said, that he endured the contradiction of 'sinners.' So, perhaps do we; but we are sinners likewise, and deserve much more than we suffer, if not immediately from the instruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what instruments he pleases to afflict

us for our sins. This thought quieted the spirit of David, when his own sons rose up against his life, and his own servants cursed him to his face, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled: he had done nothing amiss; yet the usage he met with was such as has seldom been offered to the vilest malefactor. Their cruel and scornful contradiction was likewise expressly and directly against 'himself;' whereas his people only suffer from unreasonable and wicked men, for his sake, and for their professed attachment to 'him.' In the most violent persecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce his name and his cause, usually escaped punishment, and were frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is still the ground of the world's displeasure; fierce and bitter as their opposition may seem, the way to reconciliation is always open; they are not angry with us further than we avow a dependence upon him, and show ourselves determined to obey him rather than men. If we could forsake him, their resentment would be disarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from his service. I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon these terms are esteemed by them for their compliance; but they are seldom disturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we suffer as Christians, it is for his sake. He likewise suffered for our sake; but how wide is the difference between him and us? We, when the trial is sharp, are in danger of flinching from the cause of our best friend and benefactor, to whom our obligations are so innumerable, and so immense; whereas he gave himself up to endure such things for us, when we were strangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmost detestation and scorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unrestrained barbarity could suggest.

1. They began to 'spit upon him' in the high priest's hall. The Roman soldier's, likewise, 'did spit upon him,' when they had contemptuously arrayed him in a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him, in mockery of his title of King. Great as an insult of this kind would be deemed amongst us, it was considered as still greater, according to the customs prevalent in the eastern countries. There, to spit, even in the presence of a person, though it were only upon the ground, conveyed the idea of disdain and abhorrence. But the lowest of the people spit 'in the face' of the Son of God. No comparison can fully illustrate this indignity. There is some proportion between the greatest earthly monarch and the most abject slave. They did not spit upon Alexander, or Cæsar, but upon the Lord of glory.

2. They 'buffeted and beat him on the face,' and when he

mekly offered his cheek to their blows, they ‘plucked off the hair.’ The beard was in those times accounted honourable; and when David’s servants were shaven by the command of Hanun, 2 Sam. x. 5 they were ashamed to be seen. But Jesus was not shaven. With savage violence they tore off the hair of his beard; while he, like a sheep before the shearers, was dumb, and quietly yielded himself to their outrages.

3. ‘His back’ they ‘tore with scourges,’ as was foretold by the Psalmist, Psalm cxxix. 3. ‘The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows.’ The Jewish counsel condemned him to death for blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God. Stoning was the punishment prescribed, by the law of Moses, in such cases, Lev. xxiv. 16. But this death was not sufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut their insatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their subjection to the Roman power to be so absolute, that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, John xviii. 31. according to their judicial law; and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the punishment which the Romans appropriated to slaves who were guilty of flagitious crimes, and therefore insisted that he should be crucified. According to the Roman custom, those who were crucified, were previously scourged. Thus, when they had mocked him, and made him their sport, by putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, in derision of his kingly office, he was stripped and scourged. It was not unfrequent for the sufferers to expire under the severity and torture of scourging. And we may be certain that Jesus experienced no lenity from their merciless hands. The plowers plowed his back. But more and greater tortures were before him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for sin, by his sufferings; and as he had power over his own life, he would not dismiss his spirit, till he could say, ‘It is finished.’

And now, to use the words of Pilate, ‘Behold the man!’ John xix. 5. Oh! for a realizing impression of this his extreme humiliation and suffering, that we may be duly affected with a sense of his love to sinners, and of the evil of our sins, which rendered it necessary that the surety should thus suffer! Behold ‘the Lamb of God,’ mocked, blind-folded, spit upon, and scourged! Let us add to all this, the consideration of his praying for his tormentors, Luke xxiii. 34. and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall *we*, then, refuse to suffer shame for *his* sake, and be intimidated, by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our

attachment to him! Ah! Lord, we are, indeed, capable of this baseness and ingratitude. But if thou art pleased to strengthen us with the power of thy Spirit, we will account such disgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and despond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us and persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us, provided it be falsely, and provided it be for thy sake! Matt. v. 11.

Shall we continue in sin, (Rom. vi. 1.) after we know what it cost him to expiate our sins? God forbid! When Mark Antony addressed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæsar—he enlarged upon Cæsar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it in the donations and bequests he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he specified. When he had thus engaged their admiration and gratitude, and they discovered emotions of regret and sensibility, that Cæsar, the greatest character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for *them*, and had remembered *them* in his will, should be slain, Anthony threw aside a cloth, and showed them his dead body, covered with wounds and blood. This sight rendered it needless to say more. The whole assembly united as one man, to search out and destroy his murderers. The application is obvious. May our hearts from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable resentment against sin, the procuring cause of the humiliation and death of our best Friend and Benefactor!

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## SERMON XIX.

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MESSIAH SUFFERING AND WOUNDED FOR US.

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ISAIAH, liii. 4, 5.

*Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and conversed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we should probably have desired to know the subject of their conversation, as we might reasonably suppose it

turned upon very interesting and important topics. The Scripture makes little provision for the indulgence of our curiosity, but omits nothing that is necessary for our instruction ; and we learn thus much from it, that they discoursed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, such as the rise and fall of empires ; but they spake of the sufferings of Jesus, and of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. They spake of his Exodus, Luke, ix. 31, (as the word is,) his departure out of life, the issue and complexion of his engagement for sinners, that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born souls. We lately considered the cruel insults MESSIAH submitted to from the servants in the high priest's hall and from the Roman soldiers. The passage I have now read leads our meditations to the foot of the cross. May the Holy Spirit realize the scene to our hearts ! The cross of Christ displays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a just God and Saviour. Here the believer contemplates, in one view, the unspeakable evil of sin, and the unsearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the most affecting sense of the misery which he has deserved, while, at the same time, he receives the fullest assurance that there is forgiveness with God, and discovers a sure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of disappointment. From the moment the apostle Paul was enlightened to understand this mystery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but loss ; his former supposed wisdom no better than folly, and became determined to know nothing, (1 Cor. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14.) to depend upon nothing, to glory in nothing, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

A representation of the Redeemer's sufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the passions, may be made by the powers of oratory ; and similar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the subject is known beforehand to be entirely a fiction. But light in the understanding is necessary to convince and influence the heart. Unless the mind be deeply penetrated with the *causes* which rendered MESSIAH'S death necessary, the most pathetic description of the *fact* will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can assign these causes. You have felt yourselves personally concerned in an event which took place long before your birth ; and if you are asked, Why was Jesus mocked, buffeted, and spit upon ? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the cross ? You can answer, Surely he hath borne our griefs,

and carried our sorrows'—and you can likewise say, 'by his stripes we are healed.'

The words lead us to consider the *cause* and the *effect*.

I. The *cause* of the Redeemer's sufferings implied in the word 'our.' He bore the griefs and sorrows which were our desert. Such is the language, the confession, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the spirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death, and likewise they who see they must perish unless saved by him, are authorized to consider him as mindful of them, and making provision for them in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brazen serpent according to God's appointment, had a sufficient proof in themselves, that it was erected and placed in view of the camp (Numb. xxi. 9.) on their account. 'He bore our griefs.' It does not follow that sinners must have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible punishment, it may teach us, that without his interposition we were justly liable to extremity of misery in the present life. That we who have offended God should enjoy health, peace, or satisfaction for a single hour; that we do not draw every breath in the most excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourselves, and mutually to each other; that our state while upon earth is, in any respect, better than an image of hell—must wholly be ascribed to him. A sinner, as such, is under the curse of the law; and this curse includes every species of misery that can affect us, either in mind, body, or estate. But *he* was appointed, from the beginning, to sustain and exhaust the curse for us. And therefore the earth, though so long inhabited by wretches in a state of bold rebellion against their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-suffering, patience, and mercy. Therefore he still affords 'us rain and fruitful seasons,' Acts xiv. 17. indulges us with a variety of temporal blessings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This consideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love and pledges of his favour, sanctified to their use by his blood and promise. Cheered by such thoughts as these, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleasure, of which the expensive and dissipated sensualist has no conception. And how does it add to the relish of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are using them,

There's not a gift his hand bestows,  
But cost his heart a groan!

So, likewise, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the pressure of all their sufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, 'yea, glory in tribulation also,' Rom. v. 3.

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his sufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a just idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, considered in themselves, they were light if compared with the agonies of his soul. These extorted the blood from his body (Luke xxii. 44.) before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his most dolorous cry upon the cross, it was not for the anguish of his bodily wounds, but his soul felt, for a season, a separation from the presence and comforts of God. Therefore he said, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' Matt. xxvii. 46. It is true, his holy nature was not capable of some part of the impenitent sinner's portion. Remorse of conscience, the stings of the never-dying worm, and the horrors and rage of despair, could not touch him, who had no personal sin, and whose love and faith were always perfect. But a sword pierced his soul: and it pleased the Father not only to permit him to be bruised by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruise him himself, Isa. liii. 10.

The ground of all this was laid in the voluntary substitution of himself, from before the foundation of the world, to obey and suffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the passage we are next to consider. At present, let us briefly notice the expressions before us.

1. 'He was wounded.' This word, which signifies pierced or stabbed, refers to his crucifixion. This punishment, being unknown to the Jews till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no express name for in their language. Yet it is plainly described by the psalmist, who, speaking, by the spirit of prophecy, in the person of MESSIAH, says, 'They pierced my hands and my feet,' Psal. xxii. 16. And it was typified under the law of Moses, Deut. xxi. 23. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Cor. v. 7. John iii. 14. by the curse annexed to hanging upon a tree, which was the nearest death to this; by the paschal lamb, which was roasted; and by the brazen serpent. It was a fit death for a sinner, painful and ignominious. How circumstantial were the prophecies, how apposite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews should be led to depart from their own customs and purposes, in order to their accomplishment, though they intended nothing less! But it was the

determined counsel and appointment of God, Acts ii. 23. who over-rules all the designs of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purposes of his own will and glory.

2. 'He was bruised.' If we distinguish wounded from bruised, the latter may be referred to the sorrows of his soul, (for it is expressly said, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him;') that distress broke his heart, filled him with dismay, caused him to be sore amazed and very heavy, and to say to his disciples, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,' Matth. xxvi. 38. No words can be more selected and emphatical than those which the evangelists use in describing his consternation in the garden of Gethsemane. How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings and death were a proper atonement of sin; and who suppose, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he died merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulness under sufferings? Many of his followers, who were thus witnesses for the truth, and patterns of faithfulness to us, have met death in its most terrible forms with composure, yea, with pleasure, yea, with transports of joy. But is the disciple above his Lord? if Christians have triumphed in such circumstances, why did Christ tremble? Not, surely, because their courage and constancy were greater than his. The causes were entirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body; but Jesus suffered immediately from the hand of God. One stroke of his mighty hand can bruise the spirit of man more sensibly than the united power of all creatures. Jesus died. They that believe in him are said 'to sleep in him,' 1 Thess. iv. 14. 'To them death comes disarmed of its sting, wearing a friendly aspect, and bringing a welcome message of dismissal from every evil. But the death of Jesus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which sinners had deserved to suffer as transgressors of the law.

3. The 'chastisement,' or the 'punishment,' of our 'peace was upon him;' that chastisement or punishment on the account of which sinners obtain peace with God. It properly signifies here, a punishment for instruction or example. Punishments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others. The two former reasons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil; he was perfect before, and in suffering. But standing in the place of sinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the misery and distress which sin demerited.

Thus justice was vindicated in the exercise of mercy; and sinners believing in his name, are exempted from punishment, for his sake, in a way which affords not the least encouragement or extenuation to sin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his sufferings for sins not his own. 'He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows;' he was wounded and bruised for us; 'the chastisement of our peace was upon him,' that 'by his stripes we may be healed.' The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word the apostle Peter uses in his quotation of this passage, which we render 'stripes,' 1 Pet. ii. 24. is properly the mark which stripes or wounds leave upon the body, or, as we say, *scars*. The scars in his hand, feet, and side, and perhaps other marks of his many wounds, remained after his resurrection. And John saw him in a vision, before the throne, as a lamb that had been slain. All these expressions and representations, I apprehend, are designed to intimate to us, that though the death of MESSIAH is an event long since past, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and to the eye of faith are ever present. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, should be healed, by beholding the wounds of another; Yet this is the language of the Gospel, Look and live. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' Three great wounds are ours, guilt, sin, and sorrow; but by contemplating his weals or scars with an enlightened eye, and by rightly understanding who was thus wounded, and why all these wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine speak well of it. Tell to others, as you have opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is usual for those who have been relieved in dangerous and complicated diseases, by a skilful physician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often see public acknowledgments to this purpose. If all the persons who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publish their cases, how greatly would his power and grace be displayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occasionally published, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumstances equally striking; yet there is a sufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excuse. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind, (though many might be mentioned which are indisputably true, and superior to the cavils of the gainsayers,) the Confessions of Austin may be appealed to, as a proof that the Gospel is not a system of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind,

to subdue the obstinate will, to weaken the force of long-confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from distressing fears, and to effect a real, universal, permanent and beneficial change of sentiment and conduct, such as no similar instance can be found, in the history of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true Christian, in the circle of your connexions you will sometimes have a fair opportunity of giving a reason of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and wisdom to improve such seasons; and if you speak the truth in simplicity and love, you know not but the Lord may give his blessing to your testimony, and honour you as an instrument of good. And to convert one sinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet, remember, if you espouse this cause, a certain consistency of character will be expected from you, without which you had better be silent than speak in its defence, or profess yourself a sharer in the privileges of the Gospel. There are too many persons who treat the great truths we profess as mere opinions, points of speculation which form the Shibboleth of a party; there are others who think an attachment to them a sure sign of an enthusiastic, deluded imagination: and there are others, again, who misrepresent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloak and encouragement to licentiousness. Beware, lest, by an improper conduct, you lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, strengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-sighted to the faults of religious professors; and though they affect to despise their principles, they are tolerable judges what that conversation is, which only these principles can produce, and always expect it from those who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the ministers who preach it, are not accompanied with a spirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are passionate, peevish, discontented, censorious, or proud; if they observe that you are greedy of gain, penurious, close-fisted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their customs and spirit, mingle with them in their amusements, and do not maintain a noble singularity, by avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only despise *you* in their hearts, but they will take the occasion of despising and speaking evil of the truth itself on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly solicitous

to adorn your profession by walking agreeable to the rules of the Gospel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus 'well-doing, you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,' (1 Pet. ii. 15.) and in a great measure stop their mouths, if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be constrained to feel a secret reverence for you in their consciences.

But are there any hearts of stone amongst us, who are still unaffected by the love and sufferings of the Son of God; who are still crucifying him afresh, and living in sin, though they hear and know what it cost him to make an atonement for sin? Yet now hear—now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I address you once more. I once more conjure you, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his passion, cross, and death, to seek to him that your souls may live. Can you be proof against these arguments? Nay, then, should you live and die thus obstinate, you must perish indeed!

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## SERMON XX.

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### SIN CHARGED UPON THE SURETY.

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ISAIAH, liii. 6.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.*

COMPARISONS, in the Scripture are frequently to be understood with great limitation; perhaps, out of many circumstances, one only is justly applicable to the case. Thus, when our Lord says, 'Behold I come as a thief' (Rev. xvi. 15.)—common sense will fix the resemblance to a single point, that he will come suddenly, and unexpected. So, when wandering sinners are compared to wandering sheep, we have a striking image of the danger of their state, and of their inability to recover themselves. Sheep, wandering without a shepherd, are exposed, a defenceless and easy prey, to wild beasts and enemies, and liable to perish for want of pasture; for they are not able either to provide for themselves, or to find the way back to the place from whence they strayed. Whatever they suffer, they continue to wander, and if not sought

out, will be lost. Thus far the allusion holds. But sheep, in such a situation, are not the subjects of blame. They would be highly blameable, if we could suppose them rational creatures; if they had been under the eye of a careful and provident shepherd, had been capable of knowing him, had wilfully and obstinately renounced his protection and guidance, and voluntarily chosen to plunge themselves into danger, rather than to remain with him any longer. Thus it is with man. His wandering is rebellious. God made him 'upright,' but he has 'sought out' to himself 'many inventions,' Eccles. vii. 29. God has appointed for mankind a safe and pleasant path, by walking in which they shall find rest to their souls; but they say, 'We will not walk therein,' Jer. vi. 16. They were capable of knowing the consequences of going astray, were repeatedly warned of them, were fenced in by wise and good laws, which they presumptuously broke through. And when they had wandered from him, they were again and again invited to return to him, but they refused. They mocked his messages and his messengers, and preferred the misery they had brought upon themselves, to the happiness of being under his direction and care. Surely he emphatically deserves the name of the Good Shepherd, who freely laid down his life to restore sheep of this character!

My text, therefore, expresses the sentiment of those, and of those only, who are acquainted with the misery of our fallen state, feel their own concern in it, and approve of the method which God has provided for their deliverance and recovery. It contains a confession of their own guilt, and an acknowledgment of his mercy.

I. A confession of guilt and wretchedness. Sin has deprived us both of the knowledge and presence of God. In consequence of this, we wander, every one to his own way. All are under the power of sin, and all equally strangers to the paths of peace and safety. The paths which sinners choose for themselves are diverse from each other, as inclination or circumstances vary; but, however different in appearance, if persisted in, they terminate at last in the same point. They all lead to destruction. We may observe, on this head,

1. It is a sufficient proof of our depravity, that we prefer our own ways to the Lord's; nor can he inflict a heavier judgment upon us in this life, than to give us up entirely to the way of our own hearts. He made us to be happy; but he made us for himself, and gave us a capacity, and a vastness of desire, which only he himself can satisfy, the very constitution and frame of our nature render happiness impossible to us, unless in a way of de-

pendence upon him, and obedience to his laws. The lamb that grazes in the meadow, and the fish that swims in the stream, are each in their proper element. If you suppose them to change places they must both perish. But the brute creation have no propensity to such changes as would destroy them. The instincts implanted in them by their great Creator are conducive to their welfare; and to these instincts they are uniformly faithful. If you can conceive of beasts impatient to leave the shore, and improve their situation by rushing into the ocean; and the fishes equally earnest to forsake the waters, in quest of new and greater advantages upon the dry land; it may illustrate the folly of fallen man, who, turned aside by a deceived heart, refuses life, and seeks death in the error of his ways. For the will of God, (if I may so speak,) is our proper element; and if we depart from it, our sin unavoidably involves our punishment. We naturally indulge hard thoughts of God, and think the rule he has enjoined us too strict and severe, intended to restrain us from real good, and propose to ourselves some unknown advantages by transgressing it. Thus Satan persuaded Eve, and we derive from her: and though we know that she only gained misery by the experiment, we rashly repeat it for ourselves. The Scripture assures us that the ways of God are pleasant, but we will not be persuaded. Experience proves that the way of transgressors is hard, but we resist the conviction, and hurry on in a round of continual disappointment. Are the proud, the covetous, the voluptuous or the ambitious, happy? I appeal to conscience.

2. There is only one right way, but a thousand ways of being wrong. If you are not following him, who has said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John xiv. 6. you are wandering, you are far from God; for none can come to the Father but by him: and far from peace; for there can be no true peace in the mind, unless he bestows and maintains it. The profane and the self-righteous, the open sinner, and the hypocrite, the lover of pleasure, and the lover of gold, the formal Papist, and the formal Protestant, though they seem to travel different roads, though they pity or censure each other, will meet at last, (unless the grace of God prevent,) in the same state of final and hopeless misery. It is grievous to a spiritual and benevolent mind, to see those who are all wrong disputing among themselves which of them is right. Each one is ready to think himself wise, if the folly in which he allows himself be not precisely of the same kind with that which he condemns in his neighbour. But the Scripture is the invariable rule, to which it is your duty and interest to be conformed

now ; for it is given by the inspiration and authority of God, and is the standard by which you must be judged at last. Whatever character you bear amongst men, if you have not faith and holiness, you certainly are not in the way of life. For it is written, ' He that believeth not, shall be damned,' Mark xvi. 16. ; and again, it is written, ' without holiness, no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14.

3. As wandering sheep are liable to innumerable dangers which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such is our condition, until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are stopped, and turned, and brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. Oh ! the misery of man, while living without God in the world ! He is exposed every hour to the stroke of death, which would at once separate him from all that he loves, and plunge him into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. And at present he is perpetually harassed with cares and fears, with wants and woes, without guidance or refuge ; and yet so blinded as to think himself safe, and that his crooked wandering ways will lead him to happiness !

II. An acknowledgment of mercy. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Man sinned, and MESSIAH suffered. ' The Lord hath laid,' or caused to meet upon him, the iniquity of us all,' that is, the punishment due to them. The evils we had deserved were in pursuit of us ; but Jesus interposed, and they all seized upon him ; and he endured them, that we might be spared. Do we ask, upon what grounds ? It was on the ground of his voluntary substitution for sinners, as their covenant-head and representative.

So much, correspondent to this appointment, obtains amongst men, as may show that the idea accords with our notion of justice. If a man be unable to pay a debt, and the creditor should exact the payment from a third person who was no way concerned, it would, with reason, be deemed a very oppressive action. But if it be known that this person became freely bound and responsible for the debtor, he is allowed to be justly liable. But in the present case I make no appeal to human customs. It is a divine appointment, and therefore is and must be right. It was a great design, the triumph of infinite wisdom, and the highest effect of the love of God. It is revealed, not to be submitted to our discussion, or that we may sit in judgment upon the propriety of the measure, but it demands our highest admiration and praise ; and, like the sun, brings with it that light by which the whole system of our knowledge is illuminated. For till we know this great truth, and are able to see its influence upon every thing we

are related to, whatever attainments we may boast, we are, in fact, encompassed with thick darkness, with darkness which may be felt. For the accomplishment of this design, the Son of God was so manifested in the nature of man, that he, and they who believe in him, participate in a real, though mystical union, and are considered as one; he their living head; they his body, consisting of many members; each of them represented by him, accepted in him, and deriving from his fulness their life, their light, their strength, and their joy.

1. He was thus appointed and constituted before the world began, according to the holy counsel and covenant settled from everlasting (Prov. viii. 31. Tit. i. 2.) for the redemption of sinners. For the fall of man, which rendered his interposition necessary, was not an unexpected contingency; but was foreseen and provided for before man was created upon the earth, yea, before the foundations of the earth were laid.

2. After man had sinned, this glorious Head and Surety made known the certainty and benefit of his mediation, and engagement on the behalf of sinners, according to the good pleasure of his wisdom, and as the case required; otherwise, upon the entrance of sin, the full execution of the sentence of the law denounced against the offenders, might perhaps have immediately followed; but he revealed himself. He showed mercy to Adam, covenanted with Noah, walked with Abraham, conversed with Moses, dwelt with his church in the wilderness, and was known by the name of the 'Holy One of Israel,' Isa. liv. 5. Psalm xxiii. 1. David ascribes to the Shepherd of Israel the name of Jehovah, and Isaiah declares, that the Lord of Hosts is the Husband of the church. These characters of Shepherd, and Bridegroom, and Husband, are appropriated to MESSIAH in the New Testament. He therefore is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, whom Abraham, David, and Isaiah, worshipped; or his appearance upon earth would be evidently to the disadvantage of those who believe in him. If he were not God, he would be a creature, for there is no medium; and consequently our Shepherd would be infinitely inferior to the Almighty Shepherd, who was the refuge, the trust, and the salvation of his people, before MESSIAH was manifested in the flesh.

3. In the fulness of time he veiled his glory. He 'who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made of a woman, made under the law,' Phil. ii. 6, 7. Then the union between him and the people whom he came into the world to save was completed; because 'the children were partakers of flesh and blood,

he likewise took part of the same,' Heb. ii. 14. 'The Word, who in the beginning was God, and was with God, was made flesh,' John, i. 1. And in our nature, though he knew no sin, he was treated as a sinner for us, to declare the righteousness of God, in his forbearance and goodness to all who have been saved in former ages, and in the forgiveness and salvation of all who should trust in him to the end of time. He suffered 'once' for all, 'the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' And now God is revealed, not only as merciful, but as just, 'in justifying him which believeth in Jesus.' God is well pleased in him, and for his sake, with all who accept him. Their sins are expiated by his sufferings, Rom. iv. 6. Jer. xxiii. 6; and his perfect righteousness, the whole of his obedience unto death, is the consideration or ground on which they are accounted righteous.

By virtue of this union likewise he is their life. They receive of his fulness, as the branches derive their life and fruitfulness from the tree whereon they grow, John, xv. 1; therefore the apostle said, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Gal. ii. 20. This is the great mystery of Christianity, which words alone cannot explain; it is a divine appointment, hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own sight, but revealed to all who, with the simplicity of children, are desirous of being taught of God, and wait patiently upon him, in the use of his prescribed means, for the light and influence of his Holy Spirit.

From this subject, the substitution of MESSIAH for sinners, we may learn,

1. How to estimate the evil of sin. That sin is a great evil, is evident by its effects. It deprived Adam of the life and presence of God, and brought death and all natural evil into the world. It caused the destruction of the old world by water. It is the source of all the misery with which the earth is now filled; it will kindle the last great conflagration; yea, it has already kindled that fire which shall never be quenched. But in no view does the sinfulness of sin appear so striking as in this wonderful effect—the sufferings and death of MESSIAH: that notwithstanding the dignity of his person, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, and that though he prayed in his agonies, 'that if it were possible the cup might pass from him,' (Luke, xxii. 42.) yet if sinners were to be saved, it was indispensably necessary that he should drink it. This shows the evil of sin in the strongest light; and in this light it is viewed by all who derive life from his death, and healing from his wounds. We may be afraid of the consequences of sin from other considerations; but it is only by looking to him who was pierced for our transgressions, that we can learn to hate it, Zech. xii. 10.

2. The complete justification of those who believe in him. They are delivered from all condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Every charge against them is overruled by this plea, that 'Christ has died, and is risen' on their behalf, 'and ever liveth to make intercession for them.' And though they are still in a state of discipline, for the mortification of sin yet remaining in them; and though for the trial, exercise, and growth of their faith, it is still needful that they pass through many tribulations; yet none of these are strictly and properly penal. They are not the tokens of God's displeasure, but fatherly chastisements, and tokens of his love, designed to promote the work of grace in their hearts, and to make them partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 6—11. Though necessary at present, they will not be necessary long; and therefore the hour is at hand when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and they shall weep no more. His true servants, in the midst of the storms by which they are tossed on the tempestuous sea of this life, are no less safe, and notwithstanding their imperfections, are no less beloved, than those who have already escaped out of the reach of every evil, and are now before the throne.

3. The reason why believers are not wearied, nor overpowered, by all the difficulties of their service, nor by all the arts and efforts of their enemies. They are one with Christ. He who has all power in heaven and earth is engaged for their support. When they faint, he revives them; when they are wounded, he heals them; when their foot slippeth, he upholdeth them. He has said, 'because I live, ye shall live also.' Therefore, who can prevail against them, when their 'life is hidden with Christ in God?' Col. iii. 3. And further, the knowledge of their Saviour's love, and of the holy, awful, yet amiable and endearing, character of God displayed in his mediation, is the source of their love, gratitude, and cheerful obedience. It is this makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. 'The love of Christ constraineth them,' 2 Cor. v. 14. They look to him and are enlightened. And when they consider who he is, in what way, and at what a price, he redeemed them, and what he had prepared for them; when they attend to his gracious word, 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,' Rev. ii. 10: they, out of weakness, are made strong; they are inspired with fresh courage; they take up their cross with cheerfulness, and can adopt the language of the apostle, 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy,' Acts. xx. 24.

## SERMON XXI.

MESSIAH DERIDED UPON THE CROSS.

PSALM, xxii. 7. 8.

*All they that see me laugh me to scorn : they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him ; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

FALLEN man, though alienated from the life of God and degraded, with respect to many of his propensities and pursuits, to a level with the beasts that perish, is not wholly destitute of kind and compassionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures. While self-interest does not interfere, and the bitter passions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, are not roused into exercise, he has a degree of instinctive sympathy with them in their sufferings, and a disposition to assist them if he can do it without much detriment to himself. The source of these social feelings we express by the term *humanity* ; which seems to imply a consciousness that they properly belong to our nature, and that we *ought*, at least to be always and universally affected in this manner, when occasions offer. But while the heart is under the government of self, our humanity is very partial and limited ; and it is to be ascribed to the goodness of God, rather than to any real goodness in man, that it is not wholly extinguished. Were this the case, and were the native evils of the heart left to exert themselves in their full strength, and without control, earth would be the very image of hell, and there could be no such thing as society. But to prevent things from running into utter confusion, God mercifully preserves in mankind some social dispositions. They are, however, so weak in themselves, so powerfully counteracted by the stronger principles of our depravity, and so frequently suppressed by obstinate habits of wickedness, that, in the present state of things, we may almost as justly define man, (whatever impropriety there may seem in the expression,) by saying *He is an inhuman creature*, as by ascribing to him the benevolent properties of *humanity*.

The rage, cruelty, and savage insensibility, with which sin and Satan have poisoned our nature, never appear in so strong a light as when they assume a religious form ; when ignorance, bigotry, and blind zeal, oppose the will and grace of God, under a

pretence of doing him service. By this infatuation, every hateful passion is sanctified, and every feeling of humanity stifled. Thus though the sufferings of the most atrocious malefactors usually excite pity in the spectators, and often draw tears from their eyes; yet the agonies of God's persecuted servants, under the most exquisite tortures which malice could invent, have frequently raised no other emotions than those of derision and scorn. My text leads us to consider the highest instance of this kind. The 22d Psalm undoubtedly refers to MESSIAH. It begins with the very words which he uttered on the cross; nor could David speak of himself, when he said, 'They pierced my hands, and my feet.' He was God's servant in the most eminent sense; and the service he performed, was an uninterrupted course of benevolence to the souls and bodies of men. He spent his life 'in going about doing good;' Acts x. 38. nor could his enemies fix a single stain upon his conduct. Yet they thirsted for his blood; and, because he came into the world to save sinners, they accomplished their cruel designs. We have already seen how he was treated by the servants and by the soldiers, when condemned by the Jewish council, and by the Roman governor. This prophecy was fulfilled when he hung upon the cross. There have been persons in our own days, whose crimes have excited such detestation, that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power. Yet, when these very obnoxious persons have been executed according to their sentence, if, perhaps, there was not one spectator who wished them to escape, yet, neither was one found so lost to sensibility, as to insult them in their dying moments. But when Jesus suffers, 'all that see him, laugh him to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;' they insult his character, and his hope. The evangelists furnish us with an affecting comment upon this passage. They inform us by whom he was thus scorned and derided; they mention some circumstances, which strongly mark the peculiar and excessive contempt with which he was treated; and they take notice of the especial scope and object of their insults, namely, the gracious purpose he had often expressed towards sinners, and the strong confidence he had avowed in God his Father.

I. The persons who scorned and derided him, were various, and of different characters.

1. The chief priests, elders, and rulers of the people. When these, who were held in ignorant admiration by the multitude, set the example, we do not wonder that it was generally followed.

They had been his most avowed and determined enemies; they had long conspired to take away his life, and in the appointed hour their plots were permitted to succeed. They now rejoiced in their success. By their office, as teachers and expounders of the law, they ought to have pointed him out to the people as the object of their reverence and hope; but having rejected him themselves, they employed all their authority and influence to make him the object of general contempt. And, lest the extremity of his torments should awaken sentiments of commiseration in the multitude, they were the first, and the loudest, in reviling him as he hung upon the cross.

2. The populace derided him. They had been instigated by the priests to demand his death of Pilate, when he was desirous of dismissing him, and rather to insist that Barabbas should be spared, Matth. xvii. 20. The populace, though no less ignorant, were less malicious than their leaders. At different times, when they heard his public discourses, and saw his wonderful works, they had been staggered, and constrained to say, 'Is not this the son of David?' and not many days before the popular cry had been strongly in his favour, Matth. xxi. 10, 11.; though quickly after it was, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' Luke xxiii. 21. As the sea, though sometimes smooth, is always disposed to obey the impulse of the wind; so the common people, though easily roused to oppose the truth, would perhaps be quiet, if they were left to themselves; but there are seldom wanting artful and designing men, who, by a pretended regard for religion, and by misrepresentations, work upon their passions and prejudices, and stir them up to a compliance with their purposes. The priests by degrees wrought the populace up, first to reject MESSIAH, and then to join their leaders in mocking and deriding him.

3. The Roman soldiers, who had contemptuously clothed him with a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him in derision, continued to mock him when hanging upon the cross. The Romans, to whom many monarchies were become subject and tributary, affected to despise the name of king; and they held the Jewish nation in peculiar contempt. The title, therefore of King of the Jews, affixed to the cross, afforded them a subject for the keenest sarcasm.

4. Yea, such is the hardness of the human heart, that one of the malefactors, Luke xxiii. 39. who was crucified by his side, unaffected with his own guilt, and insensible of the just judgment of God, and of the account he was soon to render at his awful tribunal, seemed to seek some relief in the midst of his agonies, by

joining with the priests and people in railing on the innocent Jesus, who was suffering before his eyes. Thus he was the object of universal derision. They who were at the greatest distance in character and sentiment, who differed from, despised, and hated each other, on other accounts, united, as one man, in expressing every possible mark of hatred and scorn against him who had done nothing amiss.

II. They showed their scorn in the most pointed and cruel manner. Not only they who had clamoured for his death derided him, but others who were only passing by upon their ordinary occasions, could not pass on till they had stopped a while to insult him, wagging their heads, and reminding him of what he had formerly said, and charging him with the supposed folly and arrogance of his claims. They jested upon his wants; when he said, 'I thirst,' they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They jested upon his words: when he uttered his dolorous complaint, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani' My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' some of them, with a malicious turn, (which possibly was applauded for wit by others,) from the sound of the beginning of the sentence, took occasion to suggest that, by saying, 'Eli, Eli,' he called for Elias, the prophet to come to his assistance. Alas! of what dreadful malignity and obduracy is the heart of man capable! How may we conceive the heavenly hosts to have been affected with this scene, when they beheld their Lord, the object of their worship and supreme love, thus treated by sinners? But it behoved him thus to suffer, Luke xxiv. 26.; for he had undertaken to expiate the sins of many of his murderers, and to offer such satisfaction to the justice and law of God, as might render it consistent with his holiness and truth, to pardon the vilest offenders who should trust in his name in all future ages. Therefore there was no voice, arrest, or interposition from the heavenly world—thus he must be tormented, thus he must be scorned and suspended as a spectacle to angels and to men, till he had paid the full price of redemption, and could say, 'It is finished.' Then, and not till then, he bowed his head, and breathed out his spirit into his Father's hands. There were, however, attestations to his dignity, in this his lowest state. He showed, by his gracious answer to the penitent malefactor, that he had still authority upon earth to forgive sin, and to save to the uttermost; and the sun withdrew his light, and the rocks rent, though daring sinners derided and mocked.

III. The bulk of the people bore their part in this tragedy through precipitation and ignorance. In his prayer for their

forgiveness, (a prayer which was signally answered after his ascension,) he mentioned the only extenuation that wickedness could possibly admit, They knew not what they did. It was otherwise with those who were principally concerned in procuring his death. Long before, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they ascribed them to the agency of Beelzebub. By this malicious, wilful opposition to the strongest evidence of fact, against the conviction of their own minds, and by their violent determined rejection of his mission, they committed the unpardonable sin. They spoke and sinned against the Holy Spirit. This sin no one can have committed while he is fearful lest he has committed it; for it essentially consists in a deliberate and wilful refusal of the only means of salvation. It is the sign of final, absolute impenitence. They who had thus ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, expressed the same height of enlightened malice against him in his dying agonies, and there was a poignancy in their insults, of which the ignorant multitude were not capable.

1. They reproached his great design for which he came into the world: 'He saved others, himself he cannot save,' Matt. xxvii. 42. How different is the force of the same words, according to the intention of the speaker! When they said, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children!' Matt. xxvii. 25. they spoke the very language of the hearts of those who love him, and who derive all their hopes, and all their happiness, from the application of his blood to their consciences. But, to themselves, it proved the most dreadful imprecation. So, it will be the grateful acknowledgment of his people in time and to eternity, that when he was resolved to save *them*, the difficulties in the way were so great, that neither his prayers, nor his tears, nor his unspotted innocence, could prevail to save *himself*. But for this, his love to sinners, his enemies reviled him. Nor would they have offered to believe, if he would come down from the cross, had they supposed that there was the least probability of such an event; for they had often rejected evidence equal to what they now demanded.

2. They reproached him for his trust and confidence in God. He had said, that 'God was his own Father:' John v. 18. *ἰδιου* and they understood him to use the expressions in so high a sense, as thereby to make himself equal with God. Had they misunderstood him, had he not really intended what they laid to his charge, surely he would have explained himself. This was the very ground of their proceeding against him before the council, and the formal reason of the sentence of death they pronounced against him. How often did he appeal to the testimony of the

Scriptures, and of John, whom they durst not but acknowledge to have been a prophet, and to his own mighty works, in support of his claim? But having fastened him upon the cross, they triumphed, and unwittingly expressed their exultation, in the very words which David had foretold should be used to MESSIAH. So exactly were the Scriptures fulfilled by those who used their utmost endeavours to evade them, and to prevent their accomplishment.

But what is all this to us? It is very much to us. Christ could suffer but once, yet we read of those 'who crucify him afresh.' His Gospel represents his personal ministry, declares his character, reveals his love, produces the same effects in those who receive it; and they who oppose it are considered as opposing him, and are influenced by the same spirit which instigated the unbelieving Jews. It is to be hoped that many reject and scorn it, as the multitude did of old, through ignorance; and that the intercession of him, who prayed for those that knew not what they did, will prevail for their conversion. Whenever their eyes are opened, 'they will be pricked to the heart,' Acts ii. 37. and will then gladly inquire of those whom now they despise, What they must do to be saved? But it is to be feared, there are in Christian countries many persons who too nearly resemble the spirit and conduct of the Jewish rulers; whose opposition proceeds from rooted enmity to the truth, persisted in against light that has sometimes forced upon their minds, and who, though convinced, will not be persuaded. They who despise, calumniate, and scorn the believers of the Gospel, would certainly offer the like treatment to the author of it, if he was within their reach. They are ill-treated for his sake, and he considers it as an affront to himself. Thus he said to Saul of Tarsus, when breathing out threatenings against his disciples, 'Why persecutest thou me?' They who reject his ministers, reject him, Luke x. 16. They who speak disdainfully of his dying himself to save others; they who reproach or ridicule the humble confidence of his people; who censure and revile their hopes and comforts derived from his good word, as enthusiasm or hypocrisy; who have no compassion for their distresses, but rather wound them as with a sword in their bones, saying unto them, 'Where is now your God?' Psal. cxv. 2. are certainly treading, if not altogether with equal vehemence, in the footsteps of the Jewish rulers. May the Lord, in mercy, show them the danger of their path, and give them a timely apprehension of the destruction to which it leads! That they may humble themselves to his will, implore his pardon, espouse his cause and experience the comforts and privileges of that Gospel which they have hitherto reviled and scorned.

## SERMON XXII.

MESSIAH UNPITIED, AND WITHOUT COMFORTER.

PSALM lxi. 20.

*Reproach [Rebuke] hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.*

THE greatness of suffering cannot be certainly estimated by the single consideration of the immediate apparent cause; the impression it actually makes upon the mind of the sufferer, must likewise be taken into the account. That which is a heavy trial to one person, may to another be much lighter, and perhaps no trial at all. And a state of outward prosperity, in which the eye of a by-stander can see nothing wanting to happiness, may be, and I doubt not often is, a state of torment to the possessor. On the other hand, we know that the consolations with which it has sometimes pleased God to cheer his suffering servants, have enabled them to rejoice in the greatest extremities. They have triumphed upon the rack, and while their flesh was consuming by the fire. The Lord has had many followers, who, for his sake, have endured scourgings, and tortures, and terrible death, not only without reluctance or dismay, but without a groan. But he himself was terrified, amazed, and filled with anguish, when he suffered for us. Shall we say, The disciples, in such cases, have been superior to their Master; when yet they acknowledged that they derive all their strength and resolution from him? This difference cannot be well accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings were a proper atonement for sin, and who can see no other reason for his death, than that by dying he was to seal the truth of his doctrine, and to propose himself to us as an example of constancy and patience. But the great aggravation of MESSIAH'S sufferings, was the suspension of those divine supports which enable his people to endure the severest afflictions to which he calls them. Perhaps some persons who acknowledge our Lord's true character, may, upon that ground, think his agonies less insupportable, since he was not a mere man, but God in the human nature. It was, indeed, the dignity of his person, that gave influence and efficacy to all that he did and suffered for

sinner. It is likewise true, that the weight laid upon him was more than any mere creature could sustain. I would speak with reverence and reserve upon a point which is too high for our weak minds fully to comprehend. But in whatever way the nature of man, which he assumed, was upheld by his eternal power and Godhead, we may venture to affirm, that he derived no sensible comfort from it. For we have his own testimony, that in this sense 'God had forsaken him.' The divine nature could neither bleed nor suffer. He was truly and properly a man; and as a man he suffered, and he suffered alone. Many of his servants have rejoiced while they were tormented, because God overbalanced all they felt, with the light of his countenance; but the Saviour himself, deprived of this light, experienced, to the uttermost, all that sin deserved, that was not inconsistent with the perfection of his character. My text expresses, so far as human words and ideas can reach, his exquisite distress, when 'he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree: Reproach broke his heart, and when he looked for pity and comfort, he found none.'

I. 'Reproach hath broken my heart.' We must not confine our thoughts here to the reproach of his enemies. The passage in the *Messiah* expresses it agreeably to the version of the Psalms used in our Liturgy, 'Thy rebuke.' Though 'he knew no sin, he was made sin for us.' He was accounted and treated as a sinner. Now a sinner is deservedly the greatest object of contempt in the universe, and indeed the only object of deserved contempt. Thus he incurred the reproach of the law and justice of God. The Holy Father, viewing the Son of his love in this light, as charged with the sins of his people, forsook him. God infinitely hates sin, and will have no fellowship with it; and of this he gave the most awful proof, by forsaking his beloved Son, when he took upon him to answer for the sins of men. Then the sword of the Almighty awoke against him, and he spared him not, Zech. xiii. 7.

This rebuke broke his heart. Let broken-hearted sinners look by faith upon a broken-hearted Saviour. The phrase denotes wo and dejection inconceivable, with a failure of all resource. Any thing may be borne while the spirit, the heart, remains firm; but if the heart itself be broken, who can endure? 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14.

It is not, therefore, surprising that he says, 'I am full of heaviness.' In the evangelists we read, that 'he began to be sore amazed, and very heavy,' (Matth. xxvi. 37, 38. Mark, xiv. 33.) and he said to his disciples, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

The most emphatical words are used to describe his sensation of the bitter conflict of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane, when as yet the hand of man had not touched him. He began to be 'amazed,' ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι, or astonished. It properly signifies, to be struck with terror and surprise by some supernatural power, such as Belshazzar felt when he saw the hand-writing against him upon the wall, Dan. v. 6.; and to be 'very heavy,' ἀδημονεῖν, sated with grief; full, so as to be incapable of more. Some critics explain the word, as importing such an impression of mind as quite unfits a person for converse or society, [Compare Job xxx. 29.] He said, 'I am exceeding sorrowful,' περιλυπος, surrounded, encompassed with sorrows. It is added, he was in an agony,' αγωνια, Luke xxii. 44—a consternation of mind, such as arises from the prospect of some impending, unavoidable evil; like the suspense of mariners upon the point of shipwreck, who tremble equally at the view of the raging waves behind them, and the rocky shore before their eyes, on which they expect in a few moments to be dashed. The evils he was to bear, and to expiate, were now collecting to a point, and formed a dark tremendous storm just ready to break upon his devoted head; and the prospect filled his soul with unutterable horror; so that his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Many have sweat under extremity of pain or terror; but his agonies, and the effects of them, were peculiar to himself; his sweat was blood.

This is not a subject for declamation. It rather becomes us to adore, in humble silence, the manifestation 'of the goodness and severity of God, Rom. xi. 22. in the Redeemer's sufferings, than to indulge conjecture and the flights of the imagination. What is expressly revealed we may assert, contemplate and admire. 'His soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. We know but little of the extreme *malignity* of sin, because we have but faint views of the majesty, holiness and goodness of God, against whom it is committed. Yet a single sin, if clothed with all its aggravations, and the guilt of it brought home with power to the heart, is sufficient to make the sinner a terror to himself. Adam sinned but once, when he lost all comfort and confidence in God, and sought to hide himself. We have but slight thoughts of the *extent* of sin. Not only positive disobedience, but want of conformity to the law of God is sinful. Every rising thought which does not comport with that reverence, dependence, and love, which is due to God, from creatures constituted, furnished, and indebted, as we are, is sinful. The sins of one person, in thought, word, and deed, sins of omission and commission are innumerable. What then is contained in the collective idea, in

what the Scripture calls ‘the sin of the world?’ What then must be the atonement, the consideration, on the account of which, the great God is no less righteous than merciful, in forgiving the sins which his inviolable truth and the honour of his government engage him to punish. And they are punished, though forgiven. They were charged upon Jesus, they exposed him to a rebuke which broke his heart. They filled him with heaviness. When, therefore, we are assured that the justice of God is satisfied, with respect to every sinner of the race of mankind, who, in obedience to the divine command, makes the sufferings of the Saviour his plea for pardon, and trusts in him for salvation; and that upon this one ground they are freed from all condemnation, and accepted as children; when we are told that the glory of the divine perfections is displayed in the highest, by this method of saving millions, who deserved to perish; we safely infer the greatness of the cause from the greatness of the effect. The sufferings of Christ, which free a multitude of sinners from the guilt of innumerable sins, must have been inconceivably great indeed!

II. Under this accumulated distress, though his will was perfectly submissive to the will of God, and his determination fixed to endure all that the case required; yet as he was truly a man, he felt like a man. His fortitude was very different from a stoical hardness of spirit. All the affections of pure humanity, whatever does not imply sin, (such as impatience under suffering, and an undue, premature desire of deliverance,) operated in him as they might do in one of us. It was no impeachment of his innocence, or of his willingness, that he wished, if it were possible, for some relief or alleviation of his misery. ‘He looked,’ as we do when we are in heaviness, for ‘some to have pity on him, and to comfort him,’ but there was none. Though the pity of our friends is often ineffectual, and can afford us no real assistance: yet it gives a little relief to have those about us to whom we can open our minds; who will sympathize with us, and compassionately attend to our complaints, if they can do no more. And to be neglected and forsaken in extremity, especially by those who have professed great friendship, or are under great obligations to us, will be felt as an aggravation of the most distressing case that can be imagined. But thus it was with MESSIAH. He had to complain, not only of the cruelty of his enemies, but of the insensibility and inconstancy of those who had professed the most cordial attachment to him. The impression this made upon him, as a man, was such, that it is distinctly specified in the prophetic enumeration of the ingredients which composed the bitter cup of his sufferings.

He was not only apprehended by cruel men, but betrayed into their hands by one whom he had admitted into the number of his select apostles, who had been employed in his service, favoured with access to him in his more retired hours, and was present, with the rest, when he kept his last passover, and took his solemn and affectionate leave of them, before he entered upon his passion. It was not an avowed enemy, but one of the twelve who dipped with him in the dish, that was guilty of this enormous ingratitude and treachery. How keen are our resentments, if those to whom we have shown great kindness, are discovered to have studied our ruin while they wore the mask of friendship? Though MESSIAH was incapable of any sinful perturbation of mind, he was very capable of being painfully affected by the conduct of Judas: he had reason to look for pity from him, but he found none.

When he entered the Garden of Gethsemane, he commanded, may I not say, he intreated his disciples to tarry there and watch with him. And to engage their utmost attention, he spoke plainly to them of his distress, saying, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.' Yet, when he returned to them, the first, the second, yea, the third time, 'he found them sleeping.' How tender, yet how forcible was his expostulation, 'Could ye not watch one hour?' Matth. xxvi. 40. What! could they know that their Lord was in an agony, wrestling with strong cries and tears, yet sleep, as regardless of his sorrows as of their own approaching danger! Were our dearest friends to show themselves equally insensible when we were in extreme anguish, would not their indifference wound our spirits? He also was a man; and we may conceive it some addition to his grief, that when he looked to them for pity and comfort, he found none.

When he was apprehended, notwithstanding their former protestations of zeal and love, they all forsook him and fled.' Matth. xxvi. 56. They sought their own safety, and left him in the hands of his enemies. The apostle Paul was thus deserted, and his expressions intimate that he felt it. 'At my first answer, no man stood by me, all men forsook me,' 2 Tim. iv. 16. He had imbibed, likewise, the spirit of his Master, and prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. And though the Lord Jesus pitied and excused the weakness of his disciples, and permitted them to take care of themselves, it was in them an instance how little he could depend upon those who were under the strongest obligations to him.

But Peter followed his Lord to the hall of the high priest, and there saw him, with his own eyes, insulted, arraigned, and unjust-

ly condemned. Might he not expect that Peter, the most active and earnest of all his followers, would have pitied him at least at such a time. Alas! instead of pitying him, Peter 'denied him;' he denied with oaths and imprecations, that he had any knowledge of him whom he had seen transfigured upon the mount, and agonizing in the garden. We read, 'that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,' Luke, xxii. 61. Who can conceive the energy of that look? It was full of meaning and Peter well understood it. Surely, though a look of tenderness and compassion, it conveyed the expostulation of an injured benefactor, no less forcibly than if all who were present had heard him say, 'Peter, is this the pity I am to expect from thee?'

When he was nailed to the cross he was surrounded only by his enemies. These, as we have seen, far from pitying or attempting to comfort him, derided and mocked him. How have some of us felt for our friends in their dying hours, though we have seen every possible attention paid to them, and every thing provided and done for them that could administer to their relief and comfort! But they who have the faith which realizes unseen things, have beheld their best Friend expiring in tortures, and insulted by his murderers in his last moments.

But had all his disciples been near him, and had all his enemies been his friends, still, in his situation, he would have been alone. The loss of the light of God's countenance will, to the soul that has enjoyed it, create an universal solitude, and render every earthly good tasteless, in proportion as that soul is united to him in love; and still more, if there be superadded a sense of his displeasure. They who have never tasted that the Lord is good, not having known the difference, can have no conception of this subject. Their minds are at present occupied with earthly things; and while they are thus engaged with trifles, they cannot believe, though they are repeatedly told it, that to an immortal spirit, a separation from the favour of God involves in it the very essence of misery. But should death surprise them in their sins, tear them from all that they have seen and loved, and plunge them into an unknown, unchangeable world, then (alas too late!) they will be sensible of their immense, irreparable loss, in being cut off from the fountain of life and comfort. A suspension of this divine presence, with an awful sense and feeling of what those for whom he made himself responsible deserved, was the most dreadful part of the Redeemer's sufferings. He was perfectly united to the will and love of his heavenly Father, and, by the perfect holiness of his nature, incapable of tasting satisfaction in any thing else, if his presence were withdrawn. But when he endured the

curse of the law for us, 'he looked to God for pity and comfort, but he found none.'

In this glass we are to contemplate the demerit of sin. But there are some sufferings due to the impenitent sinner, of which MESSIAH was not capable. I mean the consciousness of personal guilt, the gnawings of a remorseful conscience, and the rage of despair. If we add the idea of eternity to the whole, we may form some faint judgment of what they are delivered from who believe in him, and what misery awaits those who presume to reject him. Awful thought, to reject the only Saviour! If they refuse his mediation, they must answer in their own persons. Then they will find no pity, no comforter. For who, or what, can comfort, when the Lord God omnipotent arises to punish? What will your pleasures, your wealth, or friends, do for you, when the hand of the Lord shall touch you to the quick? What smile can you expect will support you against the terror of his frown?

Should any of you hear the *Messiah* performed again, then and there, if not before, may God impress upon your heart the sense of this passage. Then you will understand, that the sufferings of the Son of God are by no means a proper subject for the amusement of a vacant hour.

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## SERMON XXIII.

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NO SORROW LIKE MESSIAH'S SORROW.

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LAMENTATIONS, i. 12.

*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!*

ALTHOUGH the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophecies, Luke xxiv. 44. bear an harmonious testimony to MESSIAH; it is not necessary to suppose that every single passage has an immediate and direct relation to him. A method of exposition has frequently obtained, of a fanciful and allegorical cast, under the pretext of spiritualizing the word of God. Ingenious men, and sometimes men not very ingenious, have endeavoured to discover types and mysteries in the plainest historical parts, where we have no sufficient evidence

that the Holy Spirit intended to teach them. And upon very slight grounds a proof has been attempted of the great doctrines of the Gospel, which may be proved, much more safely and solidly, from the passages of Scripture in which they are plainly and expressly revealed. But by taking this course, instead of throwing real light upon the places they have in this manner attempted to explain, they have perplexed their hearers and readers, and led them to question whether there be any fixed and determinate sense of Scripture that may be fully depended upon. It is true, when we have the authority of an inspired expositor to lead us, we may follow him without fear; but this will not warrant us to strike out a path for ourselves, and trust to our conjectures, where we have not such an infallible guide. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a key to explain to us many passages in a higher sense than perhaps we should have otherwise understood them. But it is best for us to keep within safe bounds, and to propose our own sentiments, when not supported by New Testament authority, with great modesty, lest we should incur the censure of being wise above what is written. I may, without scruple, affirm, that the history of Sarah and Hagar is an allegory referring to the two covenants, because the apostle Paul (Gal. iv. 24.) has affirmed it before me; but if I attempted to spiritualize the history of Leah and Rachel likewise, you would not be bound to believe me without proof. I may preach the Gospel of Christ from a text which mentions the manna or the brazen serpent, John iii. 14. vi. 31—35. because our Lord has expounded these things as typical of himself: but I must not be confident that every resemblance which I think I can trace, is the true sense of the place; because I may imagine many resemblances and types which the Scripture does not authorize.

There is, however, a useful way of preaching, by accommodation, that is, when the literal sense is first clearly stated, to apply the passage, not directly to prove a doctrine as if really contained in it, but only to illustrate the doctrine expressly taught in other parts of the Scripture. Thus, for instance, if the question of Jonadab to Amnon (2 Sam. xiii. 4.) were chosen for the subject of a discourse, 'Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?' The history of the context directly proves the malignity of sinful, inordinate desire, and the misery of those who are under its dominion; that it poisons every situation in life, and renders the sinner incapable of satisfaction, though he were a king's son. The form of the question might then lead to observe, That believers are kings' sons, to show what are the great privi-

leges of their adoption; and to inquire how it comes to pass, that many persons so highly privileged are lean, that is, uncomfortable, weak, and languishing in their profession? These points might not improperly be introduced by way of accommodation, though they are not directly deducible from the literal sense of the question.

The text I have just read to you has led me into this digression. I find it in the series of the passages in the *Messiah*; but I am not sure that, in the literal sense, it immediately refers to him. It is a pathetic exclamation, by which the prophet Jeremiah expresses his grief, or rather the grief of Jerusalem, when the sins of the people had given success to the Chaldean army, and the temple and the city were destroyed. Jerusalem is poetically considered as a woman, lately reigning a queen among the nations, but now a captive, dishonoured, spoiled, and sitting upon the ground. She entreats the commiseration of those who pass by, and asks, 'if there be any sorrow like unto her sorrow?' Such a question has often been in the heart and in the mouth of the afflicted, especially in an hour of impatience. We are all, in our turns, disposed to think our own trials peculiarly heavy, and our own cases singular. But to them who ask this question we may answer, Yes—there has been a sorrow greater than yours, greater than the sorrow of Jeremiah, or of Jerusalem. They who have heard of the sorrows of Jesus, will surely, upon the hearing of this question, be reminded of him, whether it was the intention of the prophet to personate him or not. If we conceive of him hanging upon the cross, and speaking in this language to us, 'Was ever any sorrow like my sorrow?' must not we reply, with admiration and gratitude, 'No, Lord, never was love, never was grief, like thine.'

The expostulation and the question are equally applicable to the sufferings of MESSIAH. The former, indeed, is not inserted in the Oratorio, but I am not willing to leave it out. The highest wonder ever exhibited to the world, to angels, and men, is the Son of God suffering and dying for sinners. Next to this, hardly any thing is more astonishing to an enlightened mind than the gross and stupid insensibility with which the sufferings of the Saviour are treated, and the indifference with which this wonderful event is regarded by creatures who are so nearly concerned in it. If they believe in him, they will be healed by his wounds, and live by his death. If they finally reject him, they must perish; and their guilt and misery will be greatly aggravated by what they have heard of him! But sin has so blinded our understandings, and hardened our hearts, that we have naturally no feeling, either for him or for ourselves.

I. Is the expostulation suited to any person here? Can I, with propriety, say to some who are now present, Has this subject been hitherto nothing to you? Then, surely, you have not heard of it before; and, therefore, now you do hear of it, you will, you must be affected. If you were to read in the common newspapers, that a benevolent and excellent person had fallen into the hands of murderers, who had put him to death in the most cruel manner, would it not be something to you? Could you avoid impressions of surprise, indignation, and grief? Surely if this transaction were news to you, it would engross your thoughts. But, alas! you have rather heard of it too often, till it has become to you as a worn-out tale. I am willing to take it for granted that you allow the fact. You believe that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was condemned by the Jews, and crucified by the Romans. And is it possible this should be nothing to you? Is it too insignificant to engage or deserve your attention? And yet, perhaps you have wept at a representation or a narrative which you knew was wholly founded in fiction. How strange! what! the sorrows of Jesus nothing to you! when you admit that he suffered for sinners, and will probably admit that *you* are a sinner. No longer, then, boast of your sensibility; your heart must be a heart of stone. Yet thus it is with too many; your tempers, your conduct, give evidence that hitherto the death of Jesus has been nothing to you. You would not have acted otherwise, at least you would not have acted worse, if you had never heard of his name. Were his sufferings any thing to you, is it possible, that you would live in the practice of those sins, for which no atonement could suffice but his blood? Were you duly affected by the thought of his crucifixion, is it possible that you could crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame, by bearing the name of a Christian, and yet living in a course unsuitable to the spirit and precepts of his Gospel? But if you are indifferent to *his* grief, is it nothing to you on your own account? What! is it nothing to you whether you are saved or perish; whether you are found at his right or his left hand in the great day of his appearance; or whether he shall then say to you, 'Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you: or, 'Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire?' Matt. xxv. 34, 41. There is no medium, no alternative. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. This lamentable indifference to the Redeemer's sorrows, is a full proof of the baseness and wickedness of the human heart; and it is felt as such, when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin. Natural conscience may excite a painful conviction of

the sinfulness of many actions. But this stupid unbelief of the heart is, if I may so speak, the sin of sins, it is the root and source of every evil, and yet so congenial to our very frame, as we are depraved creatures, that God alone can make the sinner feel it, John xvi. 9. ; and when he does feel it, the sense of it wounds and grieves him more than all his other sins.

II. With respect to the question, if we rightly understand what has been observed from the Scripture-history, in the six preceding sermons, concerning the particulars of his passions ; we may answer, without hesitation, Never was suffering, or sorrow, like that which MESSIAH endured in the day of the Lord's fierce anger. It is possible that history, which is little more than a detail of the cruelty and wickedness of mankind, may furnish us with instances of many persons who have suffered excruciating torments, and have even been mocked and insulted in their agonies : But,

1. Was there ever a character of his dignity and excellence treated in such a manner ? Job considered his former state as a great aggravation of his sufferings. He enlarges upon the respect which had been shown him in his prosperity. ' When I went out to the gate, through the city, the young men saw me and hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me, Job xxix. 8, 11. But afterwards, speaking of fools, of base men, of the vilest of the earth, he adds, ' Now am I their song, yea, their by-word. They abhor me, and spare not to spit in my face. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters,' Job xxx. 8—14. But Jesus was the Lord of glory. He whom all the angels of God worshipped, was buffeted and spit upon by the lowest rabble. If a great king was degraded from his throne, and exposed to the derision of slaves, this would be a small thing, compared with the humiliation of him, who, in his own right, was King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

2. Was there ever so innocent a sufferer ? When Aaron lost his two sons, he held his peace, Lev. x. 3. A little before he had been guilty of making the golden calf. The remembrance of this offence composed his mind under his great trial. He saw that he deserved a still heavier punishment, and was silent. In like manner, David, when his rebellious son Absalom conspired against his life, was patient ; he remembered the adultery and murder he had committed ; and, though he mourned under his afflictions, he durst not complain, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. The malefactor upon the cross submitted to his sentence, because he was a malefactor, saying, ' And we indeed justly,' Luke xxiii. 41. It

is thus with all who know themselves. Under their severest afflictions, they admit the propriety of the prophet's question, 'Why should a living man complain?' Lam. iii. 39. And they acknowledge, 'It is of the Lord's great mercy they are not utterly consumed,' Lam. iii. 22. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled; he had fulfilled the whole law, and had done nothing amiss; yet he yielded himself, 'as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,' Isa. liii. 7.

3. Did ever any other sufferer experience, in an equal degree, the day of God's fierce anger? In the greatest of our sufferings, in those which bear the strongest marks of the Lord's displeasure, there is always some mitigation, some mixture of mercy. At the worst, we have still reason to acknowledge, that he 'hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor according to the full desert of our iniquities,' Psalm ciii. 10. If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet we can give no sufficient reason why we should not. If we are exercised with poverty and losses, yet something worth the keeping, and more than we can justly claim, is still left to us; at least our lives are spared, though forfeited by sin. If we are in distress of soul, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, we are not quite out of the reach of hope. Even if sickness, pain, loss, and despair, should all overtake us in the same moment, all is still less than we deserve. Our proper desert is hell, an exclusion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, 'where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' Every thing short of this is a mercy. But Jesus, though he had no sin of his own, bore the sins of many. His sufferings were indeed temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwise extreme. Witness the effects, his heaviness unto death, his consternation, his bloody sweat, his eclipse upon the cross, when deprived of that presence, which was his only, and his exceeding joy. On these accounts, 'no sorrow was like unto his sorrow!'

The unknown sorrows of the Redeemer are a continual source of support and consolation to his believing people. In his sufferings they contemplate his atonement, his love, and his example, and they are animated by the bright and glorious issue. For he passed from death to life, from suffering to glory.

1. *His Atonement*, apprehended by faith, delivers them from guilt and condemnation, gives them peace with God, and access to him, with liberty as children, Rom. v. 1, 2. Being thus delivered from their heavy burden, and from the power of Satan, and having a way open for receiving supplies of grace and

strength according to their day, they are prepared to take up their cross, and to follow him.

2. *His love*, in submitting to such sorrows for their sakes, attaches their hearts to him. Great is the power of love! It makes hard things easy, and bitter sweet. Some of us can tell, or rather we cannot easily tell, how much we would cheerfully do, or bear, or forbear, for the sake of the person whom we dearly love. But this noblest principle of the soul never can exert itself with its full strength, till it is supremely fixed upon its proper object. The love of Christ has a constraining force indeed! 2 Cor. v. 14. It is stronger than death. It overcomes the world. And 'we thus love him, because he first loved us; because he loved us, and gave himself for us,' John iv. 29. Gal. ii. 20.

3. *His example*. The thought that he suffered for them, arms them with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By his cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. They no longer court its favour, nor are afraid of its frown. They know what they must expect, if they will be his servants, by the treatment he met with; and they are content.

He who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself for them, is worthy that they should suffer likewise for him. It is their desire, neither to provoke the opposition of men, nor to dread it. They commit themselves to him, and are sure that he will not expose them to such sufferings as he endured for them. So, likewise, under all the trials and afflictions which they endure more immediately from the hand of the Lord, a lively thought of his sorrows reconciles them to their own. Thus by his stripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowship with him in his sufferings.

4. Lastly, if more were necessary, (and sometimes, through remaining infirmity and surrounding temptation, every consideration is no more than necessary,) they know that their Lord passed through sufferings to glory. And they know (for they have his own gracious promise) 'that if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him,' John xii. 26. Rom. viii. 18. They are sure, 'that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the joy which will then be revealed; and that when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory;' Col. iii. 4. and therefore they are comforted in all their tribulation, and can say, 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy,' Acts xx. 24.

## SERMON XXIV.

MESSIAH'S INNOCENCE VINDICATED.

ISAIAH, liii. 8.

*He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare his generation ?  
For he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people  
was he stricken*

LET not plain Christians be stumbled, because there are difficulties in the prophetical parts of Scripture, and because translators and expositors sometimes explain them with some difference as to the sense. Whatever directly relates to our faith, practice, and comfort, may be plainly collected from innumerable passages, in which all the versions, and all sober expositors, are agreed. That there are some differences, will not appear strange, if we consider the antiquity of the Hebrew language, and that the Old Testament is the only book extant, which was written during the time that it was the common language of the people. For this reason we meet with many words which occur but once; and others, which do not occur frequently, are evidently used in more than one sense. If we suppose that a time should come, when the English language should be no longer spoken, and no more than a single volume in it be preserved, we may well conceive that posterity might differ as to the sense of many expressions, notwithstanding the assistance they might obtain by comparing the English with the French, Dutch, and other languages which were in use at the same period. Such assistance we derive from the Chaldee, Syriac, Greek, and other ancient versions of the Old Testament, sufficient to confirm us in the true sense of the whole, and to throw light upon many passages otherwise dark and dubious; and yet there will remain a number of places, the sense of which the best critics have not been able to fix with certainty. Further, the prophecies are usually expressed in the style of poetry, which, in all languages, is remote from the common forms of speaking. The grand evidence to a humble mind, that the Holy Scripture was originally given by inspiration of God, and that the version of it which, by his good providence, we are favoured with, is authentic, is the effect it has upon the heart and conscience when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And without

this interval, experimental evidence, the learned are no less at a loss than the vulgar.

An acquaintance with the Hebrew will, perhaps, suggest a meaning in this verse, (the latter part only of which is taken into the *Messiah*,) which may not readily occur to an English reader. But the purport of it is plainly expressed in many other passages. The text is not merely a repetition of what was spoken before concerning the Redeemer's sufferings; rather the declaration of what was to follow them begins here. It is the opening of a bright and glorious subject. He was taken, he was taken up, like Enoch and Elijah, from prison, and from judgment, and who can declare his generation? or, (as the word properly signifies, his age?) Who can declare his state, the establishment and duration of his dignity, influence, and government? For though he was cut off, made an excision and a curse, from amongst men, it was not upon his own account, but for the transgression of my people that he was smitten.

'God was manifested in the flesh,' Tim. iii. 16. and in the flesh he suffered as a malefactor. Undoubtedly the divine nature is incapable of suffering; but the human nature, which did suffer, was assumed by him 'who is over all, God blessed for ever,' Rom. ix. 5. But he was justified in the Spirit; and sufficient care was taken, that in his lowest humiliation, though he was condemned and reviled, his character should be vindicated. I shall, therefore, consider at present the testimonies given to his innocence. Though he was cut off out of the land of the living, it was only as a substitute for others. He was stricken for the transgression of his people.

1. The first attestation, and which, of itself, is fully sufficient to establish this point, is that of Judas. He was one of the twelve apostles who attended our Lord's person, and who were admitted to a nearer and more frequent intercourse with him than the rest of his disciples. Though our Lord knew that his heart was corrupt, and that he would prove a traitor, he does not appear to have treated him with peculiar reserve; or to have kept him more at a distance than the other apostles; for when he told them, 'One of you shall betray me,' they had no particular suspicion of Judas. He, therefore was well acquainted with the more retired hours of his Master's life. He had been often with him in Gethsemane before he went thither to betray him to his enemies. When he had acted this treacherous part, if he, who had been frequently present when Jesus conversed most freely in private with his select followers, had known any thing amiss in his conduct, we may be sure he would gladly have disclosed it for his own justification. Christian Societies have usually been reviled

and slandered by those who have apostatized from them; their mistakes, if they were justly chargeable with any, have been eagerly published and exaggerated; and many things often laid to their charge which they knew not. But Judas, on the contrary, was compelled by his conscience to return his ill-gotten gain to the chief priests and elders, and to confess, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood,' Matt. xxvii. 4. Considering the time of making this declaration, when he saw that he was already condemned, and the person to whom he made it, even to those who had condemned him, it cannot be denied that he was an unsuspected and competent witness to his innocence. And the answer of the chief priests implied, that, though their malice could be satisfied with nothing less than the death of this innocent person, they were unable to contradict the traitor's testimony.

2. Though Pilate likewise condemned MESSIAH to death, to gratify the importunity of the Jews, he repeatedly declared his firm persuasion of his innocence; and he did it with great solemnity. 'He took water and washed his hands,' publicly, 'before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person,' Matth. xxvii. 24. He laboured for his release; though the fear of man prevailed upon him at last, as it has upon many, to act in defiance to the light and conviction of his conscience. And from him we learn, that Herod, Luke xxiii. 15. notwithstanding he mocked him and set him at nought, considered the accusation of his enemies to be entirely groundless. And further, when the Jews proposed such an alteration of the title affixed to his cross as might imply that the claims our Lord had made were unjust and criminal, Pilate utterly refused to comply with their demand.

3. The thief upon the cross, with his dying breath, said, 'This man hath done nothing amiss.' If his competency as a witness should be disputed, because it is probable he had known but little of him, I admit the objection. Be it so, that this malefactor had little personal knowledge of our Lord. 'Then, his opinion of his innocence must have been founded upon public report; and therefore, it seems, he spoke not for himself only; but his words may be taken as a proof, that the people at large, though they suffered themselves to be influenced by the chief priests, to demand his death, and to prefer Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, to him, were generally conscious that he had done nothing amiss. Many of those who now said, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' had, not long before, welcomed him with acclamations of praise, saying, 'Hosannah to the Son of David.' This inconsistency and inconstancy is not altogether surprising to those who are well acquainted with the weakness and wickedness of human nature in

its present state ; and who consider the effects which the misrepresentations and artifice of persons of great name, and in high office, have often produced in the minds of the ignorant and superstitious. Thus, at Lystra, through the persuasion of the Jews, the apostle Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts xiv. 13, 19.) by the very people who, a little before, could with difficulty be restrained from paying him divine honours.

4. Though the salvation of men, and the honour of the law of God, required, that when MESSIAH undertook to make an atonement for our sins, he should be thus given up to the rage and cruelty of his enemies, suffer all the infamy due to the worst and vilest transgressors, and be deserted by God and man ; yet his heavenly Father bore a signal and solemn testimony to his character. The frame of nature sympathized with her suffering Lord. The heavens were clothed with sackcloth ; the sun withdrew his shining ; the sanctuary was laid open, by the rending of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom ; the earth trembled greatly ; the rocks were rent ; the graves opened ; and the dead arose. These events, in connexion with what had passed before, extorted an acknowledgment of his innocence from the Roman centurion, who was appointed to attend his execution.

Thus it appears, that Judas, who betrayed him ; the Jewish council, which could not find sufficient ground, even though they employed false and suborned witnesses, to pass sentence upon him ; Herod, who derided him ; Pilate, who condemned him ; the malefactor who suffered with him ; and the commander of the soldiers, who crucified him ; all combined in a declaration of his innocence ; God himself confirmed their word, by signs and wonders in heaven and upon earth.

It may seem quite unnecessary to prove the innocency of him who, in his human nature, was absolutely perfect, and in whom the presence and fulness of God dwelt ; and it is indeed unnecessary to those who believe in his name. It is, however, a pleasing contemplation to them, and has an important influence upon their faith and hope. In this they triumph, ‘ that he who knew no sin himself, was made sin,’ was treated as a sinner for them, ‘ that they might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ ‘ The High Priest of our profession needed not,’ as those who typified his office of old, ‘ to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people ;’ for he was perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. And had he not been a lamb without spot or blemish, he could not have been accepted on our behalf. It was the perfection of his voluntary obedience to the law of our nature,

under which he submitted to be made, which, conjoined with the excellency of his character as the Son of God, made him meet, able, and worthy to expiate our transgressions. By the 'one offering'—of himself, once offered, 'he has made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and having appeared with his own blood within the vail, in the presence of God for us, and ever living to make intercession for all who come unto God by him,' he is proposed in the Gospel as 'the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him.' 'In him, all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory,' Isa. xlv. 17, 25. In him the true Israel, the partakers of the faith of Abraham, shall be saved, 'saved to the uttermost,' 'saved with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.'

But who that knows these things can sufficiently commiserate the fatal effects of that unbelief which blinds and hardens the hearts of multitudes! especially that more learned and informed, and therefore more inexcusable, unbelief, which characterizes the modern patrons of scepticism. They read and admire ancient history. There is no old story so frivolous or improbable, but it is sufficient to engage their attention, and to exercise their acumen, if it be found in Herodotus or Livy. They spare no pains, they perplex themselves and weary their readers with their attempts to decipher an ancient inscription, or to fix the date, or reconcile the circumstances of a supposed event, which after all, perhaps never had place but in the imagination of the writer. Their implicit deference to such uncertain authorities as these, often verges upon the border of extreme credulity. The Bible is an ancient history likewise; and if it was only received upon the footing of the rest, as merely a human composition, the facts which it relates, and the manner in which they are related, the admirable simplicity of narration in some parts, the unrivalled sublimity of description in others; the justness and discrimination of characters; the views it unfolds, of the workings of the human heart, and the springs of action, so exactly conformable to experience and observation, might surely recommend it to their notice. And possibly, if it did claim no higher authority than a human composition, men, who have any just pretensions to taste, would admire it no less than they now undervalue it. But, because it does not flatter their pride, nor give indulgence to their corrupt propensities, they are afraid to study it, lest the internal marks of its divine original should force unwelcome convictions upon their mind. Therefore they remain willingly ignorant of its contents; for the knowledge they discover of it is so very super-

ficial, that a well-instructed child of ten years of age may smile at the mistakes of critics and philosophers. That such a book is extant is undeniable. How can they account for its production? A view of what they actually have done will warrant us to assert, that the wisest men of antiquity neither would have written such a book if they could, nor were they able, had they been ever so willing. And yet we have as good evidence that the New Testament was written by plain and unlearned men, as we have for any fact recorded in history. How could such men invent such a book? And how should they, without seeming directly to design it, but incidentally, as it were, represent that persons of such various characters, who concurred in putting Jesus to death, should all equally concur in establishing the testimony of his innocence!

True Christians, when they suffer unjustly, may learn, from the example of their Lord, to suffer patiently. The apostle presses this argument upon servants, 1 Pet. ii. 18—21; who in those days were chiefly bond servants or slaves. He, therefore, evidently supposed that the knowledge of the Gospel was sufficient to qualify people in the lowest situations of human life, with a fortitude and magnanimity of spirit of which philosophy could scarcely reach the conception. In effect, to be much taken up with the interests of self, to live upon the breath of others, to be full of resentment for every injury, and watchful to retaliate it; these are the properties and tokens of a little and narrow mind. It requires no energy, no sacrifice, no resolution, to acquire such a disposition; for it is natural to us, and powerful and habitual in the weakest and least respectable characters. But to act uniformly as the servants of God, satisfied with his approbation, under the regulation of his will, and for his sake cheerfully to bear whatever hardships a compliance with duty may expose us to, enduring grief, suffering wrongfully, and acting in the spirit of benevolence and meekness, not only to the good, but also to the froward; this indicates a true nobleness of soul. And to this we are called by our profession; for thus Christ suffered. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet he was reviled, but he reviled not again. He suffered, though innocent; but he threatened not. He was crucified by wicked men; but he prayed for them while they were nailing him to the cross. This was an eminent branch of the mind that was in Christ; and it ought to be a distinguishing feature in the character of his people. For, is the disciple above his Lord? or should the conduct of the disciple contradict that of his Lord? Undoubtedly, so far as we

are partakers in the doctrine of his sufferings, and have real fellowship with him in his death, we shall resemble him. 'If we say, we abide in him, we ought to walk even as he walked,' 1 John, ii. 6. But they who, calling themselves Christians, are full of the spirit of self-justification, contention and complaint, while they profess to believe in him, deny him by their works. The apostles Peter and John, deeply affected by their obligations to him, and by the exquisite pattern of meekness and tenderness which he had set before them, departed from the presence of the council, not swelling with anger, nor hanging down their heads with grief, but 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake,' Acts, v. 41. And he deserves no less from us than he did from them. It was for us, no less than for them, that he endured reproach, and was content to die as a malefactor, though he was innocent.

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## SERMON XXV.

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### MESSIAH RISING FROM THE DEAD.

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PSALM xvi. 10.

*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

THAT the Gospel is a divine revelation, may be summarily proved from the character of its Author. If an infidel was so far divested of prejudice and prepossession as to read the history of Jesus Christ, recorded by the evangelists, with attention, and in order to form his judgment of it, simply and candidly, as evidence should appear; I think he must observe many particulars in his spirit and conduct, so very different from the prevailing sentiments of mankind, as to convince him, that man, in his present state, could not possibly have conceived the idea of such a character. Poets and historians have often employed their powers in delineating what appeared to them the great and excellent in human conduct. But how different are the pictures of their admired heroes, sages, and legislators, from the portrait of the Saviour, as it is drawn, with the utmost simplicity, by plain, unlettered men, who, without art or affectation, only describe what they profess to have seen and heard! I fix at present upon a

single consideration, which perhaps cannot be expressed more properly or forcibly than in the words of an ingenious writer now living :—‘ He is the only Founder of a religion, in the history of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally uncondusive to any worldly purpose whatever. All others, Mahomet, Numa, and even Moses himself blended their religious institutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their respective people. But Christ neither aimed at, nor would accept of any such power. He rejected (John xviii. 36.) every object which all other men pursue, and made choice of those which others fly from and are afraid of. He refused power, riches, honours, and pleasure; and courted poverty, ignominy, tortures, and death. Many have been the enthusiasts and impostors, who have endeavoured to impose on the world pretended revelations; and some of them, from pride, obstinacy, or principle, have gone so far as to lay down their lives rather than retract: but I defy history to show one, who ever made his own sufferings and death (John xii. 24, 32, 33.) a necessary part of his original plan, and essential to his mission. This Christ actually did; he foresaw, foretold, declared their necessity, and voluntarily endured them.’\*

The death of our Lord was indeed essential to our plan; as such, it was constantly in his view, and he often spoke of it. Probably it was the whole of his enemies’ plan; and when they saw him dead, buried, and the sepulchre sealed, they triumphed in their success, and expected to hear of him no more. But the Scriptures which were read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day, foretold his resurrection from the dead. The text before us, if there were no other, is a sufficient proof of this, to those who acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, since it is expressly applied to him by the apostles Peter and Paul.

The word in the Hebrew text, rendered in our version *soul*, is used in different senses. According to the connexion in which it stands, it signifies breath, life, soul, or spirit, and sometimes the dead body. The corresponding Greek word, where the apostle quotes this verse, Acts ii. 27. has likewise various significations. And the original words answering to *hell*, signify both the invisible world, or the state of the dead, and sometimes the grave. Notwithstanding this seeming diversity, we are at no loss here for the precise sense. Scripture is the best interpreter of itself. It is evidently the apostle’s design to prove that the Psalmist foresaw, and foretold the resurrection of that body which was taken down

\* Jenyns’ *Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, p. 33, 34.—Edit 3.

dead from the cross, and laid in Joseph's tomb. With this body our Lord arose on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Though MESSIAH was, for our sakes, treated as a malefactor, all who were immediately concerned in his death were constrained (as we have seen) to declare his innocence. But he was worthy of a more solemn and authoritative justification. Accordingly. 'He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead!' Rom. i. 4.

The apostle expounds 'thine Holy One' by the word *flesh*. Acts ii. 26. The human nature, the body formed by the immediate power of God, and born of a virgin, was holy. It was 'A holy thing,' Luke i. 35. Perfect and pure, and therefore naturally not mortal, though subject to death for us. In this nature the Son of God was charged with sins not his own: became willingly responsible for many, Matth. xx. 28. Whatever was necessary on the behalf of sinners, to render their forgiveness consistent with the honour of the law, justice, truth, and government of God, was exacted of him, and he performed, and paid to the utmost. He made a full atonement for sin; and though he had power over his life, he hung hour after hour in agonies upon the cross, till he said, 'It is finished.' Then he resigned his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. He was afterwards buried. But having finished his whole undertaking, destroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven, in favour of all who should believe in him, 'it was not possible that he should be detained in the grave,' Acts ii. 24. He had power likewise to resume the life he had laid down for his sheep; and he arose the third day, to exercise all power and authority in heaven and in earth.

His resurrection, therefore, is the grand principal fact upon which the truth and importance of Christianity rests. For though Christ died, if he had not risen again, 'your faith and our preaching would be in vain;' we should be 'yet in our sins,' 1 Cor. xv. 17. And though it was not necessary that his resurrection should have been so publicly known, at the time, as his crucifixion, the evidence of it is strong and decisive. No one point of ancient history is capable of such clear accumulated proof. The apostles frequently saw him, conversed with him, eat and drank with him, and were assured that it was he, by many infallible proofs. They could not be deceived themselves, nor could they have any temptation to deceive others. They declared his resurrection to the very people who put him to death, and they confirmed it by many indisputable miracles, which they performed

in his name. They persevered in this testimony, in defiance of the malice of the Jews and the scorn of the Heathens. And by this doctrine of a crucified risen Saviour, though unsupported by the patronage of human power, yea, though opposed by it, in every place, they effected that change in the moral world, wherever they went, which the philosophers had not been able to produce, by all their instructions, in a single instance; turning men, whom they found under the strongest prejudices of education and habit, 'from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God,' 1 Thes. i. 9.

But there are proofs of this point which depend not upon arguments or history, which require neither learning, genius, nor study, to comprehend; but are equally adapted to persons of all capacities, and in all circumstances. These are the effects which this doctrine produces on the hearts of those who truly receive it upon the authority of Scripture, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to open the eyes of the mind, to take of the things of Jesus, (what the Scripture reveals of his person, offices, and glory,) and to present them, with infallible light and evidence, to those who humbly yield themselves to his teaching. These are made partakers 'of the power of his resurrection,' Phil. iii. 10. It delivers them from guilt and fear, animates them with confidence towards God, weans them from the love and spirit of this evil world, inspires them with great and glorious hopes, and delivers them from the fear of death. They 'are risen with Christ,' by faith, 'and seek the things which are above, Col. iii. 1. where they know their Lord and Saviour is seated in glory.

I do but touch upon these particulars at present, because the subject will come under our consideration again, from a subsequent passage in the Oratorio. Yet I would not wholly omit leading your reflections to them, though what I briefly offer now, may make what I shall then offer (if my life is prolonged to proceed so far) appear under the disadvantage of a repetition of the same thoughts. Indeed, I know not how to place the proof of this capital doctrine in a light entirely new. The most satisfactory proofs are the most obvious; and it would be folly to substitute weaker in their place for the sake of novelty. But if I should live to resume the subject, some of you who are now present may not live to hear me. So far as concerns the fact, I may hope that the most, or all of you, are believers, and that you are already persuaded in your minds that 'the Lord is risen indeed!' Luke xxiv. 34. I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to professed Christians. But permit me to ask, What influ-

ence this truth has upon your hopes, your tempers, and your conduct? The powers of darkness know that Christ is risen. They believe, they feel, they tremble. I hope none of you will be content with such a faith as may be found in the fallen angels. As surely as he is risen, he will at length return to judge the world. 'Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him!' They who are prepared to meet him, who are waiting for him, and who long for his appearance, have reason to rejoice that he once died, and rose again!

Many are the advantages which true Christians derive from a spiritual and enlightened knowledge of this doctrine. I will mention a few.

1. AS MESSIAH was 'delivered,' that is, delivered up, as a hostage to the demands of justice, 'for our offences; so they know that 'he was raised again for our justification,' Rom. iv. 25. By virtue of that union which subsists between MESSIAH, as the Head of his body, the church, and all his members; that is, all in the successive ages of the world, who believe in him by a faith of divine operation; he is their legal representative, he and they are considered as one. His sufferings, his whole humiliation and obedience unto death, is so imputed to them, that they thereby are exempted from condemnation; and though not from all sufferings, yet from all that is properly penal, or strictly a punishment. What they suffer is only in a way of discipline or chastisement; and to them a token, not of wrath, but of love. On the other hand, as he by his resurrection was vindicated, justified from the reproaches of his enemies, declared to be the Son of God with power, and raised to glory; they have fellowship with him herein. God exalted him to glory, 'and gave him a name above every name,' that 'their faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Pet. i. 21. They are not only pardoned, but accepted in the Beloved. And after this state of discipline is ended, they shall be treated as if they had never sinned. For if their sins are sought for in that day, they shall not be found. If any charge should be brought against them, it shall be overruled by this comprehensive, unanswerable plea—'Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, appears in the presence of God,' acknowledges them as his own, and 'makes intercession for them,' Rom. viii. 33, 34. Among men, a criminal may obtain a pardon, may escape the sentence he has deserved, and yet be left in a destitute and miserable condition. But justification is God's manner of pardoning sinners, according to the sovereignty and riches of his grace in the Son of his love. Those whom he pardons, he also justifies; and

whom he justifies, he also glorifies. And even now in this life, though it doth not yet appear what they shall be, though their privileges are far short of what they hope for, 'and though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them;' 1 Cor. ii. 9. yet even now, are they 'the children of God;' 1 John iii. 2. And in the midst of their trials and infirmities, though conscious of much defect, and many defilements, in their best hours and services; and though they have not forgotten their iniquities and provocations, when they lived without God in the world; yet, according to the measure of their faith, exercised upon their Saviour who was raised for their justification, they can rejoice in the knowledge of their acceptance, and rely upon him for their perseverance; and they dare approach the great, holy, and heart-searching God, as to a Father, and pour out their hearts before him, with greater freedom than they can use to their dearest earthly friends. And, while they feel and confess themselves unworthy of the smallest of his mercies, they are not afraid to ask for the greatest blessings his bounty can bestow, even to be set as a seal upon his heart, and upon his arm, to be filled with all his communicable fulness, and to claim him as their everlasting portion.

2. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a pledge and specimen of that almighty power which is engaged on their behalf, to overcome all the obstacles, difficulties, and enemies they are liable to meet with in their pilgrimage, which threaten to disappoint their hopes, and to prevent them from obtaining their heavenly inheritance. The first communication of a principle of faith and spiritual life to their hearts, whereby they are delivered from the dominion of sin, and from the spirit and love of the world, is attributed to 'the exceeding greatness of that mighty power' which raised the dead body (Eph. i. 19—21,) of their Lord from the grave, and set him at his own right hand, 'far above all principality and might, and every name that is named.' And often the church, collectively, in its militant state, and the individuals which compose it, in their personal concerns, have been brought, to outward appearance, exceeding low. Their enemies have seemed upon the point of triumphing, and saying, down with them, even to the ground. Such was the boast of the Jewish rulers, when they had slain the Shepherd, and dispersed his flock. But it was a short-lived boast. He arose, he ascended, he took possession of his kingdom for himself and for them. He poured out his Holy Spirit upon them, and they went forth preaching his word, which spread, like the light of advancing day,

from Judea to Samaria, and to the distant parts of the earth. The united force of the powers of hell and earth endeavoured to suppress it, but in vain. Many nations and kingdoms laboured to extirpate the very name of Christianity from among men, but they successively perished in the attempt; and the cause against which they raged is still preserved. 'It is founded upon a rock; and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it,' Matt. xvi. 18. Nor can any weapon prosper that is formed against the weakest and meanest of those who sincerely espouse this cause. He to whom they have devoted and intrusted themselves, has promised, 'that none shall pluck them out of his hands,' John x. 28. And while he remains faithful to his word, and able to fulfil it, they shall be safe. Yet they are often pressed above measure, beyond strength, insomuch that they, perhaps, despair even of life. But when they are at the lowest, the Lord is their helper; and they are taught, by the exigences they pass through, to trust, not in themselves, 'but in God who raised the dead,' 2 Cor. i. 9. It is, indeed, the Lord's usual method of training up his people to an habitual dependence upon himself. When he has raised their expectations by his promises, he permits, as it were, a temporary death to overcloud their prospect; and that which he has said he will surely do for them, appears, for a season, to the judgment of sense, impracticable and hopeless. We might illustrate this point at large from the history of Abraham, of Israel in Egypt, of David, and of the rebuilding of the second temple; and I doubt not but it might be illustrated from the history of many in this assembly. If you have been walking with God for any considerable time, you have met with turns and changes which have almost put you to a stand. You have been, and perhaps now are, in such circumstances that you feel you have no resource in yourself, and you are sure that the help of man cannot relieve you; 'but while your help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth,' Psal. cxxiv. 8. and while you are warranted to trust in him, 'who raiseth the dead,' you have no just reason to despond. It was a dark season with the disciples, when their Lord, whom they loved, 'and in whom they trusted, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,' Luke xxiv. 20, 21. was condemned, and put to death. But the appointed third day relieved their fears, and turned their mourning into joy.

3. His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. As certainly as Christ, the first-fruits, is risen, so certainly shall they that are Christ's arise at his coming. And each of his people shall arise, *aliosque et idem*.\* Their bodies, though properly

\* Another and yet the same.

their own, shall be changed, 'and fashioned like unto his glorious body,' Phil. iii. 21. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and the body, which is sown in dishonour and weakness, be raised in power and glory. Flesh and blood, in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The body, in this life, is a clog and a burden to those who place their chief happiness in the service of God, and in communion with him. It is a vile body, defiled by sin, and it defiles their best desires and noblest efforts. Even the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which they live, though perfectly pure in itself, is debased, when communicated to them, and exercised under the disadvantages of a sinful nature, as the best wine will receive a taint, if poured into a foul vessel. The body, in another view, is a prison, in which the soul, confined and pent up, is limited in its operations, and impeded in its perceptions of divine things. Though we are probably surrounded by the glorious realities of the spiritual world, only short and transient glances of them are discoverable by us; we see but by reflection, and darkly, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.; we know but in part, and should know nothing of them, but for the good report of the word of God. Further, the body, as it is the seat of innumerable infirmities, and the medium which connects us with the calamities incident to this mortal state, is often a great hindrance to our most desirable enjoyments. Pain and sickness call off the attention, and indispose our faculties, when we wish to be most engaged in prayer; detain us from the ordinances, or prevent the pleasure we hope for in waiting upon the Lord in them. But our new, spiritual, and glorified bodies, will be free from all defilement or defect. They will be completely qualified to answer the best wishes and most enlarged activity of the soul. Then, but not till then, we hope to be all eye, all ear, always upon the wing in his service, and perfectly conformed to his image, in light, holiness, and love; for then we 'shall see him as he is,' without any interposing veil or cloud, John iii. 2.

## SERMON XXVI.

### THE ASCENSION OF MESSIAH TO GLORY:

PSALM xxiv. 7—10.

*Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.*

THE institutions of the Levitical law were a shadow or sketch of good things to come. They exhibited a faint and general outline of the mediation and glory of MESSIAH. They may be compared to the delicate engravings on a seal, the beauty and proportions of which cannot be plainly discerned without the assistance of a glass. The Gospel answers to such a glass. Beheld through this medium, the miniature delineations of the law, which to the eye of unassisted, unhumbled reason, appear confused and insignificant, display a precision of arrangement in the parts, and an importance of design in the whole, worthy the wisdom of their great Author.

From the similarity of the subject of this Psalm and the sixty-eighth, it is at least probable that they were both composed upon the same occasion, the removal of the ark of the Lord, from its last stationary residence, to its fixed abode in Zion; when the king, the priests, the singers, and the harpers, all assisted in the procession, attended by a great concourse of the people. The language of the latter part of the Psalm is evidently alternate. And we may conceive, that when the ark approached the tabernacle, the priests and Levites who accompanied it, demanded admittance for it in these words, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,' &c. and were answered by those who were waiting within to receive it, 'Who is the King of glory?' To which question the proper reply is made, 'The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory.'

This, if taken according to the letter of the history, was a grand and solemn transaction. But it was, at the same time, a type of an event unspeakably more glorious. They who know that the Scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Christ, that it is

he of whom Moses in the Law, David in the Psalms, and all the succeeding prophets did write, will, I think, agree in considering this passage as referring to his ascension, in the nature in which he suffered, into the holy place in the heavens, as the representative and High Priest of his people; when, after having by his own self purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then having spoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, though not in the view of mortal eyes. He lifted up his hands, and blessed his apostles, and while in this attitude he was parted from them, Luke xxiv. 51. He ascended gently and gradually, and they, admiring and adoring, beheld him with a fixed attention, till a cloud concealed him from their sight,' Acts i. 9. The pomp and triumph of his ascension were displayed in the invisible world. But this description, accommodated to our apprehensions, is given to assist the faith of his people, that their hearts may be comforted, their meditations enlarged, and that, in the exercise of grateful love, they may follow him in their thoughts, ascend with him into heavenly places, and rejoice in his glory.

We conceive of him, therefore, from this sublime passage, as ascending to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, accompanied with a train of worshipping angels, who demand admittance for MESSIAH, the Saviour and friend of sinners, as the King of glory. The question is asked, who is he that claims this honour? An answer is given, asserting his character, his victories, and the justice of his claims—'The Lord of hosts, the Lord, strong in battle, he is the King of glory.'

The principal points which offer to our consideration are,

I. His title, 'The Lord of hosts.'

II. His victories, implied in the expression, 'The Lord, strong and mighty in battle.'

III. His mediatorial title, 'The King of glory.'

IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.

I. MESSIAH, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, is 'the Lord of hosts.' He is so, if the Scripture be true: I attempt no other proof. This is a point not referred to the discussion of our fallen reason, but proposed by the authority of God in his word, as the foundation of our faith and hope. He is the husband of the church, and the husband of the church is the Lord of Hosts, Isa. liv. 5. It was the Lord of hosts who Isaiah saw seated upon a throne, his train filling the temple, Isa. vi. 1. The vision filled him with astonishment, and he cried out, 'Who is me, I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts.' But the apostle John assures us, that when Isaiah said these

things, he saw his glory and spake of him, John xii. 41. This is the title of God in the Old Testament ; or, as some choose to speak, of the Supreme Being. And it is ascribed to MESSIAH in many places. Therefore, if he were not the Lord of hosts, the Scripture would be chargeable with authorizing, yea, enjoining idolatry. But he is ' the true God and eternal life,' 1 John, v. 20. : and they who give him the honour due to his name, have every thing to hope, and nothing to fear.

II. He is ' the Lord, strong and mighty in battle.' It was in his human nature he engaged in battle with his enemies and ours. But the battle was the Lord's.' Therefore, though he ' trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him,' (Isa. lxiii. 3.) his own arm brought him salvation. He is conqueror of sin, Satan, and death. We were under the power of these ; therefore, for our sakes, he engaged in conflict with their united force. He fought, he bled, he died ; but in dying he conquered. The strength of sin is the law ; this strength he subdued, by obeying the precepts of the law, and sustaining the penalty due to our transgressions. He destroyed death, and disarmed it of its sting. He destroyed him that hath the power of death, Satan. He shook, he overturned, the foundations of his kingdom, broke open his prison-doors, released his prisoners, delivered the prey out of the hand of the mighty, ' and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,' (Col. ii. 15.) that is, his cross. The apostle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of state, attended by his officers and soldiers ; the principal prisoners followed in chains, and all the treasures and trophies gained from the vanquished enemy were displayed to adorn the procession. Thus MESSIAH subdued the strength and policy of the powers of darkness, in the hour of his lowest humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the cross ; and triumphed over them, gloriously leading captivity captive, when he ascended on high, Psalm lxxviii. 18. Satan, though still an enemy to his church and cause, is despoiled of his dominion ; his power is only permissive, and in his fiercest assaults he is limited by bounds which he cannot pass, by a chain which he cannot break. And all his attempts are controlled and overruled, to the furtherance of the cause which he would suppress, and to the good of the persons whom he would worry and destroy. They are made acquainted with his devices, furnished with armour sufficient to repel him ; and they fight under encouragement of a sure promise, that the God of peace will

shortly and finally bruise Satan under their feet. As MESSIAH, their King, has conquered for them, so they, in due time, shall, be made more than conquerors, by faith in his blood, and in the word of his testimony.

III. The title of 'King of glory,' I understand as peculiarly applicable to him in the character of Mediator. The glory of his divine nature is essential to him. But, in consequence of his obedience unto death, he obtained, in the human nature, 'a name that is above every name,' Phil. ii. 9. He suffered as a man, yea, as a malefactor; there was no appearance of glory in that form of a servant which he assumed for our sakes. Though without sin, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to poverty, disgrace, and death; but the same man who was crucified, dead, and buried, received glory and authority at his resurrection, and was highly exalted to the administration of all dominion and government. Perhaps the word *glory* is not easily defined. We conceive it as expressing brightness and splendour. The glory of Solomon was the combined effect of his wisdom, power, and riches; which distinguished him in his character, conduct, and appearance, from other men. The glory of the sun is his effulgence and influence. The word *glory*, when applied to the blessed God, seems to denote that manifestation of himself by which his intelligent creatures are capable of knowing him; for in himself he is infinite, inaccessible, and incomprehensible, and dwelleth in that light which no man, which no creature, can approach unto,' 1 Tim. vi. 16. Of this manifestation there are various degrees. His glory shines in the creation. Not only do the heavens declare it by their immensity, Psal. xix. 1. and furnish us with an idea of his unspeakable greatness, who has sent forth ten thousand worlds, to tell us that he resides above them all; but the smallest of his works, the grass and flowers of the field, and the insects which creep upon the ground, Psal. civ. 24, 25. bear an impression of his wisdom and goodness, an inimitable criterion of his wonder-working hand, which so far displays his glory. To an attentive and discerning mind, his glory shines in his providence; in his preserving the world which he has made; in supplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, besides his wisdom, power, and general goodness, we discover some traces of his character as the righteous Judge of the earth. But, to our limited capacities and views, this glory is obscured by many difficulties. Though 'righteousness and judgment are the habitations of his throne, yet clouds and darkness are round about him,' Psal. xcvi. 2. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured

with a still brighter display of his glory, in the perfections of holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to discover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3. 'No one hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,' John i. 18. intimately acquainted with his counsels, 'he hath declared him.' This was the great design of his advent, to make God known to man: for as it is life eternal to know the only true God, so he is only to be known in and by Jesus Christ, whom he sent, John xvii. 3. and who is the way and the door, and there is no entrance to the knowledge of God but by him. In the person and work of MESSIAH, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the brightness and harmony of all his attributes, is transcendently revealed. In this sense, he is the Lord, the King of glory. When we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of him according to the testimony given of him in the Scripture, we see the glory of God. Other discoveries of it are but scattered rays and emanations of light; but, in Jesus, the glory of God resides in its source and fulness, as light in the sun. He is therefore the King of glory.

IV. As the acknowledged King of glory, in the nature of man, he ascended; the everlasting gates unfolded wide, and he entered into the holy place, not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for his people.

1. As their representative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom; but he claimed and took possession in their name, Heb. vi. 20. Hence he is styled their forerunner, because, by virtue of their relation to him, and their interest in him, they shall surely follow him. This is the encouragement of believers. He is the head of his body the church: and though the church, while in this world, is in a suffering, perilous state; yet, as the body of a man is not in danger of drowning while his head is out of the water, so our forerunner and head being in heaven on their behalf, he will assuredly draw all his living members to himself. He has said, 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' John xiv. 19. And he has stipulated for them, that they shall, each in his appointed time be with him where he is to behold his glory, John xvii. 24.

2. As their High Priest and intercessor. He presents their persons and their prayers acceptable to God. He bears the iniquity of their holy things. With this encouragement, weak and unworthy as they are in themselves, and though their best ser-

vices are polluted, they find a liberty of access ; and, because he ever liveth, thus to make intercession for all who come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. they know that he is able to save them to the uttermost.

3. Though the heavens must receive and contain the holy human nature till the restitution of all things, he is not unmindful of them in their present circumstances. He is seated upon the throne of universal dominion, and he exercises his authority and rule with an especial view to their welfare. While he pleads for them on high, by the power of his Spirit, he is present with them below. He comforts their hearts, enlivens their assemblies, and manages their concerns. He is their Shepherd, who gives them food, controuls their enemies, revives their fainting spirits, and restores their wanderings, Psalm xxiii. His ear is open to their prayers, his eye is upon them in every situation, and his arm stretched forth for their relief. Therefore, though persecuted, they are not forsaken ; though cast down, they are not destroyed. And he has promised that he will not leave them until he has done all that for them which his word has taught them to hope for ; until he has made them victorious over all their enemies, and put the conqueror's song into their mouths, and a crown of life upon their heads.

This High and Holy One, this King of glory, who is seated on the throne of heaven, dwelleth also in the humble and lowly spirit. He thus solemnly claims the throne of the heart of each of his people, which in a state of nature is usurped by self and Satan ; and he is thus willingly acknowledged and admitted in the day of his power. ' Behold ! He stands at the door, and knocks,' Rev. iii. 20. and, because he is as yet unknown, he is for a while rejected. The bolts and bars of prejudice and unbelief withstand his entrance. But when he comes on a purpose of grace, he will take no denial. For a season he waits to be gracious. But he has an appointed hour, when he reveals his great name, and makes the soul sensible who he is ! Then the gates of brass and bars of iron are broken before him. His greatness and his goodness, what he is in himself, and what he has done and suffered for sinners, are motives which cannot be resisted when they are truly understood. Satan, who, as the strong one armed, long laboured to hinder him from his rightful possession, is himself dispossessed. The soul laments its former obstinacy, throws down its arms, throws wide open its doors, and bids the King of glory welcome. Then old things pass away and all things become new. Such was the change the poor man experienced, out of whom Jesus cast a legion of evil spirits. At first, if he could,

he would have prevented his kind purpose ; he was afraid of his deliverer, and said, ‘ I beseech thee, torment me not,’ Mark v. 7. How wretched was his state then, miserable in himself, and a terror to others ! But what a wonderful and happy alteration, when he sat quietly at his Saviour’s feet, clothed, and in his right mind !

I close the subject with the apostle’s inference, ‘ Seeing then that we have so great a high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession,’ Heb. iv. 14. Let not those who know him be ashamed of their attachment to him. You will not repent in a dying hour, that you once thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him, or devoted yourself with too much earnestness to his service. Nor yield to unbelief and fear. Though your enemies are many and mighty, and your trials great, greater is he that is with you. If the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty in battle, be for you, who can be against you, so as effectually to harm you ? Continue instant in prayer ; persevere in well-doing. Our ascended Lord will one day return ; and then they who have loved, and served, and trusted him here, ‘ shall appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4.

Others, if they can, must prepare to meet him. But, alas ! how shall they stand before him ? Or, whither shall they flee from him whose presence filleth the heavens and the earth ? Jer. xxiii. 24. Have they an arm like God ? or can they thunder with a voice like his ? As yet he is proclaimed by the Gospel, a Saviour, seated upon a throne of grace, stretching forth the golden sceptre of his love, and inviting sinners to be reconciled. Now is the accepted time. Hereafter he will be seen upon a throne of judgment, to take vengeance of his enemies.

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## SERMON XXVII.

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MESSIAH THE SON OF GOD.

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HEBREWS i. 5.

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

THOUGH every part of a revelation from God must of course be equally true, there may be a considerable difference even

among truths proposed by the same authority, with respect to their immediate importance. There are fundamental truths, the knowledge of which is essentially necessary to our peace and holiness: and there are others of a secondary nature, which, though very useful in their proper connexion, and though the right apprehension of them is greatly conducive to the comfort and establishment of a believer are not so necessary, but that he may be a true believer before he clearly understands them. Thus our Lord pronounced Peter 'blessed,' Matt. xvi. 17. for his acknowledgment of a truth which had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but from above, though he was at that time very deficient in doctrinal knowledge. It is not easy to draw the line here, and precisely to distinguish between fundamental and secondary truths; yet some attention to this distinction is expedient; and the want of such attention has greatly contributed to foment and embitter controversies in the church of Christ; while fallible men, from a mistaken zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, have laboured to enforce all their religious sentiments with an equal and indiscriminate vehemence. It is evident that the truths essential to the very being of a Christian must be known and experienced by all, of every nation, people, and language, who are taught of God; Isa. liv. 13. for they, and they only, are Christians indeed who are thus taught. And therefore it seems to follow, that no doctrine, however true in itself, which humble and spiritual persons, who study the Scripture with prayer and really depend upon divine teaching, are not agreed in, can be strictly fundamental. And perhaps the chief part of the apparent diversity of their sentiments does not so often respect the truth itself, as the different acceptation they put upon the words and phrases by which they endeavour to express their meaning to each other.

However, if there be any doctrine fundamental and necessary to be rightly understood, what the Scripture teaches concerning the person of MESSIAH the Redeemer, must be eminently so. Mistakes upon this point must necessarily be dangerous. It cannot be a question of mere speculation, whether the Saviour be God or creature; he must be either the one or the other; and the whole frame of our religion is unavoidably dependent upon the judgment we form of him. If he be a man only, or if he be an angel, though of the highest order, and possessed of excellencies peculiar to himself; still, upon the supposition that he is but a creature, he must be infinitely inferior to his Maker, in comparison of whose immensity the difference between an angel and a worm is annihilated. Then all they who pay divine worship to

Jesus, who love him above all, trust him with all their concerns for time and eternity, and address him in the language of Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' John xx. 28. are involved in the gross and heinous crime of idolatry, by ascribing to him that glory which the great God has declared 'he will not give to another,' Isa. xlii. 8. On the contrary, if he be God over all, blessed for ever, Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, then they who refuse him the honour due unto his name, 'worship they know not what,' John iv. 22. For there is but one God; and according to this plan, they who know him not in Christ, know him not at all, but are 'without God in the world,' Ephes. ii. 12. The judgment we form of the Saviour demonstrates, likewise, how far we know ourselves. For it may be fairly presumed, that they who think a creature capable of making atonement for their sins, or of sustaining the office of shepherd and bishop of their souls, have too slight thoughts both of the evil of sin, and of the weakness and wickedness of the human heart.

We ascribe it, therefore, to the wisdom and goodness of God, that a doctrine so important, the very pillar and ground of truth, is not asserted once, or in a few places of Scripture only. It does not depend upon texts which require a nice skill in criticism, or a collation of ancient manuscripts, to settle their sense; but, like the blood in the animal economy, it pervades and enlivens the whole system of revelation. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets, all testify of Him, who was styled the Son of God in so peculiar a sense, that the apostle, in this passage, considers it as a sufficient proof that he is by nature superior to all creatures. The form of the question implies the strongest assertion of this superiority; as if he had said, Conceive of the highest and most exalted of the angels, it would be absurd to suppose that God would say to him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.'

The verse contains three terms which require explanation. 'My Son,' 'Begotten,' 'This day.' But who is sufficient for these things? If I attempt to explain them, I wish to speak with caution and modesty becoming the sense I ought to have of my own weakness, and to keep upon safe ground; lest, instead of elucidating so sublime a subject, I should darken counsel by words without knowledge. And I know of no safe ground to go upon in these inquiries but the sure testimony of Scripture. It would be to the last degree improper to indulge flights of imagination, or a spirit of curiosity or conjecture upon this occasion. These are the deep things of God, in which, if we have not the guidance of his word and Spirit, we shall certainly bewilder our-

selves. Nor would I speak in a positive dogmatizing strain; at the same time I trust the Scripture will afford light sufficient to preserve us from a cold and comfortless uncertainty.

The gracious design of God in affording us his holy Scripture, is to 'make us wise unto salvation,' 2 Tim. iii. 15. His manner of teaching is therefore accommodated to our circumstances. He instructs us in heavenly things by earthly. And to engage our confidence, to excite our gratitude, to animate us to our duty by the most affecting motives; and that the reverence we owe to his great and glorious Majesty, as our Creator and Legislator, may be combined with love and cheerful dependence; he is pleased to reveal himself by those names which express the nearest relation and endearment amongst ourselves. Thus he condescends to style himself the Father, the Husband, and the Friend of his people. But, though in this way we are assisted in forming our conceptions of his love, compassion, and faithfulness, it is obvious that these names, when applied to him, must be understood in a sense agreeable to the perfections of his nature, and in many respects different from the meaning they bear amongst men. And thus when we are informed that God has a Son, an only Son, an only begotten Son, it is our part to receive his testimony, to admire and adore; and for an explanation adapted to our profit and comfort, we are to consult, not our own preconceived ideas, but the further declarations of his word, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, attending with the simplicity of children to his instructions, and avoiding, as much as possible, those vain reasonings, upon points above our comprehension, which, though flattering to the pride of our hearts, are sure to indispose us for the reception of divine truth. A distinction in the Divine Nature inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in terms, must be admitted upon the testimony and authority of him who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of his adorable essence. 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one,' 1 John v. 7. To each of these the three perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in various parts of Scripture. Each of them, therefore, is God; and yet we are sure, both from Scripture and reason, there is, there can be, but one God. Thus far we can go safely; and that we can go no further, that our thoughts are lost and overwhelmed if we attempt to represent to ourselves how or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be easily accounted for, if any just reason can be given why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us first, if we can, account for the

nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the loadstone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust. Far from attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to my hearers, I rather wish to leave an impression upon your minds, that it is, to us, (and perhaps to the highest created intelligences,) incomprehensible. But if it be contained in the Scripture, (which I must leave to your own consciences to determine in the sight of God,) it is thereby sufficiently proved; and humble faith requires no other proof.

Allow me to confirm my own sentiments, by an observation of a celebrated French writer\* to the following purport:—‘The whole difference, with respect to this subject, between the common people and the learned doctors, is, that while they are both equally ignorant, the ignorance of the people is modest and ingenuous, and they do not blush for being unable to see what God has thought fit to conceal. Whereas the ignorance of their teachers is proud and affected; they have recourse to scholastic distinctions, and abstract reasonings, that they may not be thought upon a level with the vulgar.’

The form of baptism prescribed by our Lord for the use of his church, is thus expressed, ‘Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Matth. xxviii. 19. It is evident, by comparing this sentence with that which I before recited from the epistle of John, that the WORD and the SON are synonymous terms, expressive of the same character. They are both the titles of MESSIAH. Of him John spoke, when he said, ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;’ and of him God the Father said, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ Had God spoken thus to an angel, it would have been in effect saying, Thou art the Word, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made. But to which of all the angels would the great God use language like this?

Our Lord, in his conference with Nicodemus, was pleased to say, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,’ &c. John iii. 16. It was undoubtedly his design, by this expression, to give to Nicodemus, and to us the highest idea possible of the love of God to sinners. He so loved the world beyond description or comparison, that he gave his only begotten Son. Surely, then, the gift spoken of must not be limited to signify the human nature only. This was not all that he gave. The human

\* Abbadie.

nature was the medium of the acts and sufferings, of MESSIAH ; but he who assumed it was the Word, who was before all, and by whom all things were made. It is true, the human nature was given, supernaturally formed by divine power, and born of the virgin. But he who was in the beginning God with God, was given to appear, obey, and suffer in the nature of man, for us and for our salvation. And to him are ascribed the perfections and attributes of Deity ; of which the highest angels are no more capable, than the worms which creep on the earth.

I cannot, therefore, suppose that the title of Son of God is merely a title of office, or belonging only to the nature which he assumed ; but that MESSIAH is the Son of God, as he is God and man in one person. If the forming a perfect and spotless man, like Adam when he was created, could have effected our salvation, it would have been a great and undeserved mercy to have vouchsafed the gift ; but I think it would not have required such very strong language as the Scripture uses in describing the gift of the Son of God. The God-man, the whole person of Christ, was sent, came forth, from the Father. The manhood was the offering ; but the Word of God, possessed of the perfections of Deity, was the altar necessary to sanctify the gift and to give a value and efficacy to the atonement.

The term *begotten*, expresses with us the ground of relation between father and son, and upon which an only son is the heir of a father. I feel and confess myself at a loss here. I might take up your time, and perhaps conceal my own ignorance, by borrowing from the writings of wiser and better men than myself, a detail of what have been generally reputed the more prevailing orthodox sentiments on this subject. But I dare not go beyond my own ideas. I shall not, therefore attempt to explain the phrase, *eternal generation*, because I must acknowledge that I do not clearly understand it myself. Long before time began, the purpose of constituting the Mediator between God and sinners was established in the divine counsels. With reference to this, he himself speaks, in the character of the Wisdom of God. ‘The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works, of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him ; rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were among the sons of men,’ Prov. viii. 22, 31. If the word of God had not engaged according to an everlasting and sure covenant, to assume our nature, and to accomplish our salvation, before the earth was formed, he would not

have appeared afterwards ; for we cannot with reason conceive of any new determinations arising in the mind of the infinite God ; to whom what we call the past and the future are equally present. In this sense (if the expression be proper to convey such a sense) I can conceive that it was the begotten Son of God from eternity ; that is, set up and appointed for eternity for the office, nature, and work by which, in the fulness of time, he was manifested to men. But if the terms, *begotten*, or *eternal generation*, be used to denote the manner of his eternal existence in Deity, I must be silent. I believe him to be the eternal Son ; I believe him to be the eternal God ; and I wish not to exercise my thoughts and inquiries more than is needful, in things that are too high for me.

The Scripture, in different places, evidently applies the purport of this phrase, ‘ I have begotten thee,’ to transactions which took place in time, *This Day*, and particularly to two principal events.

1. His incarnation. Thus the angel to Mary, ‘ The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ;’ therefore, also, ‘ the holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God,’ Luke i. 35. So the apostle, ‘ In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,’ Gal. iv. 4. And in the passage we are next to consider ; ‘ When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.’

2. His resurrection. To this purpose our text is quoted from the second Psalm. ‘ The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again ;’ Acts xiii. 32, 33. as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘ Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ And in another place he teaches us, that he who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,’ Rom. i. 4.

After all, I would remind you, that the best knowledge of the doctrine of the person of Christ, that which affords light and comfort to the soul, is to be obtained, not so much by inquiry and study on our part, as by a gracious manifestation on his part. Prayer, attention to the great Teacher, a humble perusal of the Scripture, and a course of simple obedience to his known will, are the methods which he has prescribed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of himself. Thus even babes are made wise ; while they who are wise and prudent in their own sight, the more they endeavour to investigate and ascertain the sense of

Scripture, are frequently involved more and more in perplexity. He has given a promise and direction, for the encouragement of those who sincerely seek him: 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him,' John xiv. 21.

This is he with whom we have to do. In and by this Son of his love, we have access by faith unto God. Unworthy and helpless in ourselves, from hence we derive our plea; here we find a refuge; and on this we rest, and build our hope, 'that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;' who is so much 'better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they,' Heb. i. 4.

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## SERMON XXVIII.

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MESSIAH WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS.

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HEBREWS, i. 6.

*Let all the angels of God worship him.*

MANY of the Lord's true servants have been in a situation so nearly similar to that of Elijah, 1 Kings, xix. 10. that, like him, they have been tempted to think they were left to serve him alone. But God had then a faithful people, and he has so in every age. The preaching of the Gospel may be compared to a standard erected, to which they repair, and thereby become known to each other, and more exposed to the notice and observation of the world. But we hope there are always many, who are enlightened by his word and Holy Spirit, and training up in the life of faith and holiness, known and dear to God, though they have little advantage from public ordinances, and perhaps no opportunity of conversing with those who are like-minded with themselves. But even though the number of those who visibly profess the Gospel of the grace of God were much smaller than it is, we need not be disheartened. If our sight could pierce into the invisible world, we should be satisfied that there are more with us than against us, 2 Kings, vi. 16. And such a power is attributed to faith. It is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1.

because it receives the testimony of Scripture, and rests upon it, as a certainty, and a demonstration; requiring no other proof, either of doctrines or facts, than that they are contained in the sure word of God. True Christians, therefore, are comforted by the assurance they have that their Saviour, the Lord of their hearts, is not so neglected and despised, nor his character so misunderstood and misrepresented in yonder land of light, as in this dark and degenerate world. Though too many here, like Festus, treat it as a matter of great indifference whether Jesus be dead or alive, Acts xxv. 19. and ask them with a taunt, What is your beloved more than another beloved? they are not ashamed, for they know whom they have believed; and if men will not join with them in admiring and praising him, they are sure that they have the concurrence of far superior beings. By faith they behold him seated upon a throne of glory, adored by all holy and happy intelligent creatures, whether angels, principalities, powers, or dominions. And when he was upon earth, in a state of humiliation, though despised and rejected of men, he was seen and acknowledged by angels. Their warrant and ours is the same. He is proposed to us as the object of our supreme love and dependence; and as we are enjoined to kiss the Son and to pay him homage, so when God brought him into the world, he said, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.'

Though the bringing MESSIAH, the first or only begotten, into the world, may, as I have observed already, be applied to his incarnation, or to his resurrection, I apprehend it rather designs the whole of his exhibition in the flesh. At his ascension, having finished the work appointed for him to do, he was solemnly invested with authority and glory, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But in his lowest, no less than in his exalted state, the dignity of his divine person is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He was always the proper object of worship. It was agreeable to right, and to the nature of things, and a command worthy of God, that all the angels of God should worship him.

The holy angels that excel in strength, Psalm ciii. 20. always do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. We might be certain, therefore, that this highest and most comprehensive command a creature is capable of receiving from his Creator, is fulfilled by them, even if he had no express information of the fact. But we have repeated assurances to this purpose. Thus Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of him, 'saw the seraphim standing; each one had six wings; with twain

he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,' Isa. vi. 2, 3. I see not how the force of the argument is arising from this passage, to prove that MESSIAH is the proper object of the most solemn adoration which creatures can offer to the Most High, can be evaded; unless any were hardy enough to assert, either that the prophet was himself imposed upon, or has imposed upon us by a false vision; or else, that the apostle John (John xii. 41.) was mistaken when he applied this representation to Jesus Christ. But the apostle likewise had a vision to the same effect; in which, while his people, redeemed from the earth by his blood, cast their crowns at his feet, the angels were also represented as joining in the chorus of their praises, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,' Rev. v. 12. In brief, he is the Lord of angels. The heavenly hosts waited upon him, and sung his praises at his birth, Luke ii. 13, 14. Angels ministered unto him in the wilderness. And they are so entirely his servants, that at his command they are sent forth to minister unto, and to attend upon, his believing people; 'Are they not all ministering?' [λειτουργικα, worshipping] 'spirits,' Heb. i. 14. adoring the divine Majesty, yet 'sent forth to minister [εις διακονιαν, to the service] 'to the heirs of salvation?' He is likewise the head of angels, though they are not in the same near relation to him as the sinners whom he has redeemed with his blood; for he took on him their nature. There was no redemption appointed for the angels who kept not their first habitation. But the confirmation of those who continue in holiness and happiness, is in and through him. 'For all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, are gathered together in one' [ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι, reduced under one head into one body] 'in him,' Ephes. i. 10. And they are therefore styled, in contradistinction from the others, The elect angels,' 1 Tim. v. 21. He is their life, and strength, and joy, as he is ours, though they cannot sing the whole song of his people. It is appropriate to the saved from among men to say, This God shines glorious in our nature; he loved us, and gave himself for us.

Here, then, as I have intimated, is a pattern and encouragement for us. The angels, the whole host of heaven, worship him. He is Lord of all. We in this distant world have heard the report of his glory, have felt our need of such a Saviour, and are, in some degree, witnesses and proofs of his ability and wil-

lingness to save. He lived, he died, he arose, he reigns for us. Therefore, humbly depending upon his promised grace, without which we can do nothing, we are resolved, that whatever others do, we must, we will, worship him with the utmost power of our souls. It is our determination and our choice, not only to praise and honour him with our lips, but to devote ourselves to his service, to yield ourselves to his disposal, to intrust our all to his care, and to place our whole happiness in his favour. I hope, in speaking thus, I speak the language of many of your hearts.

Some reflections easily offer from this subject, with which I shall close it.

1. They who love him may rejoice in the thoughts of his glory. They have deeply sympathized with him, when reading the history of his humiliation and passion. It has not been a light concern to them, that he endured agonies, that he was rejected, reviled, scourged, and slain. He who suffered these things was their best friend, their beloved Lord, and he suffered for their sakes. In the glass of his word, and by the light of his Holy Spirit, he has been set forth as crucified before their eyes; and they have been crucified with him, and have had fellowship with him in his death. From hence they derive their indignation against sin, and their indifference to the world, which treated him thus. But now he is no more a man of sorrows: his head, which was once crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory; his face, which was defiled with spittle, shines like the sun; his hands, which were manacled, wield the sceptre of universal government; and, instead of being surrounded by insulting men, he is now encircled by adoring angels. Therefore they rejoice with joy unspeakable, expecting soon to see him as he is, and to be with him for ever, according to the gracious promises he has made them, and the tenour of his prevailing intercession for them.

2. What an honour does his exaltation and glory reflect upon his faithful followers? The world that rejected him pays little regard to them; they are slighted, or scorned, or pitied; and in proportion as they manifested his spirit, experience a degree of the treatment which he met with; they are accounted visionaries or hypocrites; many of them are great sufferers; and few of them, comparatively, are distinguished among men by abilities, influence, or wealth; they are pilgrims and strangers upon earth; yet this God is their God. He who is worshipped by angels is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11. They are nearly related to him who sitteth upon the throne; and he is pleased to account them his portion and his jewels. It doth not yet appear

what they shall be; but the day is coming when their mourning shall be ended, their characters vindicated, and they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Lord. They shall stand before him with confidence, and not be ashamed when he appears. Then shall the difference between the righteous and the wicked be clearly discerned. In that day the righteous shall say, 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!' Isa. xxv. 9. while the others, however once admired or feared by mortals, the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, no less than those of inferior rank, shall tremble, shall wish in vain to conceal themselves, and shall say to the 'mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, for the great day of his wrath is come,' Rev. vi. 15, 16. In that hour, the striking description in the book of Wisdom (which, though apocryphal, is in this passage quite consonant with the declarations of authentic Scripture) will assuredly be realized: 'Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for; and they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints,' Wisd. v. 1—5.

3. We may well admire the condescension of this great King, who humbleth himself even to notice the worship of heaven, that he should look upon the worship of sinful men with acceptance, and permit such worms as we are to take his holy name upon our polluted lips. If we know ourselves, we must be conscious of such defects and defilement attending our best services, as are sufficient to affect us with shame and humiliation. What wanderings of imagination, what risings of evil thoughts, what unavoidable, though unallowed workings of self complacency, mingle with our prayers and praises and disturb us in our secret retirements, in the public assembly, and even at the table of the Lord! I hope we know enough of this to be sensible that we need forgiveness, not only for our positive transgressions of his will, but for our sincerest, warmest, and most enlarged attempts to render him the glory due to his name! Yet we are incompetent and

partial judges of ourselves ; we know but little of the evil of our own hearts, and have but a slight sense of the malignity of that evil which is within our observation. But the Lord searches the heart and the reins ; to him all things are ‘ naked,’ without covering, ‘ open,’ Heb. iv. 13. without concealment. He understandeth our thoughts afar off, and beholdeth us exactly as we are. Our dislike of sin is proportionable to our attainments in holiness, which are exceedingly short of the standard. But he is infinitely holy and therefore evil is unspeakably hateful to him. How vile and abominable, therefore, must our sins appear in his view ! Indeed, if he was strict to mark what is amiss, we could not stand a moment before him ; nor would it be agreeable to his majesty and purity to accept any services or prayers at our hands, if we presumed to offer them in our own name. But now there is an atonement provided, and a way of access to a throne of grace, sprinkled with the blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Now that we have an Advocate, Intercessor, and High Priest, to bear the iniquity of our holy things, we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the great and holy God vouchsafes to admit such sinners into communion with himself. He invites us to draw near with boldness ; and, because of ourselves we know not how to pray as we ought, Rom. viii. 26. he favours us with the influence of his Holy Spirit. It is a great instance of the power of faith, that, remembering what we have been, and feeling what we are, and having some right apprehension of him with whom we have to do, we are enabled to approach him with confidence, and to open our hearts to him with greater liberty than we can use to our dearest earthly friends. His people know, by many infallible proofs, that his presence is with them in their secret retirements, and in their public assemblies, according to his promise. He hears and answers their prayers, he revives their spirits, he renews their strength ; he gives them reason to say, that a day in his courts is better than a thousand of the world’s days. Such are their expectations, and such, in the exercise of faith, is their experience. They worship him whom the angels worship ; and they know that, unworthy and defective as they are, their worship is no less acceptable to him than that of the angels in glory, by virtue of their relation to him, who is Lord both of angels and men.

4. Hence we may infer the necessity of that change of heart which the Scripture expresses by a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and other representations, which denote it can only be effected by divine power. Till we are subjects of this operation,

we are incapable of enjoying, or even of seeing, the kingdom of God, John iii. 3. Though to outward appearance, the congregation before me seem all to be serious and attentive, as if engaged in the same design, and animated with the same desire and hope; he to whom our hearts are known, doubtless observes a great difference. Some of you, though custom or a regard to your connexions bring you hither, yet must ye be sensible that this is not your chosen ground, and that these are not the subjects which give you pleasure. We preach Christ Jesus and him crucified—Christ Jesus the Lord. The Lord sees, though I cannot, the indisposition of your hearts towards him. You are soon weary and uneasy; and you wish to throw the blame of your uneasiness upon the preacher. You regard his method, his manner, his expressions, with no friendly intention, in hopes of noticing something that may seem to justify your dislike; and a sermon not very long in itself, is to you very tedious. We wish well to your souls, we study to find out acceptable words; for though we dare not trifle with or flatter you, we are unwilling to give you just offence. But if you will be faithful to yourselves, you may perceive that it is not so much the length or the manner, as the subject of our sermons, that disgusts you. You would, perhaps, hear with more attention and patience, did we speak less of him whom the angels worship. There are assemblies more suited to your taste, and there are public speakers to whom you can probably afford a willing ear, for a much longer time than we detain you; because there you are at home. You are of the world, and you love the world. The amusements, the business, the converse, and the customs of the world, suit your inclination. But here you are not, if I may so speak, in your proper element; and yet it may be, there are persons in the same seat with you, who think themselves happy to hear what you hear with indifference or disgust. If you knew your state as a sinner, your need of a Saviour, and the excellency and glory of the Saviour whom we preach to you, you likewise would be pleased; and a preacher of very moderate powers would fix your attention, and gain your esteem, if he preached this Gospel. But what ideas do you form of a future state? Surely, you cannot suppose, that in the eternal world you will meet any of the poor expedients you have recourse to now, for filling up your time, which otherwise would hang heavy upon your hands. To attempt a detail of the round of vanities which constitute a worldly life, would be unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. Let it suffice, that death will remove you from them all. If they are now necessary to what you ac-

count your happiness, must you not, of course, be miserable without them? If you believe you shall exist hereafter, do you not desire heaven? But such a heaven as the word of God describes could not afford you happiness, unless your mind be previously changed and disposed to relish it. Neither the employment nor the company of heaven would be pleasing to you. It is a state, where all the inhabitants unite in admiring and adoring him who died upon the cross. If this subject is displeasing to you here, it would be much more so there. Heaven itself would be a hell to an unhumbled, an unholy soul. Consider this seriously, while there is time to seek his face; and tremble at the thought of being cut off by death in your present state, insensible as you are of who he is, and what he has done for sinners. May he enlighten your understanding, and enable you to see the things pertaining to your true peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes!

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## SERMON XXIX.

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### GIFTS RECEIVED FOR THE REBELLIOUS

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PSALM lxxviii. 18.

*Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*

WHEN Joseph exchanged a prison for the chief honour and government of Egypt, the advantage of his exaltation was felt by those who little deserved it, Gen. xlv. 4, 5. His brethren hated, and had conspired to kill him. And though he was preserved from death, they were permitted to sell him for a bond-servant. He owed his servitude, imprisonment, and sufferings to them; and they were afterwards indebted to him for their lives, subsistence, honour, and comfort; God in a wonderful manner overruling their evil conduct for future good to themselves. Thus Jesus was despised, rejected, and sold; and he was actually slain. But he arose, and ascended. The man of sorrows took possession of the throne of glory; and not for himself only: his honour is the source of happiness to those who were once his enemies, and rebellious against him. For the sake of such he lived and died.

For their sakes he lives and reigns. He fought, conquered, and triumphed over their enemies. As their representative, he received gifts to bestow upon them; such gifts as their necessities required, derived from the relation he was pleased to stand in to them, and from the value and dignity of his engagements on their behalf; such gifts as he alone could communicate, and which alone could restore them to the favour of God, and revive his image in their hearts, so as to make it suitable to his holiness and truth for the Lord God to return to his polluted temples, and to dwell in them and among them.

I formerly observed, (page 212,) that this Psalm, and the twenty-fourth, were probably composed and first published on the memorable occasion, when David, having obtained the victory over his numerous enemies, and settled his kingdom in peace, removed the ark, which till then had no fixed residence, into Zion. The apostle's application of this passage (Ephes. iv. 8.) authorizes us to consider that transaction as typical of our Lord's ascension. Jesus is the true ark. The holy law of God was in his heart; his obedience unto death was fully commensurate to the demands of the law, Rom. iii. 25.; as the mercy-seat, or propitiation, which covered the ark, was exactly equal to its dimensions. He who had thus obeyed on earth, ascended on high; the everlasting gates unfolded, and he 'entered the holy place not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for us,' Heb. ix. 24. In this state he is highly exalted upon a throne of glory, and administers all power in heaven and in earth. From hence is the honour, safety, and happiness of those who believe in him. They have nothing to plead for themselves. But, unworthy as they are, he is not ashamed to own them; and he assures them, that all he did, and that all he has received, so far as they are capable of sharing in it, is for them. The clauses, as they lie in the text, suggest a convenient method for our meditation, and will lead me briefly to consider four points:

His ascension—his victories—the gifts he received for men—and the great end for which he bestows them.

I. 'Thou hast ascended on high.' God formed man originally for himself, and gave him an answerable capacity, so that no inferior good can satisfy and fill his mind. Man was likewise, by the constitution and will of his Maker, immortal, provided he persevered in obedience. But sin degraded and ruined him, shut the gates of paradise, and the gates of heaven against him. Man destroyed himself; but wisdom and mercy interposed for his recovery. A promise was given of the seed of the woman,

who should bruise the serpent's head, defeat his policy, destroy his power, and repair the mischiefs he had introduced by sin. MESSIAH fulfilled this promise. And when he had finished all that was appointed for him on earth, as the second Adam, the head and representative of his people, he ascended on high, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As an illustrious proof to the universe, that God is reconciled: that there is forgiveness with him for sinners who implore his mercy; one in our nature, and in our behalf, has taken possession of the kingdom. The series of texts in this part of the Oratorio recalls this subject frequently to our thoughts; nor can we think of it too often. It is the foundation of our hopes, the source of our sublimest joys, and the sufficient, the only sufficient, answer to all the suggestions by which guilt, fear, unbelief, and Satan, fight against our peace. Surrounded as we are with enemies and difficulties, we plead, against every accusation and threatening, that our Head is in heaven; we have an Advocate with the Father, a High Priest upon the throne, who, because he ever liveth to make intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. This is all our plea, nor do we desire any other. His ascension on high is a sure pledge that his servants shall follow him, John xii. 26. And even at present by faith they ascend and are seated with him in the heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6. They behold invisibles with the eye of their mind; they realize the glorious scene, from which they are separated by the veil of flesh and blood. They know that, even now, day and night, day without night, myriads of golden harps and happy voices resound his praise. The babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forsaken upon the cross, is now the Lord of glory. In the thought of his glory they greatly rejoice, because they love him, and because they expect shortly to be with him.

II. 'Thou hast led captivity captive.' The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive. The spirit and force of it is destroyed; and his people, when released by him and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from those whose captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a prisoner in chains. The energy of the phrase is not unlike that of the apostle, which we are hereafter to consider, 'death is swallowed up in victory.' Man by nature is a captive, in a state of confinement and bondage, from which he cannot escape by any address or effort of his own.

He is a captive to sin; a sinful state is a state of bondage; and this, notwithstanding the sinner is a willing captive, speaks

swelling words of vanity, and boasts of liberty, while he is the servant, the slave of corruption. Conscience sometimes remonstrates, fills him with fears and forebodings, which make him struggle to be free. And there are many sins, which, besides being offences against the law of God, are directly contrary to the sinner's present interest and welfare; and would be so upon his own plan, and if he was wholly his own master, and had no account to render of his conduct. Persons enslaved to habits of lewdness or drunkenness, need not be told from the pulpit that the courses they pursue are injurious to their health, their business, or substance, their reputation and their peace. They know it and feel it, without a monitor. There are seasons, when the ill consequences they bring upon themselves make them sick of the drudgery, and excite some efforts towards a reform. But in vain. The next return of temptation bears down all their resolutions like a torrent; and, after every attempt to amend, they usually become worse than before. For none can escape, unless the Son makes them free. His grace can overcome the most obstinate habits of licentiousness, and implant the contrary habits of purity and temperance. But they who are not delivered by him must die in chains.

III. 'Thou hast received gifts, even for the rebellious.' To bestow gifts upon the miserable is bounty; but to bestow them upon rebels, is grace. The greatness of the gifts, contrasted with the characters of those who receive them, displays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer's grace. He came to save not the unhappy only, but the ungodly. He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life, to his enemies; whose minds are so entirely alienated from him, that until he makes them willing, in the day of his power, their minds are determined against accepting any favour from him. They live long in contempt of the law and authority of God; and though justly obnoxious to his displeasure, while left to themselves, they despise and reject the proposals of his mercy. If they sometimes acknowledge themselves to be sinners, they still presume that they are able to procure his favour by their own performances. They strangely imagine they have a sufficient ground of hope, so long as it appears to themselves that they are not altogether so bad as others. And when, by the Gospel, the Lord treats them as sinners already justly condemned by the tenour of his holy laws, and informs them of the exigency of their case; that nothing less than the resources of his infinite wisdom, and the most extensive exertion of his unspeakable love, can possibly save them from destruction; the pride of their hearts rises against his declarations. His wisdom, in their view, is folly; and his love provokes their enmity and

scorn. He says of MESSIAH, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;' but the language of their hearts is, 'We will not have him to reign over us,' Luke, xix. 14. They revile and oppose the messengers of his grace, account them enemies, charge them as troublers of their peace, and as those who turn the world upside down: and, when not restrained by the providence of God, inflict upon them, besides, reproaches, stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. If their dearest friends, and those who are connected with them by the nearest ties of relation, submit to the testimony of God, and yield themselves to the appointed Saviour, they are treated as apostates from the general opinion. This defection from the common cause is often sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations, to dissolve the closest intimacy, to raise a person foes in his own household, and to excite envy, hatred, and malice, in those who once professed esteem and love. Can the spirit of rebellion rise higher than when they who have insulted the authority, defied the power, and resisted the government and will of the great God, proceed at length to trample upon his tenders of reconciliation, and to affront him in that concern, which, of all others, is dearest to him, the glory of his grace in the person of his Son? Yet this is no exaggerated representation. Such is the disposition of the heart of man towards God; such were some of us; and such, I fear, some of us are to this hour. I do not say that this enmity of the carnal mind acts, in every person who is subject to the grace of God, with equal rage and violence. In a land of light, liberty, and civilization, like ours, a variety of circumstances may concur to set bounds to its exercise; education, a natural gentleness of temper, and even interest, may keep it within the limits of decorum, especially towards some individuals; but I affirm, or rather the Scripture declares that enmity against God, a disaffection to his Gospel no less than to his law, and a dislike to those who profess and obey the truth, are principles deeply rooted in our nature, as fallen; and however they may seem dormant in some persons for a season, would operate vigorously, if circumstances were so to alter as to afford a fair occasion. For, as of old, 'he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit,' Gal. iv. 29. even so it is now. And it is still as true as in the apostles' days, that 'all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall, in one degree or form or other, 'suffer persecution' 2 Tim. iii. 12. from those who will not.

Thus men are characterized in the word of God, rebels and enemies, having 'a neck of iron to denote their obstinacy; 'a brow of brass,' Isa. xlvi. 4. to express their insolence and

presumption, and 'a heart of stone,' Ezek. xxxvi. 26. insensible to the soft methods of persuasion; incapable of receiving tender, kind, and generous impressions, though they are wooed and besought by the consideration of the mercies of God, of the dying agonies of MESSIAH; unless that mighty power be displayed in their favour which brought forth streams of water from the rock in the wilderness.

MESSIAH died, arose and ascended on high, that he might receive gifts for rebels of this spirit, and disposition. The one grand gift I shall specify is, indeed, comprehensive of every other good, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said to his sorrowing disciples, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' John xvi. 7. Soon after his ascension this promise was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit; Acts ii. 4—37. and the people who had slain the Lord, were pricked to the heart, repented of their sins, received faith in him whom they had pierced, and experienced joy and peace in believing.

That the Gospel is preached upon earth by a succession of ministers called and furnished for that service, and that the Gospel, when preached, is not rejected by all, as it is by many, is wholly to be ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose office and covenant engagement it is to convince 'the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' John xvi. 8. and to glorify MESSIAH. He opens the eyes of the understanding, subdues the stubborn will, softens, or rather removes, the heart of stone, and gives a feeling, tender heart, a heart of flesh. Then the rebels relent and sue for mercy; then they obtain faith, repentance, remission, a full and free salvation, and all the gifts which MESSIAH has received for them.

IV. His ultimate design in favour of rebellious men, the great final cause of his mediation, and particularly of his bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, is that the Lord God may dwell among them. Man was created in the image of God, who formed him for himself. But he sinned and was forsaken. God withdrew his light and love from him, and man sunk into darkness and misery. Sin and Satan took possession of the heart which was originally designed to be the temple of the living God. But the Lord had a merciful purpose, to return in a way worthy of his perfections. Without him, the souls of men, and the whole human race, as to their proper happiness, are like what the earth would be without the sun, dark, cold, fruitless, and comfortless. But the knowledge of MESSIAH, like the sun, enlightens the world and the heart.

When, in the day of his power, by the revelation of his light and love, he destroys the dominion of sin, and dispossesses Satan, he reclaims his own, and takes possession for himself. The heart, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and anointed with the holy unction, becomes a consecrated temple of the Holy Ghost. This persuasion, though now, by many who have not renounced the name of Christian, deemed the essence of enthusiasm, was once essential to Christianity; so that the apostle speaks of it as an obvious, incontrovertible fact, with which no true Christian could be unacquainted: 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?' 1 Cor. vi. 19. Again he speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart: Eph. iii. 17. 'Christ in you the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. And in another place, 'Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them;' 2 Cor. vi. 16. agreeably to his promise by the prophets. He liveth in them, as the principle of their life, wisdom, and power; therefore the apostle says, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Gal. ii. 20. There is a mutual indwelling between the Lord and his people. They in him, as the branch in the vine; and he in them, as the sap in the branch. He in them, as in his temples; they in him, as in their strong tower of defence. And from hence, we infer the duration of their life of grace; that it shall continue and spring up into everlasting life; since it is properly not their own, but his; and since he has said, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

He dwells likewise among his people in their collective capacity. His whole church, comprising all the members of his mystical body, 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' form a building fitly framed together, a palace, a holy temple for the Lord, the great King. He dwelleth likewise in every particular society who walk by his rule, and adorn the profession of his truth by a conversation becoming the Gospel. He is 'a wall of fire round about' them, and a 'glory in the midst of them,' Zech. ii. 5, 10. When they meet together in his name, he is there. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. It is his presence that gives life and efficacy to all his ordinances, and communicates a power to his word, by which the minds of his worshipping people are enlightened, strengthened, healed, and comforted. Here he manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world; and they can adopt the words of the Psalmist, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.' To his presence they owe their peace and increase, their union and protection. And if he withdraws, *Ichabod*, may be written upon their

solemn assemblies; 1 Sam. iv. 21. for even his own appointments can afford them neither profit nor pleasure, unless they are animated by his glory.' Their graces languish, their harmony is interrupted, strifes and dissensions take place, evil roots of bitterness spring up to trouble and defile them; Heb. xii. 15. 'men arise' from among themselves, 'speaking perverse things, and fierce wolves break in, not sparing the flock,' Acts xx. 29, 30. if the good Shepherd suspends his influence and presence.

I trust he dwells and walks in the midst of us. He is here as an observer, and as a gracious benefactor. He sees who 'draw near him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him;' and he likewise takes notice of them that fear and love him, and who esteem the light of his countenance to be better than life. 'The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth likewise with those that are of a contrite and humble spirit,' Isa. lvii. 15. to revive and bless them.

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## SERMON XXX.

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### THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

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PSALM lxxviii. 11.

*The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it, [or of the preachers.]*

PERHAPS no one Psalm has given greater exercise to the skill and the patience of commentators and critics, than the sixty-eighth. I suppose the difficulties do not properly belong to the Psalm, but arise from our ignorance of various circumstances to which the Psalmist alludes; which probably were, at that time, generally known and understood. The first verse is the same with the stated form of benediction which was used whenever the ark of the Lord set forward while Israel sojourned in the wilderness; Numb. x. 35. which confirms the prevailing opinion, that the Psalm was primarily designed as an act of thanksgiving, to accompany the removal of the ark to Zion by David. The seventh and eighth verses are repeated, with little variation, from the song of Deborah,' Judges v. 4, 5. The leading scope of the whole appears to be, first, a recapitulation of God's gracious

dealing with Israel, and of the great things he had done for them, from the time he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt; and then, a transition, in the spirit of prophecy, to the far greater things he would do for his people, under and by the Gospel dispensation, in consequence of MESSIAH'S exaltation to receive gifts for rebellious men. This verse, though the particular occasion is not specified, probably refers to some season of deliverance or victory, when the women, according to the custom of the nation, assembled to praise the Lord, with timbrels, songs, and dances, Exod. xv. The songs and responses of Miriam and her companions, and of the women who welcomed Saul and David after the defeat of the Philistine, 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. I have formerly mentioned as instances.\* The word which is rendered, 'Those who published or preached,' being expressed with a feminine termination, leads the mind to this sense. But we are not necessarily confined to it; for the word rendered 'preacher' in the book of Ecclesiastes, is likewise in the feminine form, though we are sure the person intended by it was Solomon.

However, this passage is properly introduced in the *Messiah*, and in its proper place, immediately after the view given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension, as it leads us to consider the first visible effect of that great event: for soon afterwards, 'when the day of Pentecost was fully come,' the Lord gave the word, Acts ii. 1—4. The Holy Spirit, the precious gift, which Jesus had received for rebellious men, descended with visible emblems and a powerful energy, and inspired and qualified his disciples for the great work of establishing and spreading his spiritual kingdom. From that hour, great was the number of the preachers, and great was the success and efficacy of their mission. So that in a few years the Gospel spread like the light, from Jerusalem through all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And he who said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' Matt. xxviii. 20. has, by the same Spirit, perpetuated his word, and a succession of preachers, to our time; and has promised to perpetuate and work by the same means, till time shall be no more.

My text, therefore, if not a direct prophecy of the publication of the Gospel, is at least a fit motto to a discourse on this very important subject. We may consider it in two senses, which, though something different, are equally agreeable to the words before us, and to the general tenour of the Scripture.

I. That the message is the Lord's. He gave the word, and prescribed to his servants the subject matter of their preaching.

\* Ser. VII. p. 69.

II. That the messengers employed are called and sent forth by him. The Lord gave the word or command; in consequence of which word, the number of preachers was great, as when in the beginning he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.'

I. The Lord gave the word which the multitude of preachers went forth to publish. His merciful design was great, to deliver sinners from bondage, misery, and death; and to bless them with liberty, life, and peace. But they are by nature rebellious and obstinate, and must be made willing. He only can subdue their prejudices, and soften their spirits; and he has promised to display his power in their favour, by a certain mean of his own appointment, and we cannot expect that he will do it in any other way. This mean is the Gospel, which, for its admirable suitability and efficacy, is commended to us 'as his wisdom and his power,' 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. He has given it for this purpose, and his blessing makes it successful. He has said concerning it, 'As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it,' Isa. lv. 10, 11. It has been confirmed by the experience of ages, that no mean but this can produce the desirable effect. It is confirmed, by observation, in the present day. If the wisdom of man, if learning, if oratory, if animated descriptions of the beauty of virtue, and pathetic persuasions to the practice of it, could reform, we should be a reformed people. But, alas! this is only to oppose a mound of sand to the violence of a flood. Notwithstanding many ingenious sermons and treatises upon this plan are admired and praised, wickedness prevails and triumphs. They have little influence upon the conduct of civil life; and, I may boldly say, no influence to inspire the heart with the love and peace of God, and to bring it into a habit of subjection to his will and command. Nothing will do this but the Gospel, the word which the Lord has given. This alone shows the evil of sin in its true light, affords a solid ground for the hope of mercy, and furnishes those motives which alone are sufficient to break the force of temptations and difficulties with which we have to conflict. When this word is simply and cordially received, an immediate and wonderful change takes place. The sinner abandons his false hopes and vain pursuits, is freed from his former slavery to the love of

the world and the fear of man, and becomes the willing servant of him who redeemed him with his own blood.

But we are sometimes asked, what we understand by the Gospel? The use of the term, in a restrained sense, so as to imply there are but few comparatively who preach it, is deemed invidious and assuming; and it is supposed by many, that a sermon, if delivered from a pulpit, and if the text be taken from the Bible, must of course be the Gospel. It is undeniable, however, that there are a variety of different and opposite sentiments delivered from the pulpits; and surely the Gospel cannot be opposite, contrary, yea, contradictory, to itself! It is a mournful consideration, that multitudes of people are not qualified to judge of this point. Not properly for want of ability, for many of them are persons of good sense and discernment, and can judge and talk well upon other subjects; but for want of attention. Their application is engrossed by the demands of business or pleasure, and they have neither leisure nor taste for a careful perusal of the Scriptures, nor for the examination of religious sentiments. If the language and elocution of the preacher be good, and if there be no close and painful address to the conscience, they are satisfied. The apostle Paul undoubtedly preached the Gospel; and he tells us himself that he preached Christ crucified; he preached Christ as appointed of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30. He preached the cross of Christ, (Gal. v. 14.) he gloried in it, and he determined to glory in nothing else. The Gospel treats all mankind as already in a state of condemnation; it declares their utter inability to save or help themselves; and it gives assurance of pardon and salvation to all who believe in the Son of God. That they may be encouraged and enabled to believe, it describes the dignity of his person, the necessity and greatness of his sufferings, the completeness of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession—his love, authority, power, and faithfulness. These truths, revealed and applied to a guilty conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, produce faith. The sinner perceives the sufficiency and excellency of such a Saviour, commits himself to his compassion and care, and renounces every other hope and service. He looks to the Saviour by the eye of his mind, with desire and admiration, and derives life from his death, healing from his wounds, as the Israelites, when wounded, were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. And not only is the conscience relieved by this knowledge of Christ crucified—the understanding is likewise enlightened, the judgment is formed, the affections regulated and directed by it. The old things

pass away, all becomes new. The love of sin departs, and the future life is devoted to him, who therefore 'died and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living,' Rom. xiv. 9.

There is likewise a certain energy or power which accompanies the Gospel when it is truly preached, which sufficiently characterizes and distinguishes it from all other religious schemes and systems. Our Lord, during his personal ministry, frequently gave proofs that he knew the heart of man. When Zaccheus thought himself unknown and unseen, he called him by his name, Luke xix. 5. He reminded Nathaniel of what had passed in secret under the fig-tree; John i. 48. and by a few words, brought to the remembrance of the woman of Samaria all that she had done in her life, John iv. 29. A similar effect accompanies the preaching of his Gospel to this day. The Gospel is preached, when they who are present find the secrets of their hearts are made manifest; when the preacher, who perhaps never saw them before, reminds them of what they have done, or said, or thought, possibly of things transacted long ago, and almost forgotten by themselves; and likewise describes the very feelings of their hearts while he is speaking to them. It is usually in this way that conviction of sin first takes place; and in this way, that a convinced, burdened sinner meets with seasonable support and direction, so exactly suited to his case, that he almost thinks the preacher is speaking to none but himself. No preachers but those who speak in conformity to the word which the Lord gave, have this power over the heart and conscience.

II. It is owing to the word, the appointment, and power of God, that any persons are induced or enabled to preach this Gospel. Men may, indeed, assume the office of a preacher upon other grounds; there are too many who do. But though they speak in the name of the Lord, and as his ministers, if he has not sent them, they cannot declare his message in such a manner as to make full proof of their ministry, 2 Tim. iv. 5. They may profit themselves, according to their low views, and may obtain such honours and emoluments as the world can give; but they have not the honour which cometh from God only. They are not wise to win souls, Prov. xi. 30. They have no testimony in the consciences of their hearers. They may deliver truths occasionally, which are valuable and useful in their proper places; but for want of knowing how to connect them with what the apostle styles 'The truth as it is in Jesus,' Eph. iv. 21. they are unable either to break the hard heart, or to heal the wounded spirit.

The thoughtless are not alarmed, nor the ignorant instructed.  
The wicked go on in their evil ways—

*The hungry sheep look up, but are not fed.*

Nay, we see, in fact, though a few persons may still be found, who place their religion in a dull, unmeaning attendance upon the form of public worship, upon any form in which it was their lot to be educated; yet, in many places, the bulk of the people, by their contempt of the Lord's day, and by their customary manner of absenting themselves from their appointed teachers, give sufficient proof that they have neither found, nor expect to find, so much benefit or pleasure, as to make them think it worth their while to attend them.

It will appear, to competent judges, that faithful preachers are called and prepared for their office by the Lord, the head of the church, and not by human institutions, from the following considerations:

1. That the Gospel cannot be rightly understood but by divine teaching. The natural man, however distinguished by abilities or literature, cannot 'receive the things of the Spirit of God;' 1 Cor. ii. 14. nay, he cannot discern them. He may, indeed, know something of the Gospel system, considered as a matter of science; he may know how to defend the outworks of Christianity, and be master of the external evidences for its truth; and he may espouse orthodox opinions, and be a successful champion in the field of controversy. But the inward power and life, that which constitutes the essential difference of true religion, is no less remote from his apprehension, than the idea of light is from a person born blind. This he can only learn by experience. The first lesson received and learnt by those who are taught of God, is a conviction of guilt, ignorance, and misery—and then they begin to learn the importance, necessity, and design of the Gospel. The man who is thus instructed, if the Lord be pleased to call him to the office of teaching others, will, in due time, proceed to deliver to the people what he has himself learnt; not with hesitation, uncertainty, or indifference, not what he has acquired by hearsay or from books, 'but he has the witness in himself,' 1 John v. 10. His heart teacheth his mouth,' Prov. xvi. 23. He believes, therefore he speaks. He simply and freely declares that which he himself has known, and seen, and tasted of the word of life. And speaking from the fulness of his heart, with an earnestness inspired by the greatness and importance of

his subject, he speaks to the heart and feelings of his hearers, and impresses a manifestation of the truth upon their minds.

2. That the desire of preaching this Gospel, when known, if it be a right desire, must likewise be given. If a man should attempt the service, without counting the cost, or considering the consequences, he will most probably be disgusted and wearied. And if he seriously and properly considers before-hand what he is about to engage in, and has a due sense of his own weakness, he will tremble at the prospect, and direct his thoughts to some other employment, unless his call and support be from on high. What courage, wisdom, meekness, and zeal, appear requisite, in the view of such an inquirer, to qualify a man for preaching, and continuing to preach, a doctrine so unpleasing to the world as the doctrine of the cross has in all ages proved! What opposition, and snares, and difficulties, 'what fightings from without, what fears within,' may be expected! Surely, he will be ready to shrink back, and to say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' But the Lord, by the constraining sense of his love, and by giving a deep impression of the worth of souls, and by exciting in the mind a dependence upon his all sufficiency, can and does encourage those whom he calls and chooses, to serve him in the Gospel. In themselves they are quite unequal to what is before them, but they obey his voice; they trust in his promises for guidance and protection, and are not disappointed. We are therefore directed to pray, that 'the Lord of the harvest would send,' or rather, (according to the force of the Greek word,) 'thrust forth labourers into his harvest,' Matt. ix. 38.

3. That only he who sends forth his ministers can enable them to persevere. It is a service of continual exertion and expense, and requires a continual supply. The opposition of the world, and the power of temptation, acting upon the weakness and depravity of the heart, would quickly prevail against the best ministers, if they were left to carry on the warfare at their own charges. They are at times, yea, frequently, in situations and circumstances which teach them feelingly the meaning of the apostle's words, 'We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life,' 2 Cor. i. 8. Besides the trials incidental to the Christian profession, which they are exposed to in common with others, they have many which are peculiar to their calling as preachers of the Gospel. Their chief pre-eminence over Christians in private life is a painful one; they have the honour of bearing a double share of the heat and burden of the day, and of standing in the foremost ranks of the battle, to pro-

voke and receive the fiercest assaults of the enemy. Their only resource and hope is in the faithfulness and compassion of their Lord, under whose banner and eye they fight, and who has said, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.'

4. That the Lord only can give success to their endeavours. 'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,' but there is no increase unless he affords a blessing,' 1 Cor. iii. 6. It is at least a presumptive proof, that he has called a man to preach, if he owns his labours, since he has not promised to own any but those whom he sends.

We must, however, allow and observe that to preach salvation to others, and even to be instrumental in saving souls, will not absolutely prove that the preacher is in a state of salvation himself. We hope it is generally so; but there are exceptions and instances, which should awaken our circumspection, and keep us constantly looking to the Lord in a spirit of humility and dependence. There was a Judas among the apostles; and we are assured that at the last day, some, yea, many will plead having done great things in the name of Christ, whom he will notwithstanding disown, as workers of iniquity, Matt. vii. 22, 23. Even the apostle Paul was impressed by this thought, and he has recorded the improvement which he had made of it for our instruction. 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away,' 1 Cor. ix. 27.

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## SERMON XXXI.

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE, GLAD TIDINGS.

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ROMANS, x. 15.

*[As it is written] How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

THE account which the apostle Paul gives of his first reception among the Galatians, Gal. iv. 15. exemplifies the truth of this passage. He found them in a state of ignorance and misery; alienated from God, and enslaved to the blind and comfortless superstitions of idolatry. His preaching, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, had a great and marvellous effect. His principal subject was the death of Jesus, who had lately suffer-

ed as a malefactor at Jerusalem. Though the transaction was past, and the scene at a considerable distance, yet by the manner of his representation, the fact was realized to their minds; and they could have been no more affected had they been actually upon the spot at the time. Jesus Christ was exhibited to them as crucified before their eyes, Gal. iii. 1. By the same divine energy they were instructed in the knowledge of his character, who he was, and why he suffered; and likewise understood their own need of such a Saviour. Thus they hearkened to him, not with the indifference of the Athenians, but with application of all that he said to themselves. They heard, they believed, and they rejoiced. The apostle reminds them, that they had not received a cold, speculative doctrine, but such a one as imparted a blessedness to them. This, indeed, many of them afterwards lost, when they were unhappily seduced by false teachers. But for a time the knowledge of a Saviour, so exactly suited to their circumstances, made them happy; and while they were so, they felt very strong emotions of gratitude and esteem for the messenger who brought them these glad tidings. Though he was by many accounted and treated as the off-scouring and filth of all things, the Galatians received him as an angel of God, and attended to him, as if the Lord, who sent him, had spoken to them in person. And, although he had till then been an entire stranger to them, his message opened a way to their hearts, and they gave him every testimony of the most cordial friendship; insomuch, 'that had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.'

Thus, likewise, when Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria, the consequence was, great joy in that city, Acts viii. 8. But when the Gospel is thus gladly received, there must be a suitable disposition of mind. It is sent 'to the poor.' It is designed to 'heal the broken-hearted, to deliver the captives, and to give sight to the blind,' Luke iv. 18. And therefore they who are well satisfied with themselves, who say, 'We see,' and who boast of their freedom, cannot possibly judge either of the truth or of the importance of the Gospel doctrine. As the Lord waters the earth with a profusion worthy of his magnificence and bounty, and does not confine his rain to cultivated soils; so the good seed of his word often 'falls upon the highway, upon the rocks, and among thorns,' Luke viii. 13—15; but is only productive upon the good ground of an 'honest and good heart.' Not that any human heart is truly good by nature, but some are prepared for the reception of the truth. And this preparation is the first effect of the word, when it brings forth fruit unto life eternal. It

undeceives those who were for a time deluded with vain hopes, and convinces them that they are poor, and blind, and helpless. Then they gladly accept the Gospel of peace, and the message is often to them as life from the dead.

The passage from the prophet Isaiah, from which my text is quoted, is very animated and descriptive. ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!’ Isa. liii. 7. Imagine a distressed people, at the will and disposal of a conqueror, who was justly offended with them, and under the anxious, trembling uncertainty how he would treat them: if an authorized messenger should inform them, that instead of the punishment they deserved, the king vouchsafed them a free pardon, was ready to receive them with favour, and to bestow honours and possessions upon all who applied to him, without excepting the most guilty, even the ringleaders in rebellion; how welcome must this messenger be to them! This, indeed, is beyond the manner of men. No earthly monarch has either magnanimity to make, or power to make good, so gracious and unlimited a proclamation to a whole nation of rebels. But this is the manner of the great God. Such an act of grace is the Gospel. An act of grace to sinners, yet founded in righteousness, and displaying the glory of his justice equally with the riches of his mercy. For it is founded on the mediation of the Son of his love, and procured by his blood. The messengers of this grace are thus welcomed and honoured by those who believe their report, ‘and are esteemed very highly in love for their works’ sake,’ 1 Thess. v. 13. We may observe,

I. The message of the Gospel is ‘glad tidings’ of ‘peace’ and ‘good things.’

II. The messengers, or preachers, find ample reward in their success and acceptance.

I. According to the Hebrew idiom, (which frequently obtains in the New Testament,) all good things are comprised in the term *peace*. They are eminently comprised in the peace of the Gospel; for it is ‘the peace of God which passeth understanding.’ It brings a blessed assurance, that MESSIAH has made peace by the blood of his cross. They who believe this good report derive from it peace of conscience; and are enabled to say, ‘Though thou wert justly angry, thine anger is turned away,’ Isa. xii. 1. It dispels their fears and forebodings, and inspires them with liberty to come to God as children; consequently, on their parts, alienation and enmity cease. They no longer conceive of him as an avenging judge or a hard master. They no longer dispute his authority, nor repine at his appointments. They

become a willing people. They yield themselves to him. They cultivate peace in all their connexions. The forgiveness and bounty they have received, teaches them likewise to forgive, and be kind, as they have opportunity. They possess such good things as the world can neither give nor take away; communion with God, grace, wisdom, and power. They serve him with their all, and are supported by his good Spirit in every trying circumstance; and they have a good hope which enables them to rejoice in tribulation, and to smile in death.

If the wickedness and obstinacy of mankind were not strongly described and exemplified in the Bible, and if we could forget that this obstinate perverseness was once our own character, we should find it difficult to conceive, after we understand the nature and design of the Gospel, upon what grounds a scheme so wisely and completely adapted to relieve men from misery, to promote their present comfort, and to secure their future happiness, should, instead of being received with thankfulness, generally excite contempt and opposition. Can the world afford a peace which shall abide and cheer the heart under all the changing circumstances incident to us in this mortal state? Can it propose any good, any honours, profit, or pleasures, worthy of being compared with the honour which cometh from God only, the light of his countenance, and the riches of glory? Can the influence of the world preserve us from trouble, or support us under it, or deliver us out of it? Has it any charms capable of soothing the anguish of a wounded conscience? Can it obviate the stroke, or overcome the fear of death? Or can it inspire the soul with confidence and joy, in the contemplation of that approaching day, when we must all appear before the tribunal of the supreme Judge? That the world, if we possessed the whole of it, cannot do these things for us, is acknowledged by many, and felt by all. The Gospel proposes a cordial for every care, a balm for every wound; and none who make the experiment of its efficacy are disappointed. In other cases, they who have received great obligations, may speak highly of their benefactor; and they who, beyond hope, have been recovered from a dangerous malady, may commend the skill and care of their physician to those who are labouring under the same disease, without giving offence. But if they who have obtained life and peace by believing in Jesus, proclaim his goodness, and point him out to their fellow-sinners as the only Physician and Saviour of souls, their testimony is charged with folly, and their endeavours rejected with scorn, as officious and impertinent. Men, while left to themselves, will not come to him that they may have life. The God

of this world so works upon their prejudices, pride, and passions, that though the light of truth shines around them like the light of the sun, the eyes of their mind are blinded, and they are pleased with their darkness, and unwilling to see, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Hence, of the few comparatively, who are favoured with a clear and faithful dispensation of the Gospel, the greater part it is to be feared, reject the counsel of God against themselves; and his ministers, in all ages, have had cause to adopt the prophet's complaint, Lord, 'who hath believed our report?' Isa. liii. 21. It would be thus universally, if the Lord, who gave the word, and who sends forth the preachers, had not engaged his promise, that they shall not labour wholly in vain, nor spend their strength for nought. He prepares a people to serve him, and to show forth his praise. And while some mock, others refuse to hear; Acts xvii. 32. and others with an indolent indifference, are content to hear again and again; there are others whose hearts are opened to receive the truth in the love of it. They hear and believe to everlasting life.

II. The instruments of this happy change find their reward in their work. It being owned to the salvation of a few, they are compensated for all the opposition they meet with from the many; and this on a two-fold account.

First, and principally, for the love they bear to their Lord, and to souls for his sake.

To see his name made precious to the hearts of sinners; to see those who were blind admiring his excellency; to see those who were so far off from God brought so nigh; to see those who were wretched rejoicing in his goodness; to hear those whose lips were filled with folly, falsehood, or blasphemy, proclaiming his praise; such salutary effects of their ministry fill them likewise with praise and joy: and when their hearers express the power and spirit of the Gospel in their tempers and conduct, they can say, 'Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord,' 1 Thess. iii. 8.

A secondary satisfaction, which of itself is sufficient to make them full amends for all the scorn of an unkind world, is the share they have in the affections of the people who are thus benefitted by their ministry. This is the popularity which alone is desirable. It would be a small thing to be able merely to hold a multitude by the ears; but to be approved and loved by those to whom the Lord has made them useful, is a high honour, and a source of sublime pleasure. When Peter and John (Acts iii. 11.) had healed the lame man, I doubt not but they were more affected by the simple, honest testimony of his gratitude, than by the unmeaning wonder of all the surrounding multitude. If a true servant of the Lord, by any advantage of abilities or elocution.

should attach a large congregation to a personal regard for himself, should be admired and beloved by them, and yet discover no attachment in them to the Saviour whom he preaches, their partiality to him would give him but little pleasure. He would be more ready to weep over them, than to rejoice in the preference they gave him. For he seeks not their applause, but their edification; and he aims not to promote his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him, John vii. 18. He is, indeed, glad to see them attending upon the means which God has promised to bless. But the faithfulness and closeness of his addresses to their consciences, by which many are sooner or later disgusted and driven away, is a proof that he does not want them merely to make up a number about him. They who make the office of a preacher an occasion whereby to promote their own interest or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they seek; but it is such a reward as can only satisfy a weak and mercenary mind; and from him whose mind they prostitute, they can only expect the reward assigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.

But true Christians will, and do set a high value upon the ministers who, with simplicity and godly sincerity, preach the gospel of peace in such a manner as to evidence that they are influenced by a regard to the glory of God, and to the good of souls; and they give proof of their affection in more ways than by speaking well of them.

1. By the satisfaction with which they accept a faithful ministry, as a balance to the trials they meet with in common life. There are many poor, and many afflicted people, who have little comfort in the things of this life, and in their own houses. Some are pinched by penury; and some who live in opulence, yet dwell, as the Psalmist expresses it, in fire and among lions, Psalm lvii. 4. : they suffer no less than the others, though in a different way, from the unkindness and opposition of their nearest connexions. But in the house of God, they are satisfied and comforted. And, according to the words of the prophet, 'though the Lord is pleased to give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction,' Isa. xxx. 20. yet, since their teachers are not removed into corners, but they have free access to the preaching of the word, and can attend upon a minister who careth for their souls, and meets them, when they are weary, with 'a word in season,' they bear their appointed cross with cheerfulness. Though they have much bitterness of heart at home, known only to themselves, they have the pleasure which a stranger intermeddeth not with, when they go up to the house of the Lord. But if the instrument, who

is the messenger of God to them for good, be removed, and they are deprived of these opportunities, the regard they bore him is manifested by their sorrow for losing him; which often affects them more sensibly than all their other griefs.

2. By taking kindly and in good part his most searching discourses in public, or even his reproofs and admonitions in private, if needful. For they know that he watches over their souls, as one who must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. And because they love him, they do all in their power to make the service a pleasure, and not a grief to him. They do not wish him to speak smooth things to them, or to entertain them with the discussion of points in which they have little concern, but to hear that which is suitable to their own case and circumstances. And if the preacher discovers to them, that, through inadvertence, they have allowed themselves in any wrong practice, or have lived in the omission of any duty, instead of being offended with his plain dealing, they love him better for it.

3. By their tenderness and sympathy with him in all his exercises; and by their care, according to their ability, to make his situation comfortable, and to avoid every thing that might give him just occasion for complaint or grief. The trials of a faithful minister are neither few nor small. His work is great; he is sure to meet with enemies and discouragements. He travels in birth for souls, Gal. iv. 19.; he is pained by the opposition of the wicked, the inconstancy of the wavering, and the inconsistency of many who make profession of the truth. He feels many anxieties for those who are inquiring the way to the kingdom, lest they should be turned aside and hindered; and too often the hopes he had indulged, of some who discovered a concern for religion, are disappointed. His inward conflicts are many. He often walks in much weakness, fear, and trembling, 1 Cor. ii. 3. When he considers what he is, what he ought to be, and what he has to do, he is often distressed, afraid, and ashamed, and unable to speak. His path is spread with snares, his heart wounded with temptations. But his judicious hearers have some knowledge of what he endures for their sakes and in their service; they love him, pity him, and pray for him, and their kind attention comforts him under all their tribulations.

Sometimes their regard is rather improperly expressed; as when they not only value his ministry, but hold him so highly a favourite, that they can hardly hear another. A preference is certainly due to the person who is made especially useful, but no faithful preacher should be slighted. Though gifts and abilities

are not equal in all, yet they are all the Lord's messengers, and entitled to regard.

Again, it is an improper regard, if they yield themselves implicitly to him, to be governed by his will. So far as we speak agreeably to the Scripture, which is the rule and standard of faith and practice, both to you and to us, we are authorized to require your attention and obedience; but you are not bound to receive what we propose, merely upon our own authority. There are those who account ignorance the mother of devotion, and expect an implicit compliance with their injunctions, by virtue of their office and personal influence. But a true minister will account it his honour and pleasure to preach to an enlightened people, who love and study the Bible, and, like the Bereans, search the Scripture, Acts xvii. 11. to see if things are so as represented. 'We have no dominion over your faith, but wish to be helpers of your joy,' 2 Cor. i. 24. Nor do we pretend to dominion over your purses; though we are to remind you of the apostle's charge, 'To do good, and to communicate, forget not,' Heb. xiii. 16.

How much are they to be pitied, who account that word of grace a burden, which to those who receive it with thankfulness, proves the balm and cordial of life! 'Take heed how you hear.' If the Gospel is not made to you a savour of life, it will be a savour of death. It will aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and leave you utterly hopeless and inexcusable. If you continue impenitent and obstinate, the hour is coming when you will wish you had never heard of the name of Jesus. It had been better for you never to have been born, or to have lived and died among the savage Indians, or to have been an idiot or a lunatic to the end of your days, than to have lived where the doctrine of salvation was published in your hearing, if you finally reject the counsel of God against yourselves!

## SERMON XXXII.

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### THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

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ROMANS, x. 18.

———*Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

‘THE heavens declare the glory of God,’ Psal. xix. 1. The grandeur of the arch over our heads, the number and lustre of the stars, the beauty of the light, the splendour of the sun, the regular succession of day and night, and the seasons of the year, are such proofs of infinite wisdom and power, that the Scripture attributes to them a voice, a universal language, intelligible to all mankind, accommodated to every capacity. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. The combined effect of the visible works of the great Architect, presses a declaration upon the ear of reason—‘The hand that made us is divine.’ We must, however, understand it of the ear of right reason. The loudest voice is unnoticed by the deaf. Thus it ought to be, and thus it would be, if man were indeed a rational creature, as he proudly boasts himself. That the fact, in general, is otherwise; that the bulk of mankind are no more affected by the works of God, than the beasts of the field; that the philosophers who profess to study them, so faintly discern, so frequently deny, the great First Cause of all, is a proof that sin has darkened and depraved the noblest powers of the soul, and degraded man into the state of an inattentive idiot. However the evidence, if it does not excite his admiration and praise, is abundantly sufficient to convict him of stupidity and ingratitude, and to leave him without excuse,’ Rom. i. 20.

This passage, taken from that sublime ode of David, the nineteenth Psalm, is applied by the apostle to illustrate the character and the progress of the still more wonderful display of the divine perfections, which God has made known by the glorious Gospel. A variety of truths shine (like stars in the firmament) in the system of revelation. But principally Jesus, the Son of truth and righteousness, the source of spiritual light and life, answers to the de-

scription there given of the material sun. 'His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from his heat,' Psalm xix. 6.

But the fulfilment of the promises respecting MESSIAH'S kingdom is progressive. So far as this prophecy has been accomplished, the arm of the Lord has been revealed. It is his doing, and may justly be marvellous in our eyes. The truth of the prophecy will be proved by its final completion; which, though not likely to take place in our time, we may be assured that it cannot fail, for the Lord hath spoken it. And besides, we have a sufficient pledge and security for the whole, in what he has already done. It was not necessary for the fulfilling of this prophecy, nor consistent with the tenour of many other prophecies, that the spread of the Gospel should be instantaneous and universal on its first publication. MESSIAH is to rule in the midst of his enemies, till the appointed season, when all enemies shall be subdued under his feet. The Gospel, the rod of his power, is so admirably adapted to the necessities of mankind, that the obstructions it has met with must be ascribed to their wickedness and obstinacy. Not that they could resist the will of God. Had he intended to give it universal success from the beginning, the event would have been unanswerable. But it was his pleasure to conduct the dispensation of it, so as on the one hand to display his sovereignty, wisdom, and power, and on the other, to afford a full proof of the depravity and alienation of the heart of man. This point is so much misunderstood and misrepresented, that, though it is attended with great difficulties, especially if we give way to vain reasonings upon it, I shall venture in the present discourse, to offer a few thoughts towards clearing the subject, and vindicating (if the very attempt be not presumptuous) the ways of God to man.

When the Sun of righteousness, after a long night of darkness, arose upon the world, there appeared a strong probability that the prophecies concerning the extent of his vital influence, from east to west, from pole to pole, would soon be completely realized.

In a very short space he was known and adored by multitudes, through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and beyond its limits. But, perhaps, for about seventeen hundred years since that period, the boundaries of his kingdom, though they have been altered, have not been much enlarged. If he has since, in some measure enlightened the more western parts of the globe, the eastern regions, which once rejoiced in his light, are now overwhelmed with gross Mahommedan darkness. And if we were capable of investigating the state of the world at this day,

we should probably find, that five out of six of the human race now living, never so much as heard of the name of Jesus as a Saviour. There is reason to fear, likewise, that in the nations who professedly call him Lord, and are not unwilling to be themselves called Christians, a greater proportion than five out of six, are no less strangers to his power and grace than the Mahomedans who reject him, or the Heathens who never heard of him.

There is not, perhaps, a darker chapter in the book of divine providence, nor a meditation which calls for a more absolute subjection and submission to the holy will and unsearchable wisdom of God, than this. The first spread of the Gospel proved it to be a divine expedient, fully capable of producing all the great purposes which the prophets had foretold, and which the state of the world required. It reconciled men to God, to themselves, and to each other. It subdued their passions, regulated their affections, freed them from the guilt and bondage of sin, from the love of the world, and from the fear of death. Wherever the doctrine of the cross was preached, it produced that salutary change of conduct which philosophy had long attempted in vain; and raised men to that life of communion with God, of which philosophers had no conception. Such was the bright morning of the Gospel day. But in time, yea, in a little time, dark clouds obscured its light, its progress was impeded, and in a manner stopped. On one hand, the profession and name of the Gospel gave occasion to mischiefs and abominations which had been unknown among the Heathens; so that the part of the world which received the name of Christendom was little distinguished from the rest in a religious view, but by a fierce and rancorous superstition, which tyrannized over the consciences, liberties, and the lives of men, on the other hand, as I have observed, the very name of Christianity was restrained to a small portion of the earth; many nations have not heard of it to this day; and many who once professed it have renounced it long ago.

Thus the fact stands. We cannot deny it. But how shall we account for it? Infidels and petty reasoners think they here find an invincible objection against the truth. They say, 'If the Gospel you speak of be so salutary and necessary, if it be, indeed, the greatest effect of the divine goodness, why has not God, who is the common Father of Mankind, afforded it to all the nations of the earth? and why is it restrained to so few?' But I think we may retort the question, and let them who propose it give such an answer (if they can) as shall not amount to a confession of the obstinacy and ungrateful folly of mankind. When the world saw

the happy tendency and effects of this Gospel in the age of the apostles, why did they not universally receive it? We know that when the use of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, and many other inventions that might be named, were discovered in one country, they were presently adopted by the surrounding civilized nations. Even the recent attempts to venture through the air with a balloon, hazardous as they certainly are, and insignificant with respect to real usefulness, are likely, in a little time, not only to engage the notice, but to excite the imitation, of Europe. Why then was the Gospel, the most beneficial and important discovery the world has been favoured with, the only one that has been treated with general contempt? Certainly our Lord has assigned the true reason, 'Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil,' John iii. 19. They hate the light, they will not come to it, nor will they permit it to come to them if they can possibly prevent it. This glorious Gospel of the blessed God has been and still is shunned and dreaded, and every human precaution and exertion has been employed to withstand and suppress it, as though, like the pestilence, it was baneful to the welfare of society. May we not say, speaking after the manner of men, that the Lord has done enough to confirm his own express and solemn declaration, that he 'has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way, and live!' Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He has raised up a succession of faithful servants, from age to age, to publish these glad tidings. The reception they have met with, not only from the Heathens, but from nominal Christians, is well known to those who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history; which contains little more than a detail of the arts and cruelties by which the civil and ecclesiastical powers of almost every kingdom where the Gospel has been known, have endeavoured to suppress it.

The nation of Great Britain, in particular, has but little right to ask, Why the Gospel of Christ has been spread no further among the Heathens? The providence of God has favoured us with peculiar advantages for this service. Our arms and commerce have opened us a way to the most distant parts of the globe; and of late years the enterprising spirit of our navigators has added almost a new world to the discoveries of former times. How far have our plans been formed with a subserviency to the great design of evangelizing the Heathen? How much have we done to promote it in Asia, where our influence and opportunities have been the greatest? What impression of the name and spirit

of Christianity has our conduct given the inhabitants of India? But I forbear—facts are too well known to need recital; too glaring to need a comment. It is true, we have an incorporated society for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, and we hear of missionaries; but of the good effects of their missions, as at present conducted, we neither hear, nor expect to hear. While America was ours, the efforts of a few individuals from the northern provinces, in the last and present century, were not without success. But I fear this is all the honour we can claim. Some good has been done by the Danish mission to Tranquebar; but I believe our influence in it has been rather nominal than effective. The extent and effects of the labours of the *Unitas Fratrum*,\* compared with their circumstances and resources, must not be omitted on this occasion. They doubtless excite admiration, and thankfulness to God, in every serious mind acquainted with the subject. But, excepting in these instances, I believe the Heathens have derived but little knowledge of the Gospel from their connexion with Christendom, for some ages past. And I think none of the commercial nations in Europe have had the propagation of Christianity less at heart than the English. What obligations the natives of Africa, are under to us, for instruction or example, may be estimated, in part, by a cursory survey of the state of our West India Islands.

That the Gospel is so little known in the world, and so little received where it is known, cannot be so properly ascribed to the will of God, as to the wickedness and wilfulness of men. Undoubtedly he to whom all things are possible, who has absolute power over the hearts of his creatures, could make a way for the universal reception of it. And we trust that in his own time he will do so. But power is not his only attribute. It would be rash and absurd to suppose that the great God *will* do every thing that he *can* do. We are sure that he will do what is worthy of himself; but of this his own infinite wisdom is the only competent judge. What is becoming of his perfections and holy government, we can know no further than he is pleased to inform us. But it certainly becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, when we contemplate his conduct. Or, if we do speak, to adopt the apostle's language, 'Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever,' Rom. xi. 33, 36.

\* More generally known amongst us by the name of the Brethren, or Moravians.

However, my text is fulfilling, and shall be fulfilled. This joyful sound has already been spread far abroad, in defiance of all attempts to restrain it. Multitudes, from age to age, have heard it, and found it to be the power of God unto salvation. And it would be easy to prove, if it belonged to my subject, that the superior advantages of civilization which Christendom enjoys, are remotely owing to the knowledge of revelation. To this must be chiefly ascribed the different state of this island from what it was when visited by Julius Cæsar. Yea, our modern philosophers would make but a poor figure, were they despoiled of all the plumes they have borrowed from the book they affect to despise. Further, the purpose of God to save sinners by faith in his beloved Son, is the primary ground of that patience and long-suffering which he still exercises towards such a world as this. And some imperfect traces of this design, transmitted by tradition, are probably to be found, though wofully disfigured, among every nation and people under heaven; which have at least preserved, in a degree, the notices of a right and wrong, and some faint warnings of conscience, in the most savage state of human nature. But, were it not for reasons connected with the designs of his mercy, we can scarcely conceive that the Holy God would have perpetuated the race of mankind in a state of rebellion and enmity against his government. Or if he had permitted them to multiply, and left them wholly and absolutely to themselves, without interposing some restraints upon their depravity, I believe the inhabitants of the earth would have been no better than incarnate fiends.

The prophecies, both of the Old and New Testament, encourage us to hope for a time when the light of Gospel truth will break forth with meridian brightness, the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see his salvation. As a pledge of this, and of the truth of the whole Scripture, we have what may be called a standing miracle continually before our eyes; I mean the state of the Jews, who, though dispersed far and wide among many nations, are every where preserved a distinct and separate people. The history of the world affords no other instance of the like kind. The great monarchies, by which they were successively conquered and scattered, have successively perished. Only the names of them remain. But the people whom they despised, and endeavoured to exterminate, subsist to this day; and, though sifted like corn over the earth, and apparently forsaken of God, are still preserved by his wonderful providence, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; still tenacious of the law of Moses, though the observance of it is rendered impracticable. Many days, many ages they have lived as the prophets

foretold they should, without a temple, without sacrifice or priest, Hos. iii. 4, 5. As yet, many Heathen nations are permitted to walk in their own ways. But at length 'the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved,' Rom. xi. 25, 26. The revolutions and commotions in kingdoms and nations, which astonish and perplex politicians, are all bringing forward this great event. The plan of the human drama, to us, who only see a single scene, is dark and intricate; but the catastrophe is approaching: and in the close of the whole, the manifold wisdom of God will be admired and adored, and all holy and happy intelligences will acknowledge, with transport, 'He has done all things well.'

But the point I am chiefly to press upon my hearers, is, that this word of salvation is sent to you, Acts xiii. 26. How the great Judge will deal with the Heathens, who were never favoured with it, he has not seen fit distinctly to inform us. But thus far he has assured us, that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who have the privilege of knowing the Gospel, if they reject it, Matth. xi. 20—24. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Do not think ministers assuming if they magnify their office. We have no reason to think highly of ourselves. Nor would you be blameable for disregarding us if we spoke in our own names. But if we preach the truth of the Gospel in simplicity and sincerity, then we speak in the name of the Lord, and demand your attention. Do you ask for our authority and commission? Ask your own consciences. If, like Felix, when you mean only to indulge your curiosity by hearing us, you are constrained to tremble, Acts, xxiv. 25; if we force upon your mind the remembrance of what you have said or done; if our message makes you uneasy and dissatisfied with yourselves; if you cannot avoid feeling at some times the truth of our principles, and the necessity of the change we would press upon you; if, though you have been repeatedly displeased and offended with what you hear, and perhaps, have gone away purposing or threatening that you would hear it no more, you still appear amongst us—then you have a sufficient proof that the ministers are sent and authorized to speak to you, and we take your consciences to witness that we preach the truth.

## SERMON XXXIII.

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### OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH UNREASONABLE.

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PSALM ii. 1—3.

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed: saying, Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us.*

It is generally admitted, that the institutes of Christianity, as contained in the New Testament, do at least exhibit a beautiful and salutary system of morals; and that a sincere compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his apostles would have a good effect upon society. Few infidels have ventured to contradict the common sense of mankind so far as to deny this. Nor can it be denied that the author of this institution, if we judge by the history and character given of him by the evangelists, exemplified, in the highest perfection, by his own conduct, the precepts which he enjoined to his followers. While he lived as a man amongst men, the tenour of his behaviour was such as became the friend of mankind. Though he submitted to a low estate, and often suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness, we do not read of his having wrought a single miracle merely for his own relief. But the wants and calamities of others continually excited his compassion, and engaged his assistance. He gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, and sometimes wiped away the tears of mourners, by restoring their dead to life. He endured hunger himself; but once and again provided food for multitudes, lest they, having nothing to eat, should faint by the way. Nor did he confine his acts of benevolence to his followers, but was easy of access, and granted the request of all, indiscriminately, who applied to him. 'He went about doing good,' Acts x. 38. and often put himself in the way of those who would not otherwise have known him. And though he was opposed, calumniated, and laughed to scorn, he continued unwearied and determined in the same cause, bestowing benefits on all around him, as occasions offered, and returning good for evil. May we not with reason ask, why then did Jews and Heathens, priests and people, Scribes and Saddu-

cees, rage so furiously against him who did nothing amiss, who did all things well? Why did persons of the most opposite interest, parties, and sentiments, who could agree in nothing else, so cordially agree in opposing MESSIAH?

His Gospel breathes the spirit of the great Author, and has a direct tendency to make men happy and useful. Wherever it was published, in the first age, among the Heathens, many of them turned from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God. It taught and enabled them to renounce 'ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly,' Tit. ii. 12.; and it still produces the same effects. The world now bears the name of Christian; but under this new and honourable name it retains the same spirit as formerly. Many who are called Christians, are no less under the power of evil tempers and evil habits, than the Heathens to whom the apostle preached. But where the Gospel of the grace of God reaches the heart, a real and observable change is produced. The profane person learns to fear an oath, the libertine is reclaimed, the drunkard becomes sober, and the miser kind. Wherever the truth of the Gospel is known and received, instances may be found of persons who were a terror and a burden to their families, being delivered from the stings of a guilty conscience, from the dominion of headstrong passions, from the slavery of habitual wickedness, and made peaceful, useful, and exemplary members of society, by what the apostle calls the preaching of the cross. And we challenge history to show, that an abiding, consistent reformation, was ever effected by any other doctrine, in a single province, or city, or village, or even in a single family.

What then shall we say of that zeal which kindled the fire of persecution against our Lord and his apostles, and his followers, through a succession of ages?—What is the common principle, the bond of union, which at this day connects people who differ so widely in other respects, and points their displeasure from all sides against this one object? In a former discourse (Sermon xvii.) I briefly mentioned the grounds of that dislike which the Jews manifested to MESSIAH's personal ministry; and I observed that they are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man, and therefore not peculiar to any one age or nation. The Gospel always did, and always will, produce the same happy change in those who receive it; and provoke the same opposition and resentment in those who do not. The actings will be different as circumstances vary, but the principle is universally the same. In this island, which the good providence of God has distinguished by many

signal and peculiar favours, the spirit of our constitution and government is friendly to liberty of conscience and the rights of private judgment ; so that our religious profession does not expose us to the penalties of fire and sword, stripes or tortures, imprisonment or banishment. Such trials have been the lot of our forefathers ; when the servants of God, under the names of Gospelers or Puritans, were treated as heretics of the worst sort. We are bound to acknowledge, with thankfulness, the blessings of religious and civil liberty which we enjoy. But the world at large around us is not more favourably disposed to the grace and rule of MESSIAH'S kingdom, than it was in the days of Heathen and Popish darkness. The tongue at least is unrestrained, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. The Gospel offends the pride of men, by considering them all on a level, as sinners in the sight of God ; and by proposing only one method of salvation, without admitting any difference of plea or character. It offends them likewise by its strictness. Like Herod, they might perhaps consent to do many things, Mark vi. 20. if they were left at liberty to please themselves in others, in which, though expressly contrary to the will of God, they will not submit to be controlled ; and therefore they are much displeased with the Gospel, which by affording no allowance or connivance to the least known sin, but prescribing a rule of universal holiness, crosses their inclinations and favourite interests. When Paul preached at Ephesus, Demetrius and his companions perceived that their craft was in danger. This was the real cause of their anger, but they were ashamed to avow it ; and therefore their ostensible reason of opposing him was of a religious kind, Acts xix. 28. and they professed a great concern for the honour of Diana. Few, perhaps, would have given themselves much trouble to promote or preserve the gain of the craftsmen ; but a pretended regard for the worship which had been long established, was a popular topic, which wrought powerfully upon the superstition of the ignorant multitude, and thousands were presently induced to join with them in the cry, ' Great is Diana of the Ephesians.'

The like arts are still practised with the like success. The same secret motives are disguised by the same plausible pretences. The deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart appears in no one instance more plainly than in the cavils which are repeated and multiplied against the grace of the Gospel. When we preach a free salvation by faith in Jesus, and propose his obedience unto death, as the sure and only ground of acceptance with God ; when we say, in the words of the apostle, to the vilest of

sinners who feel the burden, and fear the consequences of their sins, 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' Acts xvi. 31. an alarm is raised, and a concern pretended for the interests of morality. The doctrine of salvation by faith only is charged with opening a door, a flood-gate, for licentiousness; and it is supposed, that if this doctrine be true, people may live as they please, and still comfort themselves with the expectation of heaven at last. Considering our natural propensity to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, I do not wonder that persons who are, comparatively, sober and decent, should speak thus, while they are ignorant of the strictness of the holy law of God, and of the depravity of their own hearts. But I sometimes wonder that they are not a little disconcerted, by the characters of many, (so different from what they suppose their own to be,) who join with them in the objections they make. For in this point, with the sober and decent, the licentious and profligate readily concur; the whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and profane swearers, almost equal them in gravely expressing their apprehensions that the doctrine of salvation by grace will prove very unfavourable to the practice of good works. How very remarkable is this—that the virtuous and the vile, the most respectable and the most infamous people, should so frequently agree in sentiment, and unite in opposing the Gospel professedly from the same motive. But thus it was at the commencement of MESSIAH'S kingdom: kings, rulers, priests, and people, all conspired and raged against him. Herod and Pilate, the Jewish elders and the Roman soldiers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees thus differed, and thus agreed. They hated each other till he appeared; but their greater common hatred to him made them act in concert, and they suspended their mutual animosity, that they might combine to destroy him.

I may seem to have digressed from the immediate scope of my text; but I judged it proper to bring the subject home to ourselves. If I confined myself to prove that the enemies of our Lord, when he was upon earth, were very unreasonable and unjust in treating him as they did, I should have an easy task, and, I suppose, the ready assent of all my hearers. But there may be persons present, who, though they little suspect themselves, are equally misled by prejudices; and, under a semblance of zeal for a form of godliness, oppose the truth and power of it upon the same principles, and in the same spirit, as the Jews and Heathens did of old. The Jews who condemned MESSIAH to death, blamed their forefathers for persecuting the prophets who foretold his

appearance, Matth. xxiii. 30, 31 ; but their own conduct towards him was a proof that, had they lived in the days of the prophets, they would have acted as their fathers had done. So the resentment that many, who bear the Christian name in this day, discover against the doctrines of the Gospel, and against the people who profess them, is proof that they would have concurred with those who crucified the Lord of glory, had they lived in Jerusalem at that time.

In this prophecy, David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks of the future as actually present. He saw the resistance that would be made to the person and kingdom of MESSIAH by the powers of the world ; that they would employ their force and policy to withstand and suppress the decree and appointment of God. The question, 'Why?' implies that their opposition would be both groundless and ineffectual.

1. It was entirely groundless and unreasonable. MESSIAH was indeed a king, and he came to set up a kingdom that should endure for ever. But his kingdom is not of this world ; and, if rightly understood, would give no umbrage to human governments. It does not interfere with the rights of princes. His subjects are, indeed, primarily bound by the laws of their immediate King, and they must obey 'God rather than man,' Acts, v. 29. if a man will presume to enjoin such laws as contradict his known will. But with this exception, it is part of the duty they owe to their Lord, to obey those whom he has placed, by his providence, in authority over them. The kingdom of Messiah has little to do with what we call politics. His people are taught 'to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' Matth. xxii. 21. and to yield a peaceful subjection to the powers that be, under whatever form of government their lot may be cast. They 'are strangers and pilgrims upon earth,' 1 Pet. ii. 11. their citizenship, treasures, and conversation, are in heaven ; and they have no more direct concern with the intrigues and parties of politicians, than a traveller has in the feuds and disturbances which may happen in a foreign country through which he is passing. They are to obey God, they are to obey kings and governors in subordination to God, they are to render to all their due ; 'tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour,' Rom. xiii. 1—7. But where they cannot comply with the laws of government without breaking the laws of God, then they are not to obey, but to suffer patiently, committing their cause to him whom they serve ; well knowing that he is able to protect or relieve them, so far as his wisdom judges it fit, and to make them abundant amends for all they can suffer for his sake. I am

not a direct advocate for the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance in the largest sense. I set a great value upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty; I reverence the constitutional rights of nations, particularly of our own. But they are all dependent upon the will of our Lord; and I know not by what means they can be preserved to a people, when their sins have made them ripe for judgment. But 'let the dead bury their dead, Matth. viii. 22. God will never want instruments, when it is his pleasure to relieve the oppressed, or to abase the proud. For these purposes he overrules the counsels and affairs of men, pours contempt upon the designs of princes, and takes the wise in their own craftiness. The subjects of his spiritual kingdom have only to commit their cause to him, to wait upon him, to observe and to admire his management. Their best interest is always safe. And even the troubles they meet with are appointed for their good. But if they so far conform to the world as to take an active and decided part in the disputes and contentions around them, they usually dishonour their Christian character, and obstruct their own peace and comfort. There may possibly be some exceptions. God may sometimes place a servant of his, by the leading of his providence, in a post of high political importance, as he did Joseph and Daniel; but I believe such instances are few; and if any venture of their own accord beyond the proper line of their calling as Christians, the event is usually grief and loss to them. They are described in his word as those 'who are quiet in the land,' Psalm xxxv. 20. and such should be their deportment.

We are sure it was thus, in the first and golden days of Christianity. The Roman government was then absolute, arbitrary, and oppressive. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and others, who presided over it, and bore the name of Roman emperors, were beyond measure vile and abominable: one of them was, by a decree of the Roman senate, sentenced to death as a public enemy to mankind—but the Christians neither disputed their right, nor disobeyed their authority. Kings and rulers, therefore, have nothing to fear from the Gospel of Christ. The maxims of sound policy would engage all their influence in facilitating its progress; for true Christians will assuredly be good subjects. Impatience of subordination, contempt of lawful authority, tumults, riots, and conspiracies, are evils which would have no place if the Gospel was generally received. But princes have been usually exposed to the flattery of designing men, who by their arts and misrepresentations, have seduced them to act contrary to their true in-

terests. Their mistaken efforts to suppress that cause, which, if maintained, would have been the best security of their thrones, have often stained the annals of their reign with innocent blood, and filled their dominions with misery. History furnishes many instances of kings, who might otherwise have lived beloved and died lamented, that have involved themselves and their families in the calamities with which they unjustly punished those who deserved their protection. For,

2. Opposition to MESSIAH and his kingdom is no less vain and ineffectual, than unreasonable and groundless. Nor is it vain only, but ruinous to those who engage in it. What did the Jews build when they rejected the foundation-stone which God had laid in Zion? They acted, as they thought, with precaution and foresight. They said, 'If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation,' John xi. 48. Foolish politicians! Did they preserve their city by crucifying the Son of God? The very evil they feared came upon them; or rather, being abandoned of God to their own counsels, they brought it upon themselves. In a few years the Romans, with whom they appeared so desirous to keep upon good terms, destroyed their city with an unheard-of destruction, and extirminated them from the land. This was an emblem of the inevitable, total, irreparable ruin which awaits all those who persist in rejecting the rule of MESSIAH. The nation, the individual, that will not serve him, must surely perish.

Ah! if sinners did but know what the bonds and cords are which they are so determined to break; if they knew that 'his service is perfect freedom;' if they were aware what more dreadful bonds and chains they are rivetting upon themselves, by refusing his easy yoke, they would throw down their arms and submit. They think, if they yield to the Gospel they must bid adieu to pleasure. But what will become of their pleasure when, the day of his forbearance being expired, he will speak to them in his wrath, and fill them with hopeless horror and dismay?

Bless the Lord, ye favoured few, whose eyes are opened, whose hearts are softened, and who are become the willing people of this Saviour. Yet a little while and he will appear again, and then you also shall appear with him in glory!

## SERMON XXXIV.

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### OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH IN VAIN.

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PSALM ii. 4.

*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*

THE extent and efficacy of the depravity of mankind cannot be fully estimated by the conduct of Heathens destitute of the divine revelation. We may say of the Gospel, in one sense, what the apostle says of the law, 'It entered that sin might abound,' Rom. v. 20. It afforded occasion for displaying the alienation of the heart of man from the blessed God in the strongest light. The sensuality, oppression, and idolatry which have prevailed in all ages, sufficiently prove the wickedness of men to be very great. But the opposition which they who have rebelled against the government of their Creator make to the proposals of his grace, is a proof still more striking. If sin has so hardened their hearts, and blinded their eyes, that of themselves they neither can nor will implore his mercy; yet it might be thought that if the Great God whom they have so heinously offended, should be pleased, of his own goodness to make the first overtures of reconciliation, and to invite them to receive pardon, they would gladly attend to his gracious declaration; especially when they were informed that, to preserve them from perishing, he gave up his only Son to sufferings and death. But when they not only defy his power, but insult his goodness; when they reject and blaspheme the Saviour whom he commends to them; when they are but the more exasperated by his tenders of mercy; when they scorn his message, and persecute his messengers by whom he entreats them to be reconciled; this mad and ungrateful carriage shows such a rooted enmity against God in fallen men, as even the fallen angels are not capable of discovering. For MESSIAH 'took not on him the nature of angels,' nor did he make proposals of mercy to them. But he did take upon him our nature. He visited us in person; for us he lived a sufferer, and died that we might live. The prophets foresaw and foretold the reception he would meet

with, and their predictions were fulfilled. The Jews, who professed to expect him, and the Heathens who have not heard of him, united their utmost efforts to withstand and defeat the purposes of his unexampled love. What must the holy angels think of the baseness, presumption, and obstinacy of such creatures!

But rebellion against God is not only wickedness, but folly and infatuation in the extreme. 'Who ever hardened himself against the Lord and prospered?' Job, ix. 4. He whom they opposed, and against whom they thought they had prevailed when they saw him dead upon the cross, soon resumed his glory, and his throne. The text, therefore, principally respects the opposition made to his Gospel and to his kingdom after his ascension, which is still carrying on, but which always was, and always will be, in vain. The words I have read offer two points for the consolation of those who love him, and for the timely consideration of those who have hitherto disregarded him.

I. That 'he sitteth in the heavens.'

II. The notice he taketh of his enemies. He smiles at their rage, and treats both their power and their policy with contempt.

I. He whom God has anointed, (therefore called MESSIAH.) he against whom kings and rulers, nations and the people rage, 'sitteth in the heavens.' He has finished his great work, and entered into his rest; having by himself 'purged our sins,' he is immovably seated on his throne, 'at the right hand of the Majesty on high;' Heb. i. 3. He is the Head, King, and Lord of principalities, dominions, and powers, possessed of all authority, unchangeably fixed over all, 'God, blessed forevermore.' Rom. ix. 5. In this character he is the Representative, High Priest, Advocate, and Shepherd of all who put their trust in him. He is ever mindful of them. While he is preparing a place for them near himself, by the power of his Spirit he maintains an intercourse with them, and manifests himself to them as he does not to the world. By his providence, which ruleth over all, he manages their concerns upon earth, supplies their wants, and gives them present and effectual help and support in their time of trouble. To him their eyes and hearts are directed, 'they look to him and are enlightened,' Psalm xxxiv. 5. strengthened, and comforted. And under his protection they are safe. He having taken charge of them, and engaged to save them to the uttermost, 'no weapon formed against them can prosper.' Now they may draw nigh to God with boldness, for they have One 'who ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Now they may lay aside all anxious, uneasy cares, for they have a mighty Friend who careth for them. Now they may say, each one for himself,

‘I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, and my salvation.’ Isa. xii. 2. Whether you have, indeed, fled to him for refuge as the hope set before you, committed your soul to him, and accepted him in all his offices, as your Prophet, Priest, and King, is a point of experience. If you have, he knows it, for he enabled you to do it; and he will not disappoint the hope and expectation which he himself has wrought in you. If you have, methinks you must know it likewise. Have you not done it more than once? Do you not daily repeat this surrender of yourself to him? It is certainly possible to assent to the truths of the Gospel, considered merely as doctrines or propositions, yea, to plead and dispute for them with much seeming earnestness, and yet to be entirely a stranger to their power. But I trust that they to whom I now speak will understand me. Our Lord reminded Nathaniel of what had passed under the fig-tree, John, i. 48, when he thought himself alone. Do not I remind you of seasons when no eye but the eye of Him who seeth in secret was upon you? Did not you then and there, once and again, accept him as your Saviour upon the warrant of his own word, devote yourself to his service, resign yourself to his disposal, and intrust yourself to his care? Then fear not. He that sitteth in the heavens is on your side. If the promises be well grounded, the inference is sure. And though many may rise up against you, they shall not prevail; for he will ‘teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight,’ will cover your ‘head in the day of battle,’ and in the end ‘make you more than conqueror.’ For the battle is not yours, but the Lord’s. Your enemies are his, and his cause is yours. They who associate against him shall be dashed to pieces, as the billows break and die upon a rocky shore.

II. The feebleness and insignificance of their rage against MESSIAH, is intimated by the manner in which he notices their proceedings. ‘He holds them in derision, he laughs them to scorn.’ He has them perfectly under his control, holds them in a chain when they think themselves most at liberty, appoints the bounds beyond which they cannot pass, and can, in a moment, check them, and make them feel his hook and bridle, when in the height of their career.

It is the Lord’s pleasure not only to favour and to support, his people, but to do it in such a way that it may appear to be wholly his own work, and that the praise belongs to him alone. And therefore he permits their enemies, for a season, to try if they can prevent his designs. For a season, things take such a course

that their attempts seem to prosper ; they threaten, they boast, and confidently expect to carry their point. But the contest always issues in their shame and confusion. He not only disconcerts their schemes, but makes them instrumental to the promoting of his own designs. Thus, when he sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Pharaoh, instead of complying with his command, increased their burdens, added to the rigour of their bondage, and, though rebuked by the succession of severe judgments, he hardened himself the more, and was determined to detain them if he could. But he could not detain them a day or an hour beyond the appointed time, which God had long before made known to Abraham, Exod. xii. 41, 42. Then they were delivered, and Pharaoh and his host overthrown in the Red Sea. Hereby the name of the God of Israel was more known, noticed, and magnified, than it would have been, if Pharaoh had dismissed the people without reluctance or delay.

In like manner, when MESSIAH left the earth, his followers were considered as sheep without a shepherd. The world conspired to suppress his cause, and to root out the remembrance of his people. But the methods they employed counteracted their own designs. They who were dispersed by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, preached the word wherever they went, the Gospel spread from place to place, and the number of disciples daily increased. So that the Jewish rulers soon found themselves unequal to the task, and foreboded their own disappointment, 'doubting whereunto these things would grow,' Acts, v. 24. In some cases the Lord signally interposed, and showed how entirely the lives and the hearts of his adversaries were in his hands. The haughty Herod was suddenly smitten by an invisible hand, with a loathsome and mortal disease, Acts, xii. 23. He fell devoured by worms : but the success of the Gospel, which he had presumed to withstand, greatly increased and spread. The furious zeal of Saul of Tarsus, Acts, ix. against the truth, was silenced in a different manner. Jesus, whom he ignorantly persecuted, appeared to him in the way to Damascus, when he was 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples,' disarmed his rage, made him a monument of his mercy, and an earnest and successful preacher of the faith he had laboured to destroy.

From the Jews, the business was transferred to the Heathens, whose opposition was no less unavailing. Though they sometimes affected to boast that they had suppressed the Christian name, the Gospel was propagated in defiance of their attempts to prevent it. The worst and the best of the Roman emperors were

alike industrious, and alike successful, in their endeavours to stifle the work of God. At length in the reign of Constantine, the Christian religion obtained the sanction and protection of imperial authority.

But it soon appeared that the religion of the New Testament gained little advantage by this revolution. Though the worship of Heathen idols gradually declined, and sunk into disrepute, the bulk of the people of all ranks were only changed in name. The world still lay in wickedness, 1 John, v. 19. and true Christianity was still exposed to persecution. When the name of Christian ceased to be invidious and despicable, new names were soon invented to stigmatize the real servants of God; and ecclesiastical power gradually increased, till the mystery of iniquity reigned for ages in the temple of God. The persecutions of Popery equalled and exceeded those of Paganism. And they who aspired to be Christians indeed, were constrained, like the worthies of old, to 'wander on mountains and in deserts,' to hide themselves 'in dens and caves of the earth,' Heb. xi. 38. Yet, under all disadvantages, there was still a remnant, according to the election of grace, who could not be compelled to wear the mark of the beast. And while persecutors, who could only kill the body, seemed to weaken the church militant, they increased the number and the songs of the church triumphant.

To appearance, the church of Christ was often brought low. It was very low at the time of the Reformation. But then it was suddenly revived, and broke forth like the sun from behind a dark cloud; and the light of the Gospel was diffused far and wide, almost as at the beginning, in the apostles' days. But Protestants were quickly actuated by the same spirit as their Popish and Pagan predecessors had been. The form of Christianity was professed and protected, and the power of it denied and opposed. And to this day it remains a truth, verified by experience, 'that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must,' in one way or other, 'suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12.

Of late years, the sanguinary spirit which, under pretence of doing God service, destroyed his people by fire and tortures, is much subsided. We live in a time when great pretences are made to candour and moderation. We have reason to be thankful for our religious liberty, to the good providence of God. But, so far as men are concerned, we are not indebted for it to a just sense and acknowledgment of the right of private judgment, but to the prevalence of sceptical indifference and infidelity. The religion of the Gospel was, perhaps, never more despised and ha-

ted than at present. We seem to be returning apace to the state of the primitive ages, when there were but two sorts of persons, Christians and infidels. But, notwithstanding all the arts and assaults of men, whether open enemies or pretended friends, the Bible is still extant, the Gospel is still preached, yea, is still spreading. The Lord has always had a people, though they have been often hidden from the general notice and observation of men. 'He that sitteth in the heavens' laughs his opposers to scorn, and maintains his own cause in defiance of them all.

Surely, if this work was not of God, the united efforts of kings, councils, popes, philosophers, the great, the wise, the decent, and the profligate, must have overthrown it long ago. If a miracle be demanded in proof of Christianity, behold one! Though the world has been raging and plotting against it, from its first appearance; though it has been fiercely assaulted by those without, and shamefully betrayed by many within, it still subsists, it still flourishes. And subsist it shall, for it is maintained by Him who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can control or change them as he pleases. He can, and he will, support and strengthen his people under all their sufferings. He can disappoint his adversaries by unexpected events, divide them among themselves, and so manage them, by his providence, as to make them protect and promote the very cause which they hate. And whenever he pleases, he can, as it were, from the stones, Matt. iii. 9. raise up instruments to carry on his work, and to show forth his praise. Therefore,

1. Let not his people tremble for the ark. Our eyes, indeed, should affect our hearts. It becomes us to be jealous for the Lord of hosts, to be concerned for the contempt and dishonour that is cast upon his government and grace, to be grieved for the abounding abominations of the day, and to pity and pray for obstinate sinners who know not what they do. But we need not fear the failure of his promise. His truth and honour are engaged for the success of his Gospel, and they must stand or fall together. It is a cause dearer to him than it can be to us. The manifestation of his glory in the salvation of sinners by the doctrine of the cross, is the one great concern, for which the succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, is continued, and the visible frame of nature is preserved. 'He will work, and none shall let it. The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and the dispersed of Israel shall return to

the Lord their God, and be saved.' These great events, to those who judge by an eye of sense, and according to the present state of things, may appear improbable or impossible. But 'the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?' Isa. xiv. 27.

2. Think it neither strange nor hard, if any of you are called to suffer for the sake of the truth. Think it not strange; for thus it has been from the beginning. Think it not hard; for our sufferings are small, if compared with the lot of many who have lived before us. We are not called to 'resist unto blood.' Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see such days of liberty as we are favoured with, but have not seen them.

3. Consider seriously, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' He is the strongest side, and must prevail. If you have yielded yourselves to him, and taken upon you his yoke, your best interests are safe, your final happiness is secured. Nothing can separate you from his love. You shall be kept by his power through faith, 'and no weapon formed against you shall prosper.' But if you are against him, tremble, for the day of his wrath will come, it will 'burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and shall leave them neither root nor branch,' Mal. iv. 1. Turn, therefore, in time from your evil ways, submit yourselves unto him, and implore his mercy, while he waiteth to be gracious, 'that iniquity may not be your ruin.'

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## SERMON XXXV.

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### OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH RUINOUS.

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PSALM ii. 19.

*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

THERE is a species of the sublime in writing, which seems peculiar to the Scripture, and of which, properly, no subjects but those of divine revelation are capable. With us things inconsiderable in themselves are elevated by splendid images, which give them an apparent importance beyond what they can justly claim.

Thus the poet, when describing a battle among bees, by a judicious selection of epithets and figures, excites in the minds of his readers the idea of two mighty armies contending for empire. But the works and ways of God are too great in themselves to admit of any heightening representation. *We* conceive more forcibly of small things by illustrations borrowed from those which are greater; but the Scripture frequently illustrates great things by contrasting them with those which in our estimation are trivial and feeble. One instance, out of many which might be mentioned, is that truly sublime passage of the prophet, ‘And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree,’ Isa. xxiv. 4. The apostle, when favoured with a heavenly vision, introduces the same thought, almost in the same words, ‘And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together,’ Rev. vi. 13, 14. Such forms of expression are becoming the Majesty of the great God, before whom the difference between the great and the small, in our judgment, is annihilated. In his view, the earth, with all its inhabitants, are but as a drop which falls unnoticed from the bucket, or as the dust which cleaves to the balance, Isa. xl. 15. without affecting its equilibrium. At the same time, the simplicity of these illustrations, so well suited to confound the pride of the wise, is striking and obvious to the lowest capacities. If Homer or Virgil had attempted to describe the exertion and effect of the power of God, in subduing and punishing his enemies, they would probably have laboured for a simile sufficiently grand. But I must question if they would have thought of the image in my text, though none can be more expressive of utter, irreparable ruin, or of the ease with which it is accomplished. ‘He shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’

The series of the passages we have lately considered is very regular and beautiful. MESSIAH ‘ascended on high, and received gifts for men,’ Psalm lxxviii. 18. The first and immediate consequence of his exaltation in our nature, is the publication of the Gospel. Then follows the happy and beneficial influence of the Gospel on those who thankfully receive it. ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach these glad tidings.’ The next passage secures and describes its extensive progress. ‘The sound went forth into all the earth.’ The opposition awakened by it is then described, first, as unreasonable, ‘Why do the Heathen rage?’ Secondly, as ineffectual. ‘The Lord laughs’ at his op-

posers; he sits upon his immoveable throne, and derides their attempts. Thirdly, the final issue of their mad resistance, their confusion and ruin, is the subject of the verse I have read, which prepares for the close of the second part of the Oratorio. His enemies shall perish, his kingdom shall be established and consummated; and then all holy intelligent beings shall join in a song of triumph, 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.'

The two expressions, of breaking with a rod of iron, and dashing in pieces, suggest nearly the same idea: but as elsewhere he is said, to rule his enemies 'with a rod of iron.' Rev. xix. 15. I shall avail myself of this variation, in order to give you a more complete view of the dreadful state of those who oppose MESSIAH and his kingdom. He rules them at present; 'with a rod of iron,' and hereafter he will 'dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' Let us, therefore, consider,

I. How the Lord MESSIAH rules over impenitent and obstinate sinners in the present life. They attempt, in vain to withdraw from his subjection; they oppose his holy will; they refuse to submit to his golden sceptre: he will, therefore, 'rule them with a rod of iron.' For though they boast of their liberty, and presume to say, 'Who is Lord over us? Psalm xii. 4. yet, in the thing wherein they speak proudly, 'he is above them,' Exod. xviii. 11.: They cannot hide themselves from his notice, nor avoid the intimations of his displeasure.

I. One branch of his iron rule over them consists in that certain and inseparable connexion which he has established between sin and misery. 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' James iii. 18. They who live in the fear of the Lord, and yield a willing obedience to his word, not only possess peace of conscience, and a hope which can look with comfort beyond the grave; but are thereby preserved from innumerable evils, into which they who attempt to cast off his yoke unavoidably plunge themselves. On the contrary, 'the way of transgressors is hard,' Prov. xiii. 15. It is hard in itself, if we set aside for a moment, the consideration of the dreadful end to which it leads. Could you see what passes within the breast of a man who disdains to be governed by the rule of God's word, you would see his heart torn to pieces by the clamorous, insatiable demands of the various, violent, inconsistent appetites and passions, which like so many wild beasts, are continually preying upon him. Not one of them can be fully gratified, much less all, for many of them are diametrically opposite to each other. The boilings of anger, the gnawings of envy, the

thirst of covetousness, the anxieties attendant on pride and ambition, must make the mind that is subject to them miserable. 'There is no peace to the wicked;' there can be none. Further, their evil tempers and irregular desires produce outward and visible effects, which publicly and manifestly prove, that the service of sin is a hard drudgery, and that whatever pleasure it may seem to promise, its pay is misery and pain. 'Who hath wo, contentions, and wounds without cause?' Prov. xxiii. 29. The drunkard. Lewdness and drunkenness are high roads, if I may so speak, leading to infamy, disease, penury, and death. Such persons do not live out half their days which their constitutions might have afforded, if they had not sold themselves to do wickedly. Again, look into their houses. Where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. How frequently may we observe, in their family connexions, discord and enmity between man and wife, unkind parents, disobedient children, tyrannical masters, and treacherous servants! Thus they live, 'hateful in themselves and hating one another,' Titus, iii. 3. If they have what the world accounts prosperity, their hard master, Satan, so works upon their evil dispositions that they can derive no real comfort from it. Every day, almost every hour, puts some new bitterness into their cup. And in trouble they have no resource: having no access to God, no promise to support them, no relief from him against their anxieties and fears; they either sink down in sullen, comfortless despondency, or, in a spirit of wild rebellion, 'blaspheme him because of their plagues, Rev. xvi. 21. In society they are dreaded and avoided by the sober and serious, and can associate only with such as themselves. There, indeed, they will pretend to be happy; they carouse and make a noise, and assist each other to banish reflection; yet frequently the drink, or the devil, break their intimacies, and stir them up to quarrels, broils, and mischief. Such is a life of sin. 'The Lord rules them with a rod of iron.' They renounce his fear, and he refuses them his blessing. Nothing more is necessary to render them miserable, than to leave them to themselves.

2. 'He rules them with a rod of iron,' by his power over conscience. They may boast and laugh, but we know the gall and bitterness of their state; for we likewise were in it, until the Lord delivered us. Let them say what they will, we are sure that there are seasons when, like him whom they serve, 'they believe and tremble,' James ii. 19. They cannot always be in company, they cannot always be intoxicated; though this is the very reason why many intoxicate themselves so often, because they cannot bear their own thoughts when sober. They are then a bur-

den and a terror to themselves. They feel the iron rod. How awful are the thoughts which sometimes awaken them, or keep them awake, in the silent hours of the night! What terrors seize them in sickness, or when they are compelled to think of death! What a death-warrant do they often receive in their souls, under the preaching of that word of God which fills his people with joy and peace! Many will not hear it. But why not? They will not, because they dare not. I am persuaded there are more than a few of the brave spirits of the present day, who would willingly change conditions with a dog; and be glad to part with their reason, if they could at the same time get rid of the horrors which haunt their consciences. Is there one such person here? Let me entreat you to stop and consider, before it be too late. There is yet forgiveness with God. Your case, though dangerous, is not desperate, if you do not make it so yourself. I would direct your thoughts to Jesus. Look to him, and implore his mercy. His blood can cleanse from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost.

It is possible some may affect to contradict the representation I have made, and be ready to say, 'I find nothing of all this. I take a pleasure in my way. I have a healthy body, money at my command, and I can sleep soundly. I feel none of the qualms of conscience you speak of; and though the saints and good folks care as little for me as I do for them, yet I am very well and happy with such acquaintance as I like best. As to an hereafter, I do not think of it; but I am determined to live now.' In answer to sentiments of this kind, which I am afraid are too common, I observe,

3. That the amazing hardness and blindness of heart to which some sinners are given up, is another, and the most terrible effect 'of that iron rod' with which the Lord 'rules his enemies.' Pharaoh could say as positively as you, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Exod. v. 2. But because being often rebuked, he persisted in his obstinacy, the contest terminated in his destruction. If you are obstinate like him now, I believe you were not always so. You must have laboured hard, you must have resisted the light of truth, and have stifled many a conviction, before you could arrive to this pitch of obduracy. You have fought against the Holy Spirit: and wo unto you, if he be gone, gone for ever, and will strive with you no more. To be thus given up of God, to a reprobate mind, is the heaviest judgment that a sinner can be visited with on this side of hell. I am at a loss what to say to a person thus disposed, and I hope there are none

such present. But I would warn those who, though they have sinned with a high hand, are not altogether past feeling, lest you fall into such a state of confirmed disobedience and unbelief. 'Take heed lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Heb. iii. 13. If, under the light of the Gospel, you can go on in a course of wilful, wanton, deliberate wickedness, you are upon the very edge of the unpardonable sin, of that state from which it is impossible to renew you to repentance. If the Bible be, as you vainly wish it may prove, 'a cunningly-devised fable,' you may trample upon it with impunity, and laugh on securely to the end of life. But if it be true, remember you have been this day warned of the consequences of despising it. If you will perish, I am clear of your blood.

II. I proceed to consider the final issue of this unequal contest between the worms of the earth and their Maker. 'He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' Such a vessel may be curiously wrought, and appear beautiful to the eye; but it is frail, easily broken, and when once broken to pieces, it is irreparable. It is therefore a fit emblem of mortal man in his best estate. 'We are fearfully and wonderfully made,' Psalm cxxxix. 14. The texture of the human frame is admirable. The natural capacities of the mind of man, the powers of his understanding, will, and affections, the rapidity of imagination, the comprehension of memory, especially in some instances, are so many proofs, that, considered as a creature of God, he is a noble creature; and, though he is debased and degraded by sin, there are traces of his original excellence remaining, sufficient to denominate him in the words of the poet, 'majestic though in ruins.' But if you suppose him rich, powerful, wise, in the common sense of the words, he is brittle as 'a potter's vessel;' and, while possessed of every possible advantage, he is but like the grass or the flower of the field, which, in its most flourishing state, falls in a moment at the stroke of the scythe, and withers and dies. A fever, a fall, a tile, a grain of sand, or the air that finds its way through a crevice, may be an overmatch for the strongest man, and bring him down hastily to the grave. By a small change in the brain, or some part of the nervous system, he who now prides himself in his intellectual abilities, may soon become a lunatic or an idiot. Disease may quickly render the beauty loathsome, and the robust weak as infancy. There are earthen or china vessels which might possibly endure for many ages, if carefully preserved from violence. But the seeds of decay and death are sown in our very frame. We are crushed before the moth, and moulder away

untouched, under the weight of time. How surely and inevitably, then, must they whom the Lord strikes with his iron rod, be shattered with the blow.

Communities and collective bodies of men are, in his hand, no less frail than individuals. The first born throughout Egypt, and the vast army of Sennacherib, perished in a night. The Romans were the iron rod in his hand, wherewith he dashed the Jewish nation to pieces. Their fragments are scattered far and wide to this day, and who can gather them up? The Roman empire was likewise dashed to pieces in its turn; and such has been the end, successively, of many powers, and of many persons, who have presumed to oppose his designs. For a while they were permitted to rage, and plot, and strive; but at length they stumbled and fell, and their memory is perished.

But it is proper to bring the consideration nearer home. I have been informed, that the music to which this passage is set, is so well adapted to the idea it expresses, as in a manner to startle those who hear it. They who live in sinful habits, regardless of the Gospel, would be startled, indeed, if they were duly sensible how directly the words apply to their own situation, and that the Psalmist describes the manner in which God will treat them if they continue impenitent. If we could see all that passes upon dying beds, we should often see the false peace and vain hopes of sinners dashed to pieces when eternity is opening upon their view. We shall certainly see the solemnity of the great day: 'For we must all appear,' not only as spectators, but as parties nearly interested in the proceedings, 'before the judgment-seat of Christ.' 'Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him!' He will 'descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,' and 'before him shall be gathered all nations.' Where, then, shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? What will then become of those who despise, and those who abuse the Gospel of the grace of God? The libertine, the infidel, the apostate, the hypocrite, the profane scoffer, and false professor, how will they stand, or whither will they flee, when the great Judge shall sit upon his awful throne, and the books shall be opened, and every secret thing shall be disclosed? Alas! for them that 'are full,' and 'that laugh now, for then they shall pine and mourn,' Luke vi. 25. Then their cavils will be silenced, their guilt, with all its aggravations, be charged home upon them, and no plea, no advocate be found. Can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong,

when he shall speak to them in his wrath, and say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?'

But let them who love his name rejoice. You have fled for refuge to the hope set before you. To you his appearance will be delightful, and his voice welcome. You shall not be ashamed. This awful God is yours. He will then own and accept you before assembled worlds, and will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.' Then 'the days of your mourning shall be ended, and your sun shall go down no more,' Matth. xxv. 34. Isai. lx. 20.

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## SERMON XXXVI.

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THE LORD REIGNETH.

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REVELATIONS, xix. 6.

*Hallelujah ; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

THE book of the Revelation, being chiefly prophetic, will not, perhaps, be fully understood, till the final accomplishment of the events shall draw near, and throw a stronger light upon the whole series. But, while the learned commentators have been hitherto divided and perplexed in their attempts to illustrate many parts of it, there are other parts well adapted for the instruction and refreshment of plain Christians ; particularly those passages in which the scenery and images seemed designed to give us some representation of the happiness and worship of the heavenly state. Thus a plain, unlettered believer, when reading with attention the fourth and fifth chapters, though he cannot give a reason why the elders are four-and-twenty, the living creatures four, and the number of their wings neither more nor less than six ; yet, from the whole description of the Lamb upon the throne, the songs of the redeemed, and the chorus of the angels, he receives such an impression of glory, as awakens his gratitude, desire, and joy, and excites him likewise to take up the song of praise to him 'who has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood.' He is content to leave the discussion of hard questions to learned men, while he feeds by faith upon those simple truths which can be relished only by a spiritual taste ; and which, where there is

such a taste, make their way to the heart, without the assistance of critical disquisition.

The subject of the preceding chapter is the destruction of mystical Babylon, the head of the opposition against the kingdom of the Lord Christ. But Babylon sinks like a mill-stone in the mighty ocean, and is no more found. So must all his enemies perish. The catastrophe of Babylon, like that of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, is beheld by the saints and servants of the Lord with admiration, and furnishes them with a theme for a song of triumph to his praise. This may be properly styled sacred music indeed. It is commanded, inspired, and regulated by the Lord himself. The performers are all interested in the subject, 'they who fear God,' and are devoted to his service and glory. And though persons of this character are comparatively few upon earth, hidden, and in a manner lost, among the crowd of mankind; they will be, when brought together at last, a very large company. Their united voices are here compared to the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunders, and this is the solemn close, the chorus of their song, 'Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'

The impression which the performance of this passage in the Oratorio usually makes upon the audience is well known. But however great the power of music may be, should we even allow the flights of poetry to be truth, that it can 'soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak,' one thing we are sure it cannot do; it cannot soften and change the hard heart, it cannot bend the obdurate will of man. If all the people who successively hear the *Messiah*, who are struck and astonished, for the moment, by this chorus in particular, were to bring away with them an abiding sense of the important sentiment it contains, the nation would soon wear a new face. But do the professed lovers of sacred music, in this enlightened age, generally live as if they really believed that 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?' Rather, do not the greater part of them live, as they might do if they were sure of the contrary? as if they were satisfied to demonstration, that either there is no God, or that his providence is not concerned in human affairs? I appeal to conscience; I appeal to fact.

I apprehend that this passage, taken in the strictest sense, refers to a period not yet arrived. Babylon is not yet fallen. The servants of God in the present day, will, most probably, fulfil their appointed time upon earth, like those who have lived before them, in a state of conflict. They must endure the cross, and sustain opposition for his sake. The people who shall live when 'the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,' when the 'nations shall learn war no

more,' are yet unborn. But even now we may rejoice that 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,' and that Jesus is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' I must consider my text as referring to him. Many of the Heathens believed that God reigned. The Christian doctrine is, that the Lord God omnipotent exerciseth his dominion and government in the person of Christ. 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hands,' John iii. 35. And thus our Lord, after his resurrection, assured his disciples, 'All power is committed unto me in heaven and in earth,' Matth. xxviii. 18. He has already taken to himself his great power, and reigneth.—His right of reigning over all is essential to his divine nature; but the administration of government in the nature of man, is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death. But in the union of both natures, he is one person, Christ Jesus the Lord. All the riches and fulness of the Godhead, all the peculiar honours of the Mediator, centre in him. They may be distinguished, but they are inseparable.

Happy are they who can, upon solid and Scriptural grounds, exult in the thought that the Lord reigneth, and can make his government the subject of their hallelujahs and praises! Happy they who see, acknowledge, and admire his management in the kingdom of providence, and are the willing subjects of his kingdom of grace. Let us take a brief survey of his reigning glory in these kingdoms.

I. Great and marvellous is this Lord God omnipotent in his kingdom of Universal Providence. His mighty arm sustains the vast fabric of the universe. He upholds the stars in their courses. If we attentively consider their multitude, their magnitudes, their distances from us and from each other, and the amazing swiftness, variety, and regularity of their motions, our minds are overwhelmed, our thoughts confounded, by the vastness and the wonders of the scene. But He spoke them into being, and they are preserved in their stations and revolutions by his power and agency. If we fix our thoughts upon the earth, though in comparison of the immensity of his creation, it is but as a point or a grain of sand, it is the object of his incessant care. All its various inhabitants derive their existence and their support from him. He provides for the young ravens when unable to fly, and for the young lions that traverse the woods. The instinct of animals, whereby they are unerringly instructed in whatever concerns the welfare and preservation of their species, so vastly exceeding the boasted wisdom of man, that he can neither imitate nor comprehend it, is communicated by him. He teaches the birds to

build their nests, the spider to weave his web, and instructs the communities of bees, and insignificant emmets, to form their admirable policies and government among themselves. If we speak of intelligent beings, 'He does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.' He directs and overrules the counsels and purposes of men, so that, though they act freely, the event of all their different interfering schemes is only the accomplishment of his purposes. When they are employed as his instruments, from small beginnings, and in defiance of difficulties apparently insuperable, they succeed beyond their own expectations. When unhappily engaged against his designs, in vain they rage and plot. He takes the wise in their own craftiness, pours contempt upon their power and policy, and all their great preparations melt like a mist, or like snow before the sun, and leave no trace behind. Still more wonderful, to the eye of faith, is his controul over Satan and the powers of darkness. Whatever, for wise reasons, though unknown to us, he may permit them to do, they cannot, with all their subtilty or strength, detain one soul in their bondage longer than till his appointed time of release; nor recover one soul back to their dominion, of which he is pleased to undertake the care. On the contrary, he breaks the heads of these Leviathans in pieces, turns their counsels against themselves, and makes them instrumental in purifying his people, and extending his church, by the means they employ for the destruction of both. Thus they who dwell under his shadow are safe; for all things are in his power, and he always careth for them, and keepeth them, as the pupil of his eye; and therefore, though they are exercised with trials, and suffer many things for their good, his eye being always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer, they are supported, supplied, relieved, delivered, and at last, made more than conquerors.

II. He has a peculiar kingdom, which he has established distinct from the kingdoms of this world, though diffused and extended among them, and which, in due time, like leaven, will pervade and assimilate them all to himself. This is the kingdom of the Gospel, his church. It is founded upon a rock, and though the gates of hell continually war against it, they cannot prevail. For he is 'a wall of fire round about it, and a glory in the midst of it,' Zech. ii. 5.

Here he reigns upon a throne of grace. He possesses and exercises unlimited authority as a sovereign, to save whom he pleases, to pardon all manner of sins and offences, and to admit rebels and enemies, when they submit themselves and bow to his golden

sceptre, into the number of his children and his friends. Seldom do the kings of the earth publish an act of grace in the favour of those who have been guilty of rebellion, without clogging it with exceptions. Either they feel a resentment against some of the delinquents, which they have not magnanimity sufficient to conquer, or they dare not trust them. But his mercy is infinite; and he knows how to change their hearts when he pardons their sins.

Perhaps it may not be a digression wholly unuseful and impertinent, if I take this occasion to point out the several senses in which the word *church* may be understood agreeably to the Scripture.

1. It denotes, in the aggregate, the mystical church, the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head, Col. i. 18. A succession of these has appeared upon earth in every age, from the days of righteous Abel, whom Cain slew; and we have reason to believe, that the far greater part of them are yet unborn. They will all be assembled together before the throne, in the great day of his final appearance, and inherit the kingdom of glory prepared for them. This is the 'church which God hath bought with his own blood,' Acts xx. 28. Happy are they who belong to this society of the redeemed, 'whose names are written in heaven.'

2. The visible church contains all those who bear and acknowledge the name of Christians, and who admit and enjoy the Gospel revelation. The church, in this sense includes many nations. But it is a small thing to belong only to the visible church, for it is compared to a corn-floor (Matt. iii. 12.) on which chaff is mingled with the wheat; to a field in which tares grow promiscuously with the good seed; to a fisher's net enclosing a great multitude of fishes, both good and bad, Matt. xiii. 24, 47. But a time of discrimination will come. The chaff and the tares, and whatever is evil, will be consumed. Alas! what will it avail at last to say, 'Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence,' at thy table with thy true disciples, 'and thou hast taught in our streets,' Luke xiii. 26, 27. and we have heard in our own language of thy wonderful works, if you can say no more? My heart is pained with the apprehension, lest some of you who have joined in the same public worship with true believers, have sat in the same seat, and lived in the same families, should at last see them, with whom you have been very nearly connected in this world, received into the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves be shut out.

3. The catholic church, in any one period, is that part of the

visible church which is united to the Lord by living faith. It comprises all who agree in the profession of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts, or, in the apostle's words, 'All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:' Eph. vi. 24. This catholic church, through the policy of Satan and the deceitfulness of the heart, is too much divided against itself. Prejudice, bigotry, and remaining ignorance, greatly prevent that desirable union amongst true Christians, which would promote their peace, comfort, and increase, and would contribute more than a thousand arguments to put their adversaries to shame and to silence. That shameful contention for denominations, parties, and favourite preachers, for which the apostle reprov'd the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 4. is still greatly to be lamented. But, though they are too backward in acknowledging and assisting each other, the Lord is merciful to their weakness, and bears with them all. And as they grow in grace, and drink more into his Spirit, their hearts are enlarged, and they approach nearer to his pattern of long-suffering, patience, and tenderness.

4. The word church is applied to particular societies of Christians, who are connected by a participation in the ordinances of the Gospel, and who maintain a Scriptural separation from the sinful spirit and customs of the world. And though there may be pretenders among them, as there were among the apostolic churches, they are denominated by the better part. They belong to the catholic church by their profession of the truth—of course they are a part of the visible church; and those of them who are, in deed and in truth, what they profess to be, are living members of the mystical church, to which all the promises are made. By whatever name they are known or distinguished among men, they are 'branches of the true vine,' they 'have their fruit unto holiness, and their end everlasting life.' But to return:—

In this his church, or spiritual kingdom, he rules by wise and gracious laws and ordinances. He releases his subjects from all authority, in point of conscience, but his own, and enjoins them to call no one master but himself, Matt. xxiii. 8—10. If they 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made them free,' Gal. v. 1. they will not give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of any man, nor follow him further than he follows their Lord. And consequently, if they are influenced by his royal law of doing to others as they would that others should do unto them, they will not attempt to exert an undue authority or wish to be called masters themselves so as to assume a dogmatical carriage, or to expect a universal and absolute submission. But

it must be owned that, in our present state of infirmity, this privilege is not sufficiently prized, nor this command duly complied with, there being scarcely a man who does not either arrogate too much to himself, or allow too much to others. A fault in the one or the other of these respects, may be assigned as a principal cause of most of the evils which deform the appearance, or injure the peace of the church. But the design of his Gospel is to set his people at liberty from the yoke of men, from the fetters of custom and tradition, of superstition and will-worship, that they may enjoy, in his service, a state of perfect freedom.

For it is the principal glory of his kingdom, that he reigns in the hearts of his people. There he writes his precepts, impresses his image, and erects his throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward secret influence, breathing his own life and spirit into them; so that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleasurable, and its own reward. By the discoveries he affords them of his love, he wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their understandings. They derive from him the 'spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind,' 2 Tim. i. 7. and run with alacrity in the way of his commandments.

It is impossible, therefore, to make this song our own, and cordially to rejoice that 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,' unless we are the willing subjects of his government; unless we are really pleased with his appointed way of salvation, approve of his precepts, and, from a view of his wisdom and goodness, can cheerfully submit and resign ourselves to the disposal of his providence. In all these respects we are by nature at variance with him. We are too proud to be indebted to his grace, too wise in our own conceits to desire his instruction, too obstinately attached to the love and practice of sin, to be capable of relishing the beauty and spirituality of his commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too strong and grasping to permit us to be satisfied with the lot, and with the dispensations he appoints for us. We wish, if possible, and as far as possible we attempt, to be our own carvers. We are unthankful when he bestows, impatient if he withholds, and if he sees fit to resume the gifts of which we are unworthy, we repine and rebel against his will. This enmity must be subdued before we can be pleased with his government: in other words, we must be changed, we must be made new creatures. To produce this change, this new creation, the Gospel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought. The sinner who is first convinced of his

guilt and misery, and then reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to his administration. He owns and feels the propriety of his proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in the sharpest afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the desert of his iniquities. He considers himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the strongest obligations 'to live no longer to himself, but to him who loved him and gave himself for him.' And what was before his dread and dislike, becomes now the joy of his heart, the thought that the Lord reigneth, and that all his concerns are in the hands of him who doeth all things well.

Are there any among us who say in their hearts, 'We will not have this' Saviour 'to rule over us?' The thought is no less vain than wicked. He must, he will 'reign, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet.' You must either bend or break before him.

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## SERMON XXXVII.

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### THE EXTENT OF MESSIAH'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

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REVELATION, xi. 15.

*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

THE kingdom of our Lord in the heart, and in the world, is frequently compared to a building or house, of which he himself is both the foundation and the architect, Isa. xxviii. 16. liv. 11, 12. A building advances by degrees, 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 20—22. and while it is in an unfinished state, a stranger cannot, by viewing its present appearance, form an accurate judgment of the design and what the whole will be when completed. For a time, the walls are of unequal height, it is disfigured by rubbish, which at the proper season will be taken away ; and by scaffolding, which, though useful for carrying on the building, does not properly belong to it, but will likewise be removed when the present temporary service is answered. But the architect himself proceeds according to a determinate plan, and his idea of the whole work is perfect from the beginning. It is thus the Lord views his people in

the present life. He begun a good work in them, but as yet every part of it is imperfect and unfinished; and there are not only defects to be supplied, but deformities and encumbrances that must be removed. Many of the dispensations and exercises which contribute to form their religious character, do not properly belong to that work which is to abide, though they have a subserviency to promote it. When that which is perfect is come, the rest shall be done away.

And thus, although the growth and extent of his kingdom is the great scope and object of his providence, to which all the revolutions that take place in the kingdoms of this world shall be finally subservient; yet the steps by which he is carrying forward his design, are, for the most part, remote from the common apprehensions of mankind, and therefore seldom engage their attention. His kingdom, founded upon the rock of ages, is building, advancing, and the gates of hell shall not be able to withstand its progress. Only detached and inconsiderable parts of the plan are as yet visible, and the beauties are every where obscured by attendant blemishes; but his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Princes and statesmen seldom think of him, are seldom aware that in prosecuting their own schemes, they are eventually fulfilling his purposes, and preparing the way to promote the cause which they despise, and often endeavour to suppress. But thus it is. Sometimes he employs them, more directly, as his instruments; and when they are thus engaged in his work, their success is secured. So Cyrus, whom Isaiah mentioned by name, Isa. xlv. 1—5. long before his birth, as the appointed deliverer of Israel from their captivity, prospered in his enterprises, being guided and girded by him whom he knew not, and established his own power upon the ruins of the Assyrian monarchy. The Roman empire likewise increased and prospered from small beginnings, that a way might be opened, in the proper season, for the destruction of the Jewish economy, and for facilitating the preaching of the Gospel. And posterity will see, that the principal events of the present age in Asia and America, have all a tendency to bring forward the accomplishment of my text; and are leading to one grand point, the spreading and establishment of the church and kingdom of our Lord. His plan is unalterably fixed. He has said it, and it shall be done. Things will not always remain in their present disordered state; and though this desirable period may be yet at a distance, and appearances very dark and unpromising, the word of the Lord shall prevail over all discouragements and opposition.

Prophecies which are not yet fulfilled will necessarily be obscure. Many learned men have laboured to explain the prophecies of this book, to ascertain the facts which are foretold, and to fix the dates when they may be expected to take place. But they are so divided in their judgments, and with regard to several of the most eminent who thus differ, the support their opinions derive from the character and abilities of the proposers is so nearly equal, that those who consult them are more likely to be embarrassed than satisfied. For myself, I think it becomes me to confess my ignorance, and my inability, either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propose better of my own. I do not, therefore, undertake to give the precise sense of this passage, as it stands connected with the rest of the chapter. Nor should I, perhaps, have attempted to preach from it, but upon this occasion. It is introduced, with great propriety, in the *Messiah*, as a close to the second part, which begins with a view of the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, by the power of his priestly office; and concludes with an account of his glorious success, as the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

My business is only to lead you to some pleasing and profitable reflections upon this subject, now it comes in my way. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that speak in magnificent strains of a kingdom, which God would, in his appointed time, establish upon the earth; the sense of which is greatly weakened and narrowed, if restrained, as some commentators would restrain it, to the restoration of Israel to their own land, from their captivity in Babylon. Yet it must be allowed, that the highly figurative language in which many of these prophecies are expressed, a great part of which cannot be understood literally, renders the interpretation difficult.

What we read in the twentieth chapter of this book, of a period in which the saints shall reign with Christ during a thousand years, has given occasion to almost a thousand conjectures, concerning a millennial state. Some persons suppose that the present frame of nature shall be dissolved and changed, and expect a proper resurrection of the dead; after which, the Lord will personally reign with his people upon the earth, when purified by fire, and restored to its primitive perfection and beauty. If so, earth will be heaven; for the state of happiness believers are taught to hope for, depends not upon local circumstances, but chiefly consists in the enjoyment of his unveiled immediate presence, and beholding his glory. Others seem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the same manner as the Jews formed their expectations of MESSIAH'S kingdom. They think that temporal

honours, dominion, prosperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers: the very portion which they are now called upon to renounce and despise. But, as I have hinted, large allowances must be made for the metaphorical language of prophecy. We read, that the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold, and that the twelve gates are twelve pearls; Rev. xxi. 15, 21. but no person of sound judgment can suppose that this description is to be understood strictly, according to the letter. The personal presence of MESSIAH with his people, is not necessary to such degrees of happiness, as are compatible with the present state of mortality and imperfection. It is sufficient, if he vouchsafes to dwell with them by his Spirit. Much less are temporal dominion and wealth necessary to the prosperity and honour of his spiritual kingdom. But what, then, are we encouraged to expect, beyond what has been hitherto known, with regard to this point? Let us consult the Scriptures, which alone can guide and determine our inquiry. I will select some express passages, a few out of many which might be adduced, but sufficient, I hope, by the rules of sober interpretation, to lead us to a satisfactory answer.

The glory and happiness of Messiah's kingdom is described by the prophets in terms which cannot be justly applied to any period of the church already past. They sometimes represent it by a variety of beautiful pastoral images, and sometimes in plainer language. Thus Isaiah, 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge many nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,' Isa. ii. 2—4. Again, 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,' Isa. xi. 6—9. I

might likewise transcribe the whole of the sixtieth chapter, but shall only offer you the latter part of it: 'Violence shall no longer be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time,' Isa. lx. 18—22. To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel: 'And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing: and I will cause the shower to come down in his season, there shall be showers of blessing,' Ezek. xxxiv. 23—26. And again: 'Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. 'And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, The land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced and inhabited,' Ezek. xxxvi. 34—35. The prophet Zechariah speaks to the same effect: 'Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.' 'And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name One,' Zech. ii. 10, 11. xiv. 9.

Though the promises and prophecies of this import are addressed to the church, under the name of Israel, Jacob, Zion, or Jerusalem, we are certain they were not fulfilled to the nation of Israel while their civil government subsisted. Their national prosperity and glory were greatly diminished before any of these prophecies were revealed. They were an inconstant and a suffering people, during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, till at length their city and temple were destroyed by the Chaldeans. And though they returned from their captivity, and their city and temple were rebuilt, they continued tributary and dependent, and were successively subject to the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman power. Their obstinate rejection and crucifixion of MESSIAH, filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost. They were soon afterwards exterminated from their land; their constitution, both of church and state, utterly subverted; and they remain, to this day, in a dispersed state, which renders the observance of their law impracticable.

It seems equally plain, that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled to the Christian church. The greater part of the earth, to this day, is unacquainted with the name of Jesus. And the general face of Christendom, whether in Popish or in Protestant countries, exhibits little more of the spirit and character of the Gospel, than is to be found among the Heathens. If Christianity be compatible with pride or baseness, with avarice or profusion, with malice and envy, with scepticism in principle, and licentiousness of conduct, then Christians abound: but if humility, integrity, benevolence, and a spiritual mind, are essential to a Christian; if we judge by the criterion which our Lord himself appointed, and account only those his disciples who live in the exercise of mutual love, it is to be feared that they are but few, even in the places which are most favoured with the light of the Gospel. But can the Scriptures be broken? Can the promises of the Lord fail? By no means. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle' of his word shall fail of accomplishment.

It is not necessary to suppose that every individual of mankind shall be savingly converted to the Lord in this future day of his power; but I apprehend the current language of the prophecies warrant us to hope that the prayers and desires of the church shall, in some future period, be signally answered, in the following respects:

1. That the Gospel shall visit the nations which are at present involved in darkness. The Heathen are given to MESSIAH for 'his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his pos-

session.' At present, (as I have formerly observed, page 256,) if the whole of Christendom was inhabited by real Christians, they would bear but a small proportion to the rest of mankind. Large countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, where the Gospel was once known, have been for many ages involved in Mahomedan darkness. The scattered remnants of the Greek church in Turkey are so miserably depraved and ignorant, that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned as an exception. The rest of Asia knows little of Christianity, unless they have learnt it in the eastern parts from the cruelty and tyranny of men who bear the name of Christians. The like may be said of America, excepting the northern provinces of our late dominion there. For the zeal of the Spaniards and Portuguese has produced few other effects than rapine, slavery, and deluges of human blood. The interior parts, both of Africa and America, are unknown. The countries and islands lately discovered in the southern hemisphere, are left, as they were found, in gross ignorance. The exertions of our navigators to supply them with sheep and cows, and useful implements, from Europe, were humane and laudable. But it does not appear that the least attempt was made to impart to them the knowledge of our holy religion. The only missionary they have from us (if he be yet living) is the much spoken of Omiah. This man was brought to England, almost from the antipodes; he spent some time amongst us, and was then sent back to tell his countrymen what he had seen and heard. But if he gave a faithful account of our customs, morals, and religion, so far as they fell within the circle of his own observations, the relation would certainly be little to our honour, and I am afraid much to their hurt. In brief, a large part of Europe, almost the whole of the other three continents, with the islands of the Eastern and Southern oceans, are destitute of the true Gospel. But there is a time approaching, called, 'the fulness of the Gentiles,' when the Redeemer's glory shall dawn and shine upon all nations. And though we cannot see when or how this happy change shall be effected, yet, in the Lord's hour, mountains shall sink into plains. Nor is it more improbable to us now, than it would have seemed to an inhabitant of Rome in the time of Julius Cæsar, that the island of Great Britain should one day be distinguished by all those privileges which the providence of God has since bestowed upon it.

2. That this Gospel shall prevail, not in word only, but in power. Even where the name of Christ is professed, but little of the power of it is at present known. The superstition and false

worship generally prevalent within the pale of the Roman and Greek churches, may be mentioned, without offence to Protestants. But the bulk of the Protestant countries are equally overspread with scepticism and wickedness. Few, comparatively, among Protestants, are friendly to that Gospel which the apostles preached; and much fewer are they who are influenced by it. Perhaps no nation is favoured with greater advantages for knowing the truth than our nation, nor any city more favoured than this city. I doubt not but there are persons now living, who would have been thought eminent Christians, if they had lived in the first and happiest age of the church; and I trust their number is greater than we are aware of. The Lord has a hidden people, little known to the world, or to each other. But if we judge by the standard of truth, we must acknowledge that the power of religious profession is very low. How little does it appear in the lives, tempers, and pursuits of most who hear the Gospel? But the time will come when Christians shall again be known by their integrity, spiritual-mindedness, and benevolence, and all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. The fall of mystical Babylon, and of anti-christ in its various forms, and the calling of the Jews, are events which are positively foretold, and which, when they come to pass, will have great effects. Zion, as yet, is only building, but it shall be built.

3. That the animosities and disputes which prevail among Christians shall cease. The observation of a late ingenious writer, which, it is to be feared, he was confirmed in by his own experience, is too much founded in truth: 'We have just religion enough to make us hate one another.' The spirit of party, prejudice, bigotry, and interest; a zeal for systems, forms, modes, and denominations, furnish men with plausible pretences for indulging their unsanctified passions, and deceive them into an opinion, that while they are gratifying their pride and self-will, they are only labouring to promote the cause of God and truth. Hence often the feuds which obtain among religious people are pursued with greater violence and to greater lengths, and are productive of more mischievous consequences, than the quarrels of drunkards. The lovers of peace, who refuse to take a part in these contentions, but rather weep over them in secret, are censured and despised as neutrals and cowards, by the angry combatants on all sides, while the world despises and laughs at them all. It was not so in the beginning, nor will it be so always. The hour is coming, when believers shall be united in love, shall agree in all that is essential to a life of faith and holiness, and

shall live in the exercise of forbearance and tenderness towards each other, if, in some points of smaller importance, they cannot think exactly alike; which possibly may be the case in the best times, in the present imperfect state of human nature. 'Ephraim then shall no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim,' Isa. xi. 13.

4. That it will be a time of general peace. At present, the kingdoms which, by their profession, should be subjects of the Prince of Peace, are perpetually disturbing, invading, and destroying each other. They live in habits of mutual fear and jealousy, and maintain great armies on all sides; that each nation may be prepared, if occasion offers, to strike the first blow. War is followed as a trade, and cultivated as a science; and they who, with the greatest diligence and success, spread devastation, and ruin far and wide, and deluge the earth with human blood, acquire the title of heroes and conquerors. Can there be a stronger confirmation of what we read in Scripture concerning the depravity of man? Can we conceive an employment more suited to gratify the malignity of Satan and the powers of darkness, if they were permitted to appear and act amongst us in human shapes? Could such enormities possibly obtain, if the mild and merciful spirit of the Gospel generally prevailed? But it shall prevail at last, and then 'the nations shall learn war no more,' Isa. ii. 4.

How transporting the thought! that a time shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth. The evils (and these are the greatest evils of human life) which men bring upon themselves, and upon each other, by their wickedness, shall cease; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's displeasure, by such public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. And if some natural evils, as pain and sickness, should remain, submission to the will of God, and the compassion and tenderness of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this prospect be desirable to us, surely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be inquired of by his people for the performance.

But to many persons the extension of dominion and commerce appears much more desirable. The glory and extent of the British government has been eagerly pursued; and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathens, are considered by the politicians and merchants of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their

notice, or rather as obstacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is said of MESSIAH, and of his church, 'the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish,' Isaiah lx. 12. The word of God may be slighted, but it cannot be annulled; and it is more a subject for lamentation than wonder, that our national prosperity should decline, when we are indifferent, yea, adverse, to that cause which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and establish.

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## SERMON XXXVIII.

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KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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REVELATION, xix. 16.

[*And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written,*] KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

THE description of the administration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all opposition, concludes the second part of *Messiah*. Three different passages from this book are selected to form a grand chorus, of which his title in this verse is the close; a title which has been sometimes vainly usurped by proud worms of the earth. Eastern monarchs, in particular, have affected to style themselves king of kings, and lord of lords. In the Scriptural language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potsherds of the earth; but they are by nature so strongly infected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour answerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon divine prerogative. Thus sovereignty, majesty, holiness, and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the *great*. But let the great and the mighty know, that wherein they speak proudly, MESSIAH is above them. The whole verse, (of which the latter clause only is in the Oratorio,) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is represented as wearing his title. It is written, or inscribed, upon his vesture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh; either upon that part of his vesture which covers his

thigh, or upon the upper part of his vesture, and upon his thigh likewise.

II. The title itself, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind possess, is derived from him, and absolutely subject to his control.

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his vesture and upon his thigh.

1. This name being written upon his 'vesture,' denotes the manifestation and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the vesture stained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the success of his great undertaking. In the passage from whence this verse is selected, there are three names attributed to MESSIAH. He has 'a name which no one knows but himself,' Rev. xix. 12. agreeably to what he declared when upon earth. No man, οὐδείς, no one, neither man nor angel, knoweth the Son, but the Father; this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A second name, 'The Word of God,' Rev. xix. 13. denotes the mystery of the divine personality. The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when he resumed it from the grave, became the seat of all power and authority; which power we are now taught to consider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it essentially belongs, but as the power of God exercised in and by that Man who died upon the cross for our sins. In consequence of his obedience unto death, he received 'a name which is above every name,' Phil. ii. 9. This inscription his own people read by the eye of faith in the present life, and it inspires them with confidence and joy, under many tribulations they pass through in the course of their profession. Hereafter it shall be openly known and read by all men. Every eye shall see it, and every heart must either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his 'thigh.' The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on which the sword is girded, Psalm xlv. 3. By this emblem we are taught, that he will assuredly maintain and exercise the right which he has acquired. As he has a just claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are merely titular. So the king of Great Britain is styled likewise king of France, though he has neither authority nor possessions in that kingdom. But this name which MESSIAH bears is full of life, truth, and influence. He is styled 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' because he really is so; be-

cause he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleasure 'in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,' with an absolute and uncontrollable sway, 'so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou?' Dan. iv. 35.

II. The title itself is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' He is the 'Prince of the kings of the earth,' Rev. i. 5. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counsel together, and set themselves against him, saying, 'Let us break his bands asunder,' Psalm ii. 3. But 'he sitteth in the heavens, and has them in derision. He has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips; and the result of all their contrivances is neither more nor less than the accomplishment of his will.

1. The rage they discover, and the resistance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be asked, Why does he permit them to resist? we may give an answer in point from the case of Pharaoh. He resisted, and he perished. He was often warned and rebuked, but he still hardened his neck, and continued stubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was destroyed without remedy. Thus the God of Israel was more magnified, and the people of Israel were more honoured, in the view of the surrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the case would have admitted if Pharaoh had made no opposition to their departure. Yet the obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose that God is the author of the sin which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,' James, i. 13. and the Scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness or ice to the agency of the sun, though both inevitably follow, if the light and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressive, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and

Fountain of Light; and if he is pleased to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have seldom any higher end in view than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do they are but servants of this great king and Lord, and fulfil his purposes, as the instruments he employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against him, or to open a way for the spread of his Gospel. Thus, under the Old Testament dispensation, (for he was King from everlasting,) the successes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus, were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman, Isa. x. 15. And they acted under a limited commission, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when his design was accomplished, we hear of them no more. Time would not suffice, were I to adduce the many striking instances of the like kind which offer to observation from the perusal of modern history. It is well known, with respect to that great event, the Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century, and especially in our own land, that many of the principal persons who contributed to its establishment, hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy, engaged them in such measures as the King of kings over-ruled to produce consequences which they neither intended nor could foresee; and which, when they did apprehend, they would have prevented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection on the late American war; in the origin and progress of which, there was such an evident disproportion between the apparent causes, and the effects produced by them; between the first designs and expectations of the principal actors on both sides, and the final event; that I think they who do not perceive a superintending Providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to still greater and more important revolutions, must be quite at a loss to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foresight.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is further evident from the preservation of his people; for the world is against them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the sea, has bounds prescribed to it which it cannot pass. So far as he is pleased to over-rule it to his own praise, he will permit it to operate; but the remainder,

that is not subservient to the accomplishment of his purpose, he will restrain, Psal. lxxvi. 10. But he works so secretly though powerfully, by the agency of second causes, that only they who are enlightened by his word and Spirit can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counsel to Absalom which, though wicked, was, in the political sense of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious son. David had prayed that the Lord would 'turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness,' 2 Sam. xv. 31. Had the Lord instantly deprived Ahithophel of his reason, this prayer would have been more visibly, but not more effectually answered, than by the counter-advice of Hushai, which, though rash and extravagant, being suited to gratify the vanity and folly of Absalom, rendered the other abortive, 2 Sam. xvii. 14. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themselves, and then one party, to mortify and oppose the other, will protect those whom otherwise they wish to destroy. Thus Paul escaped from the malice of the Jewish council by the sudden disagreement which arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, Acts xxiii. 7. though they came together equally determined to destroy him. At other times, kings and statesmen act so inconsistently with their professed aims, and take steps so directly calculated to prevent what they wish to obtain, or to bring upon themselves what they mean to avoid, that we can only say, they are infatuated. A very small compliance seemed likely to have secured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to speak mildly to the people for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his servants for ever. But when we read that the cause was from the Lord, 1 Kings xii. 15. and that, in this way, his purpose of separating the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was effected, the wonder ceases. Very observable, likewise, was the coincidence of circumstances which preserved the Jews in Persia from the destructive designs of their adversary Haman. If the king (Esther vi. 1.) had slept that night, as usual, or if his attendant had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that chronicle but the very passage in which the service of Mordecai had been recorded, humanly speaking, Haman would have carried his point. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumstances, each of them, if considered singly, apparently trivial, and all of them contingent with respect to any human foresight or prevention, the Lord often pours contempt upon the wise and mighty and defeats their deepest laid

and best concerted schemes, in the moment when they promise themselves success.

Many salutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the consideration of this subject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It should inspire us with confidence. If the Lord of hosts, the Lord of lords, be for us, what weapon or counsel can prosper against us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God. The concerns of his church are in safe hands. The cause so dear to us, is still more dear to him. He has power to support it when it is opposed, and grace to revive it when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never shall be forsaken. When he will work, none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourself, if you have committed yourself and your all to him. 'The very hairs of your head are numbered,' Matt. x. 30. There is a hedge of protection (Job i. 10.) around you, which none can break through without his permission; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he designs to make a temporary and seeming evil conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It should affect us with an admiring and thankful sense of his condescension. 'Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest be so mindful of him?' 'He humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven,' Psal. cxiii. 6. But he stoops still lower. He affords his attention and favours to sinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a sigh or falling tear escapes his notice. He pities them, as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their strength, or their strength to their trials, and so adjusts his dispensations to their state, that they never suffer unnecessarily, nor in vain.

3. How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers. Is the man congratulated or envied whom the king delighteth to honour? Believers are more frequently despised than envied in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleasures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the 'sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty,' 2 Cor. vi. 18. Their possessions are great, for 'all things are theirs,' 1 Cor. iii. 21. They are assured of what is best for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and shall ere long be acknowledged and

owned by him before assembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be astonished and confounded when they shall see the righteous, whom they once undervalued, 'shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God.'

4. We may lastly infer the extreme folly and danger of those who persist in their rebellion and opposition against this King of kings, and Lord of Lords. Though he exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them for a season, the hour is approaching when his wrath will burn like fire. It is written, and must be fulfilled, 'the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,' Psalm ix. 17. Oh! the solemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the Judge shall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind shall be summoned to his tribunal! Will not you yet tremble and bow before him, ye careless ones, while he is seated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of mercy stands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent, and believe the Gospel. If to-day you will hear his voice, it is not yet too late. But who can answer for to-morrow? Perhaps 'this night your soul may be required of you,' Luke, xii. 20. Are you prepared for the summons? If not, seize the present opportunity. Attend to the 'one thing needful.' Seek his face, that your soul may live. If not, remember that you are warned; your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our message, and if you finally reject it, you must answer for yourselves to him whose message it is.

## PART III.

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### SERMON XXXIX.

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#### JOB'S FAITH AND EXPECTATION.

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JOB, xix. 25, 26.

*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

CHRISTIANITY, that is, the religion of which MESSIAH is the author and object, the foundation, life, and glory, though not altogether as old as the creation, is nearly so. It is coeval with the first promise and intimation of mercy given to fallen man. When Adam, by transgression, had violated the order and law of his creation, his religion, that is, the right disposition of his heart towards God, was at an end. Sin deprived him at once of faith and hope, of love and joy. He no longer desired, he no longer could bear the presence of his offended Maker. He vainly sought to avoid it; and when compelled to answer, though he could not deny his guilt, instead of making an ingenuous confession, he attempted to fix the blame upon the woman, or rather indeed upon the Lord himself, who had provided her for him. But mercy, undeserved, and undesired, relieved him from a state in which he was already become obdurate and desperate. A promise was given him of 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. iii. 15. which virtually contained, as the seed contains the future plant, the substance of all the subsequent promises which were fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by all that he did, or suffered, or obtained for sinners, in the character of Mediator. For a sinner can have no comfortable intercourse with the Holy God, but through a Mediator. Therefore the apostle observes of the patriarchs and servants of God, under the Old Testament, 'These all died in faith,' Heb. xi. 13. We can say nothing higher than this of the apostles and martyrs under the New Testament. They died, not trusting in themselves

that they were righteous, not rejoicing in the works of their own hands, but they died, like the thief upon the cross, in faith, resting all their hopes upon him who, by his obedience unto death, is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth,' Rom. x. 4. We have greater advantages, in point of light and liberty, than those of old. The prophecies concerning MESSIAH, which, at the time of delivery, were obscure, are to us infallibly interpreted by their accomplishment. And we know that the great atonement, typically pointed out by their sacrifices, has been actually made; that the Lamb of God, has, by the one offering of himself, put away sin. But as to the ground and substance, their faith and hope were the same with ours. 'Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ,' John viii. 56.; and aged Jacob soon after he had said, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,' died with the same composure and willingness as Simeon did, who saw it with his own eyes. Job, who was perhaps contemporary with Jacob, who at least is, with great probability, thought to have lived before Moses, gives us, in this passage, a strong and clear testimony of his faith. And forms a beautiful and well-chosen introduction to the third part of *Messiah*, the principal subject of which is, the present privileges and future prospects of those who believe in the Saviour's name.

The learned are far from being agreed, either in the translation, or in the explanation of this text. The words *worms* and *body* being printed in Italics in our versions will apprise the attentive English reader that there are no words answerable to them in the Hebrew. If you omit these words, something will be evidently wanting to make a complete sense. This want different writers have supplied, according to their different judgments; and from hence chiefly has arisen the variety of versions and interpretations. But it would be very improper for me, in this place, to take up your time, and to draw off your attention, from the great concerns which should fill our minds when we meet in the house of God, by giving you a detail of controversies and criticisms, which, after all, are much more uncertain than important. We need not dispute whether Job, in this passage, professes his assurance of the incarnation of MESSIAH, or of his resurrection, or of his final appearance to judge the world; or whether he is only declaring his own personal faith and hope in him. These several senses are not so discordant, that if we determine for one, we must exclude the rest. I shall content myself with the words as I find them. And I hope that, if we should miss some of the precise ideas which Job might have when he spoke, we shall not

greatly mistake his general meaning, nor wander far wide from the scope of the text.

Four things are observable :

I. The title of 'Redeemer.'

II. The appropriate word, 'My,'

III. His standing upon 'the earth.'

IV. Job's expectation of seeing him 'in his flesh.'

I. The title. There is no name of MESSIAH more significant, comprehensive, or endearing, than the name REDEEMER. The name of *Saviour* expresses what he does for sinners. He saves them from guilt and wrath, from sin, from the present evil world, from the powers of darkness, and from all their enemies. He saves them with an everlasting salvation. But the word 'Redeemer,' intimates likewise the manner in which he saves them. For it is not merely by the word of his power, as he saved his disciples when in jeopardy on the lake, by saying to the winds and the seas, 'Peace, be still: and there was a great calm, Mark iv. 39.; but by price, by paying a ransom for them, and pouring out the blood of his heart, as an atonement for their sins. The Hebrew word for Redeemer, *Goel*, primarily signifies, a near kinsman, or the next of kin. He with whom the right of Redemption lay, Numb. xxxv. 19—21. Ruth iv. 1—3. and who, by virtue of his nearness of relation, was the legal avenger of blood. Thus MESSIAH took upon him our nature, and by assuming our flesh and blood, became nearly related to us, that he might redeem our forfeited inheritance, restore us to liberty, and avenge our cause against Satan, the enemy and murderer of our souls. But thus he made himself also responsible for us, to pay our debts, and to answer the demands of the justice and law of God on our behalf. He fulfilled his engagement. He suffered, and he died on this account. But our Redeemer, 'who was once dead, is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death and of hades,' Rev. i. 18. This is he of whom Job saith, 'I know that he liveth,' (was then living,) though he was not to 'stand, upon the earth, until the latter day.' He is the living One, having life in himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8. Such was his own language to the Jews, 'Before Abraham was, I am,' John viii. 58. Therefore the Redeemer is mighty, and his redemption is sure. He is able to save to the uttermost. His power is unlimited, and his official authority, as Mediator, is founded in a covenant, ratified by his own blood, and by the oath of the unchangeable God, Psalm cx. 4.

II. But Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, 'My Redeemer.' And all that we know, or hear, or speak of

him, will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in him as *Our Redeemer*. A cold speculative knowledge of the Gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no further design than to understand the tenour and import of the writing, will neither save nor comfort his soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the estate, and all the particulars specified, his own. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, 'The promises are mine; the pardon, the peace, the heaven of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in his will, which is confirmed and rendered valid by his death; Heb. ix. 16. and therefore I humbly claim, and assuredly expect the benefit of all that he has bequeathed. But how shall we obtain this comfortable persuasion, and preserve it against all the cavils of our enemies, who will endeavour to litigate our right? I seem to have before me a proper occasion of discussing a point, very important and by too many misunderstood; I mean, the nature of that assurance of hope which the Scripture speaks of as attainable, which has been happily experienced by many believers, and which all are exhorted and encouraged to seek after, in the methods of God's appointment. But my plan will only permit me to offer a few brief hints upon the subject.

1. Many respectable writers and preachers have considered this assurance as essential to true faith. But we have the Scripture in our hands, and are not bound to abide by the decisions of any man, further than as they agree with this standard. The most eminent properties, or effects ascribed to faith, are, 'that it works by love,' Gal. v. 6. 'purifies the heart,' Acts xv. 9. and 'overcomes the world,' 1 John v. 4. I think it cannot easily be denied, by those who are competent judges in the case, that there are persons to be found, who give these evidences that they are believers, and yet are far from the possession of an abiding assurance. They hope they love the Lord, but there is such a disproportion between the sensible exercise of their love, and the conviction they have of their obligations to him, that they are often afraid they do not love him supremely; and if not, they know that in the Scriptural sense they do not love him at all.

They can say, from their hearts, that they desire to love him, but they dare not go further. But there is a weak and a strong faith; they differ not in kind, but only in degree. Faith is com-

pared to a 'grain of mustard-seed,' Matt. xvii. 20. which, under the cultivation of the heavenly Husbandman, who first sows the seed in the heart, grows up to assurance. But in its infant and weak state, it is true and acceptable faith. Far from 'breaking the bruised reed,' Isa. xlii. 3. he will strengthen it. 'He will not quench the smoking flax,' but will in due time fan it into a flame.

2. I will go a step further. Were I to define the assurance we are speaking of, I should perhaps say, *It is*, in our present state, *the combined effect of faith and ignorance*. That assurance which does not spring from true faith in the Son of God, wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is no better than presumption. But I believe what we call *assurance*, even when it is right, is not entirely owing to the strength of our faith, but in a great measure to our having such faint and slight views of some truths, which, if we had a more powerful impression of them, unless our faith was likewise proportionably strengthened at the same time, might possibly make the strongest assurance totter and tremble. I will explain myself. Admitting that I had a right to tell you, that I am so far assured of my interest in the Gospel salvation, as to have no perplexing doubt either of my acceptance or of my perseverance, you would much over-rate me, if you should suppose this was a proof that my faith is very strong. Alas! I have but a very slight perception of the evil of sin, of the deceitfulness of my own heart, of the force and subtilty of my spiritual enemies, of the strictness and spirituality of the holy law, or of the awful majesty and holiness of the great God with whom I have to do. If, in the moment while I am speaking to you, he should be pleased to impress these solemn realities upon my mind, with a conviction and evidence tenfold greater than I have ever known hitherto, (which I conceive would still be vastly short of the truth,) unless my faith was also strengthened by a tenfold clearer and more powerful discovery of the grace and glory of the Saviour, you would probably see my countenance change, and my speech falter. The Lord in compassion to our weakness, shows us those things by little and little, as we are able to bear them; and if, as we advance in the knowledge of ourselves and of our dangers, our knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ advances equally, we may rejoice in hope, we may even possess an assured hope. But 'let not him who hath put on his harness, boast as though he had put it off,' 1 Kings xx. 11. We are yet in an enemy's land, and know not what changes we may meet with before our warfare is finished.

3. How far our assurance is solid, may be estimated by the effects. It will surely make us humble, spiritual, peaceful, and patient. I pity those who talk confidently of their hope, as if they were out of the reach of doubts and fears, while their tempers are un sanctified, and their hearts are visibly attached to the love of the present world. I fear they know but little of what they say. I am better pleased when persons of this character complain of doubts and darkness. It proves, at least, that they are not destitute of feeling, nor, as yet, lulled into a spirit of careless security. And there are professors, whom, instead of endeavouring to comfort in their present state, I would rather wish to make still more suspicious of themselves than they are; till they are convinced of the impossibility of enjoying true peace while their hearts are divided between God and the world. For though sanctification is not the ground of a good hope, it is the certain concomitant of it. If it be true, 'that without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14. it must likewise be true, that without holiness no man can have a Scriptural and well-founded hope of seeing him.

4. But to give a direct answer to the inquiry, How shall I know that he is my Redeemer? I may use the prophet's words, 'Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord,' Hos. vi. 3. Our names are not actually inserted in the Bible, but our characters are described there. He is the Redeemer of all who put their trust in him. You *will* not trust in him, unless you feel your need of him; you *cannot*, unless you know him as he is revealed in the word; you *do not* unless you love him, and are devoted to his cause and service. If you know yourself to be a sinner deserving to perish, if you see there is no help or hope for you but in Jesus, and venture yourself upon his gracious invitation, believing that he is able to save to the uttermost; and if you include holiness and a deliverance from sin in the idea of the salvation which you long for, then he is your Redeemer. If, among us, an act of grace was published, inviting all criminals to surrender themselves, with a promise of mercy to those who did; though no one was mentioned by name in the act, yet every one who complied with it, and pleaded it, would be entitled to the benefit. Such an act of grace is the Gospel. The Lord says 'This is my beloved Son, hear him,' Mark, ix. 7. If you approve him, he is yours. If you are still perplexed with doubts, they are owing to the weakness of your faith. But there are means appointed for the growth of faith. Wait patiently upon the Lord in the use of those means, and you shall find he has not

bid you seek his face in vain. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Live not in the omission of known duty. Do not perplex yourself with vain reasonings, but believe and obey, and the Lord shall be with you. There are some peculiar cases. Allowances must be made for the effects of constitution and temperament. Some sincere persons are beset and followed, through life, with distressing temptations. But in general, simplicity and obedience lead to assurance. And they who hearken to the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments, 'go on from strength to strength,' Psalm lxxiv. 7. their peace and hope increase, like a river, which from small beginnings, runs broader and deeper, till it falls into the ocean. But to return to Job:—

III. Another article of his creed concerning the Redeemer, is, 'He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth.' The latter or last days, in the prophetic style, usually denote the MESSIAH'S day, the times of the Gospel. To this time Job looked forward. He beheld the promises afar off. Thus MESSIAH was the consolation of his people of old, as he who *was* to come. And it should be our consolation, to know that he *is* come. His standing upon the earth may include the whole of his appearance in the flesh: his life, passion, and resurrection. The manner of expression intimates something important and wonderful. Had Job, in the spirit of prophecy, spoken of any individual of Adam's race, of Isaiah, or Paul, there would have been nothing extraordinary predicted by saying he shall stand upon the earth, for all men do so in their successive generations. But that the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, the Maker of all things, should condescend to visit his creatures, to dwell with men for a season, to stand and walk upon the earth with them, clothed in a body like their own, is an event which never could have been expected, if it had not been revealed from heaven. It was the object of Job's faith, and well deserving the solemn preface with which he introduces his firm persuasion of it, 'Oh! that my words were graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever!' When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord of hosts, instead of admiring the magnificence of the building, he was struck with the condescension of the Lord, who would vouchsafe to notice it, and honour it with a symbol of his presence. 'Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this house which I have built!' 1 Kings, viii. 27. But what was the visible glory which appeared in that temple, if compared with the glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he tabernacled in our flesh! The human nature

of Christ is that true temple, not made with hands, in which God is manifested upon a throne of grace, that sinners may approach him without dismay, and receive out of his fulness grace for grace. To him all the prophets gave witness: on him the desire and hope of his people, in all ages have been fixed. He was to stand upon the earth, as Mediator between God and man. And in the same office, now he is upon the throne of glory; he is, and will be, admired, adored, and trusted in, by all his believing people, to the end of time.

IV. From the Redeemer's appearance upon earth, Job infers the restoration and resurrection of his own body. His trials had been great—bereaved of his children and substance, afflicted with grievous biles, harassed with temptations, reproached by his friends: out of all those troubles the Lord his Redeemer delivered him, and his latter days were more prosperous than his beginning. But he knew that he must go the way of all the earth, that his body must lie in the grave and return to dust. But he expected a future time after his dissolution, when in the flesh, for himself, and with his own eyes he should see God. The expressions are strong and repeated. He does not speak the language of hesitation and doubt, but of confidence and certainty. It likewise appears that he placed his ultimate happiness in seeing God. His words are not very different from those of the apostle, 'When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,' 1 John iii. 2. To behold the glory of God, as our Redeemer, to be in a state of favour and communion with him, and, according to the utmost capacity of our nature, to be conformed to him in holiness and love, is that felicity which God has promised, and to which all his servants aspire. Some foretastes of it they enjoy in the present life, which cheer them under their trials, and raise them above the grovelling pursuits of those who have their portion only in this world. But their chief possession is in hope. They look forward to a brighter period, when they shall awaken from the sleep of death, 'to behold his face in righteousness,' Psalm xvii. 15. Then, and not till then, they shall be completely satisfied. The expectation of Job, therefore, affords a sufficient proof that the doctrines of an immortal state, and of a resurrection unto life, were included in the revelations which God afforded to his people in the earliest times; and, consequently, that the religion of the Old Testament and of the New is substantially the same.

The great inquiry this subject should impress upon us, is, Are we thus minded? What think you, my dear friends, of Christ? Have you accepted him as your Redeemer? and have you a

good hope that you shall see him to your comfort, when he shall return to judge the world? If so, you may rejoice. Changes you must expect. You must die, and your flesh must be food for worms. But he has promised to 'change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself,' Phil. iii. 21.

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## SERMON XL.

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THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED.

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1 CORINTHIANS, XV. 20.

*But now the Lord is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

As, in the animal economy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally necessary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot say that either of them is more essentially requisite than the other; so, in the system of divine revelation, there are some truths, the knowledge and belief of which, singly considered, are fundamentals with respect to the salvation of a sinner. And though they are distinct in themselves, we cannot determine which of them is of most importance to us; for, unless we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for instance, is the Scriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature. This is a first principle; for unless we understand what our state is in the sight of God, the enormity of our transgressions, and our incapacity for true happiness until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly understand a single chapter in the Bible. Such, likewise, is the doctrine of the atonement. For if we could know how totally we are lost, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we must unavoidably sink into despair. Again, if we were sensible of our state as sinners, and even if we trusted in Christ for salvation, yet the apostle observes in this chapter, that unless he be indeed risen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain, and we should

still be in our sins. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is a doctrine absolutely essential to our hope and comfort; and it is likewise a sure pledge, that they who believe in him shall be raised from the dead also, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For 'now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept.' Let us at present consider his resurrection. The sure consequence of it, that his people shall be raised from the dead, will offer to our meditations from the following verses.

The resurrection of Christ being, as a fact, the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Christianity rest; it has pleased the Lord to put the indubitable proof of it within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninspired history so certainly and unquestionably authenticated. It may seem unnecessary to prove it, and to many of you it is entirely so. Yet I think it proper to take some notice of it; not so much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the sake of persons who may be assaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the subtilties of sceptics, are sometimes pestered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps more shrewd and powerful than such as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffee-houses. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and if permitted will, work powerfully upon this evil disposition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of Scripture, and of this among the rest. And many persons, who have been so well convinced that our Lord rose from the dead as to venture their souls and their all upon it, have found themselves at a loss how to answer the enemy in an hour of sharp and pressing temptation.

Let us suppose then, that we had lately received the news of some extraordinary and almost incredible event, and let us consider what evidence we should require to satisfy us that the report was true, and apply the same kind of reasoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a person named Jesus who gathered disciples, and died upon a cross, is universally acknowledged. Both Jews and Heathens, who lived at the time and afterwards, not only admitted it, but urged it as a reproach against his followers. Many testimonies of this kind are still extant.

The turning point between his enemies and his friends is his resurrection. This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly after he arose, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he

showed himself, and satisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the same person whom they had seen crucified. They reported what they saw, and we believe their report. We are therefore to inquire, who they were? and on what grounds we receive and rely upon their testimony?

If they were mistaken themselves, or if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty design of imposing upon mankind, we who depend upon their relation may be involved in their mistake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of these suppositions can possibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witnesses, then we are not only justified in giving credit to their testimony, but it must be unreasonable, and, (in a case of this importance,) presumptuous and dangerous to reject it.

I. That they were competent judges of what they asserted, is evident,

1. From their numbers. The eye-witnesses of this fact were many. 'He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also,' 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw no otherwise than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persons would appropriate the word *demonstration*, to *mathematical* evidence, yet *moral* evidence may be in many cases equally conclusive, and compel assent with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities as Paris and Rome, though I never saw them, that I am no more able 'seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid which I have seen demonstrated.

2. From the nature of the fact, in which it was not possible that so many persons could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others was attended with peculiar, striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom our Lord had shown himself. He would see for himself; he required more than ocular proof; for he said, 'Ex-

cept I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,' John, xx. 25. It is no wonder, that when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy addressed his risen Saviour in the language of adoration and love, 'My Lord and my God!' But his former conduct showed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses. There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For,

1. If we judge of them by their writings, we must at least allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts were evidently suited to answer their design. The penmen of the New Testament were confessedly men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations, till they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate upon their fellow-creatures such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should be impostors themselves. Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well-concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion, and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidly and successfully in a few years throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morality, so vastly superior to the united endeavours of the philosophers of all ages? A learned man in France attempted to prove, (for what will not learned men attempt?) that most of the Latin poems which are attributed to those whom we call the classic writers, and particularly the *Æneid* of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whose names they bear, but gross forgeries, fabricated by monks in the dark ages of ignorance, and successfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till *he* arose to detect the imposture. He gained but few proselytes to his absurd paradox. Yet, to suppose that men who could only express their own dull sentiments in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Vir-

gil, when they undertook to impose upon the world ; or to affirm that the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was in reality written by an ignorant Ploughman, and only sent abroad under the sanction of a celebrated name ; cannot be more repugnant to true taste, sound judgment, and common sense, than to imagine that the evangelists and apostles were, from their own resources, capable of writing such a book as the New Testament ; the whole of which must stand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection.

2. But further : They could not possibly propose any advantage to themselves in their endeavours to propagate the Christian religion, if they had not been assured that the crucified Jesus, whom they preached, was risen from the dead, and had taken possession of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a constraining sense of his love, and depending upon his promise and power to support them in the service to which he had called them, they were neither ashamed nor afraid to proclaim his Gospel, and to invite and enjoin sinners every where to put their trust in him ; otherwise they had nothing to expect but such treatment as they actually met with for professing their belief of his resurrection, and especially for the pains they took to publish it, first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 23. They were, in fact, despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went ; and those who espoused their cause were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostors there have been many ; but we cannot conceive that any set of men would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could, for a moment, suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking as, under pretence of the service of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falsehood, it would be impossible, upon that ground, to account for the success which they meet with. If this council and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought, Acts, v. 38. But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes

into the belief of their doctrine, against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their words with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus were numerous, notorious, and undeniable; and the moral effects of their preaching, though too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such as can only be with reason ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of Paganism, the superstitions of idol worship, though in every country connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration than for reasons of state, were very soon shaken, and in no great space of time subverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had described the Christians as the objects of universal contempt and hatred, Christianity became the established religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the subject, we have indisputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and persecuted as the Christians were, their religion so greatly prevailed, that in many places the idol temples were almost deserted.

But the proof of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most important and satisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and historical evidence, with which multitudes of true Christians are unacquainted, but is, in its own nature, equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the Gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls, have the witness in themselves; and are very sure that the doctrine, which enlightened their understandings, awakened their consciences, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin, brought them into a state of peace and communion with God, and inspired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, must be true. They know that the Lord is risen indeed, because they are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, and have experienced a change in themselves, which could only be wrought by the influence of that Holy Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow. And many believers, though not qualified to dispute with philosophers and sceptics upon their own learned ground, can put them to shame and to silence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulness under afflictions; and would especially silence them if they were eye-witnesses of the composure and elevation of spirit with which true believers in a risen Saviour welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence which I would principally recommend to my hearers to seek after. If the resurrection of Christ be a truth and a fact much depends upon the right belief of it. I say *the right belief*; for, though I have offered you a brief view of the

external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews or Mahomedans. If I should ask you, Believest thou the resurrection? might I not answer myself, as the apostle did on another occasion, 'I know that thou believest?' Acts, xxvi. 27. But so powerful is the defect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea, very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance, Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case—If Christ be risen from the dead, according to the Scriptures, then all that the Scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead, then he is the Lord of the dead and of the living—then he has the keys of death and hades—then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tribunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him. Your Lord who was dead, is alive, and 'because he liveth, ye shall live also.' 'If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God.' 'And, when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory.'

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## SERMON XLI.

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DEATH BY ADAM, LIFE BY CHRIST.

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1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 21, 22.

*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

FROM Mr. Handel's acknowledged abilities as a composer, and particularly from what I have heard of his great taste and success

in adapting the style of his music to the subject, I judge, that this passage afforded him a fair occasion of displaying his genius and powers. Two ideas, vastly important in themselves, are here represented in the strongest light, by being placed in contrast to each other. Surely the most solemn, the most pathetic strains must be employed, if they accord with the awful words, 'By man came death,' 'In Adam all die.' Nor can even the highest efforts of the heavenly harpers, more than answer to the joy, the triumph, and the praise, which the other part of my text would excite in our hearts, if we are interested in it, provided we were capable of comprehending the full force and meaning of the expressions, 'By man came also the resurrection,' 'In Christ shall all be made alive.'

By one man came death. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' Rom. v. 12. Sin opened the door to death. The creation, at the beginning, was full of order and beauty. 'God saw every thing that he had made, and behold all was very good,' Gen. i. 31. Adam, happy in the image and favour of his Maker, breathed the air of immortality in Paradise. While moral evil was unknown, natural evils, such as sickness, pain, and death, had no place. How different has the state of things been since! Would you account for the change? Charge it upon man. He sinned against his Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor; and thus, by him, came death. The fact is sure; and therefore our reasonings upon it, in order to account for it, further than we are enlightened and taught by Scripture, are unnecessary and vain. God is infinitely wise, and therefore this change was foreseen by him. He doubtless could have prevented it, for to Omnipotence every thing that does not imply a contradiction, is possible, is easy. But he permitted it, and therefore it must have been agreeable to his wisdom, holiness, and goodness, to permit it. He can overrule it to the purposes of his own glory, and to ends worthy of himself, and he has assured us that he will do so. Thus far I can go, nor do I wish to go further. An endeavour to vindicate the ways of God to man, to fallen man, upon the grounds of what he proudly calls his reason, would be an impracticable, and, in my view a presumptuous attempt. In proportion as his grace enlightens our minds, convinces us of our ignorance, and humbles our pride, we shall be satisfied, that, in whatever he appoints or permits, he acts in a manner becoming his own perfections. Nor can we be satisfied in any other way. We see, we feel, that evil is in the world. Death reigns. It has pleased God to afford us a revelation, to visit us with the light of his Gospel. If, instead

of reasoning, we believe and obey, a way is set before us by which we may finally overcome every evil, and obtain a happiness and honour superior to what belonged to man in his original state. They who refuse this Gospel, must be left to their cavils and perplexities, until the day in which the great Judge and Governor of all shall arise to plead his own cause, and to vindicate his proceeding from their arrogant exceptions. Then 'every mouth will be stopped,' Rom. iii. 19. Let us look to the heavens, which are higher than we; and attend to what we may learn from sure principles, that the earth, with all its inhabitants, is but as dust upon the balance, if compared with the immensity of God's creation. Unless we could know the whole, and the relation which this very small part bears to the rest of his government, we must be utterly incompetent to judge how it becomes the great God to act. We are infected with the sin, and we are subject to the death, with all its concomitant evils, which came into the world by the first man. But we are likewise invited to a participation of all the blessings which the second Man has procured, by his atonement for sin, and by his victory over death. 'For as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection of the dead.'

Let us take a survey, first of the malady, and then of the remedy.

I. The malady; the effect and wages of sin is death.' Many ideas are included in this word, taken in the Scriptural sense.

1. The sentence annexed to the transgression of that commandment which was given as an especial test of Adam's obedience, and which affects all his posterity, is thus expressed, 'In the day that thou eatest—thou shalt surely die,' Gen. ii. 17. But man was not ordinarily, to die by a stroke of apoplexy, or by a flash of lightning. The sentence includes all the natural evils, all the variety of wo, which sin has brought into the world. The rebellious tempers and appetites which so often cut short the life of man, together with the sufferings and troubles which sooner or later bring him down with sorrow to the grave, being the consequence of sin, may be properly considered as belonging to that death in which they terminate. Even the earth and the elements partook in the effects of man's disobedience. 'Thorns and thistles' (Gen. iii. 18.) were not the produce of the ground till after he had sinned. Nor can I suppose that hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes, were known in a state of innocence. But had the whole earth been a paradise, man, having sinned, must have been miserable. It is not in situation to make that heart happy which is the seat of inordinate

passions, rage, envy, malice, lust, and avarice. And were the earth a paradise now, it would be stained with blood, and filled with violence, cruelty, and misery, while it is inhabited by sinners. Many persons at present, who dwell in stately houses, and have every thing around them that is suited to gratify and please their senses, know, by painful experience, how little happiness these external advantages afford, while their minds are tortured with disappointments and anxiety. Thus the outward afflictions which every where surround and assail the sinner, and the malignant passions which, like vultures, continually gnaw his heart, all combine to accelerate the execution of the sentence of death.

2. 'Death,' in a very important sense, entered immediately with sin. Besides the rational life which still distinguishes man from the brute creation, he originally possessed a spiritual and divine life; for he was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. He was capable of communion with God, of rejoicing in his favour, and of proposing his will and glory as the great end of his actions. In a word, the presence and life of God dwelt in him, as in a temple. As the soul is the life of the body, which becomes a carcass, a prey to worms and putrefaction, when the soul has forsaken it; so God is the life of the soul. Sin defaced his temple, and he forsook it. In this sense, when Adam had transgressed the law, he died instantly, in that very day, in that very moment. He lost his spiritual life, he lost all desire for communion with God, he no longer retained any love for his Benefactor. He dreaded his presence, he sought to hide himself from him, and when obliged to appear and answer, stood self-condemned before him, till revived and restored by the promise of grace. And thus his posterity derive from him what may be called a living death. They are dead while they live, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. till they are again quickened by his Holy Spirit. This is not a subject of common-place declamation; it is to be proved by the tenour of Scripture, the nature of redemption, and the very reason of things. Unless we allow that man in his present state is thus fallen, depraved and dead, we must be reduced to the absurdity of supposing that God made him such a creature as he now is: that when he formed him for himself, and endued him with a capacity and desires, which nothing short of his own infinite goodness can satisfy, he should at the same time create him with a disposition to hate his Maker, to seek his satisfaction in sensuality upon a level with the brutes, and to confine his views and pursuits within the limits of this precarious life, while he feels, in defiance of himself, an instinctive

thirst for immortality. Man, considered in this view, would be a solecism in the creation; and they who do not acquiesce in the cause which the Scripture assigns for the inconsistencies and contradictions which are found in his character, will never be able to assign any other cause which will bear the trial of sober and rational examination. What the poet says of Beelzebub, 'Majestic though in ruins,' may be truly affirmed of man. His faculties and powers are proofs of his original greatness; his awful misapplication of them equally proves that he is a fallen and ruined creature. He has lost his true life, he is dead in sin; and unless renewed and revived by the grace of God can only, in a future state, be fit for the company of the fallen angels.

3. 'Death,' as the wages of sin, extends still further. There is the 'second death,' the final and eternal misery of soul and body in hell. This we know is the dreadful lot of the impenitent. We need no other proof that this was included in the sentence; for, certainly, the righteous Judge would not inflict a greater punishment than he had denounced. Indeed, it follows of course in the very nature of things, if we admit the soul to be immortal, a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and that there remains no other sacrifice for sin in favour of those who reject the Gospel. For to be disowned of God in the great day, to be separated from his favourable presence, and conscious of his endless displeasure; to be abandoned to the unrestrained rage of sinful dispositions and hopeless despair; to be incessantly tormented by the stings of a remorseful conscience, must be, upon the principles of Scripture, the unavoidable consequences of being cut off by death, in an unhumiliated, unpardoned, unsanctified state.

II. But, blessed be God, the Gospel reveals a relief and remedy fully adapted to the complicated misery in which sin has involved us. 'As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.' MESSIAH has made an end of sin, and destroyed the power of death. They who 'believe in him, though they were dead, shall live,' John xi. 25. For he is the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the living.

1. He raises the soul from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness. By his blood he procures a right and liberty, and by his Spirit he communicates a power, that those who were afar off, may draw nigh to God. Thus, even at present, believers are said to be 'risen with him,' Col. iii. 1. Their spiritual life is renewed, and their happiness is already commenced, though it be as yet subject to abatements.

First, Though when they are made partakers of his grace, and thereby delivered from the condemning power of the law, sin has no longer dominion over them, as formerly; yet it still wars and strives within them, and their life is a state of continual warfare. They now approve the law of God 'as holy, just, and good, and delight in it after the inward man,' yet they are renewed but in part. They 'feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds. They cannot do the things that they would, nor as they would: for when they would do good, evil is present with them,' Rom. vii. 12—23. They are conscious of a defect and a defilement attending their best services. Their attainments are unspeakably short of the desires which love to the Redeemer has raised in their hearts. They are ashamed, and sometimes almost discouraged. They adopt the apostle's language, 'Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' But with him they can likewise say, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' They know he is on their side, and expect that he will at last 'make them more than conquerors;' yet while the conflict lasts, they have much to suffer, and much to lament.

Secondly, They are subject, like our people, to the various calamities and distresses incident to this state of mortality; and they have, more or less, troubles peculiar to themselves, arising from the nature of their profession and conduct (if they are faithful to their Lord) while they live in a world that lieth in wickedness. But the curse and sting is taken out of their afflictions, and they are so moderated and sanctified by the wisdom and grace of him whom they serve, that in the event they work for their good. But though they 'yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness,' Heb. xii. 11. in themselves and at the time they are not joyous but grievous.

Thirdly, They are still subject to the stroke of death, the separation of soul and body. But this death has lost its sting, as to them. And therefore they are said not to die, but to sleep in Jesus. Death is not their enemy, but their friend. To them, instead of being an evil, it proves a deliverance from all evil, and an entrance into everlasting life.

2. That new life to which they are raised, is surely connected with life eternal; the life of grace with the life of glory. For Christ liveth in them, and being united to him by faith, they shall live while he liveth. They only shut their eyes upon the pains and sorrows of this world, to open them immediately in his presence, and so 'they shall be for ever with the Lord.' How wonderful and happy is the transition! From disease and anguish, from weeping friends, and often from a state of indigence and ob-

scurity, in which they have no friends to compassionate them, they remove to a state of glory, honour, and immortality, to a mansion in the realms of light, to a seat near the throne of God. In the language of mortals, this ineffable honour and happiness is shadowed out to us, by the emblems of a white robe, a golden harp, a palm branch, (the token of victory,) and a crown, not of oak or laurel, of gold or diamonds, but 'a crown of life.' Such honour have all the saints. However afflicted or neglected, despised or oppressed, while upon earth, soon as their willing spirits take their flight from hence, they shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Thus Lazarus lay for a time, diseased, necessitous, and slighted, at the rich man's gate. Yet he was not without attendants. A guard of angels waited around him, and when he died conveyed his spirit into 'Abraham's bosom,' Luke, xvi. 22. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham, the father of their nation, the father of the faithful. Our Lord therefore teaches us, by this representation, that the beggar Lazarus was not only happy after death, but highly exalted by him who seeth not as man seeth; for he was placed in 'Abraham's bosom,' a situation which, according to the custom of the Jews, was a mark of peculiar favour, intimacy, and distinction. Thus the beloved disciple was seated in the bosom of our Lord when he celebrated his last passover with his disciples, John, xiii. 22—25.

3. Their dead bodies shall be raised at the great day, not in their former state of weakness and corruption, but that which was 'sown in weakness shall be raised in power,' and the 'mortal shall put on immortality. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned according to the likeness of his own glorious body.' So that his own resurrection is both the pledge and pattern of theirs. I have only further to observe upon this subject at present, that as Adam is the root and head of all mankind, from whence they all derive a sinful and mortal nature; so Jesus, the second Adam, is the root of a people who are united to him, planted and ingrafted in him by faith. To these the resurrection, considered as a blessing, is to be restrained. There will be a resurrection of the wicked likewise, John, v. 29. but to condemnation, 'shame, and everlasting contempt,' Dan. xii. 2. But the connexion is close and indissoluble between Christ the first-fruits, and them that are Christ's at his coming.

May we be happily prepared for this great event, 'that when he shall appear we may have confidence in him, and not be ashamed before him,' 1 John, ii. 28. Happy they who shall then be able to welcome him in the language of the prophet, 'Lo,

this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation,' Isa. xxv. 9. But how awful the contrast of those (many of them once the great, mighty, and honourable of the earth) who shall behold him with horror, and in the anguish of their souls shall call (in vain) 'to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his presence, saying, 'The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' Rev. vi. 16, 17.

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## SERMON XLII.

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### THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

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1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 51, 52.

*Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

AN object in itself great, and which we know to be so, will appear small to us, if we view it from a distance. The stars, for example, in our view, are but as little specks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is sufficient to hide from us the whole body of the sun. Distance of time has an effect upon us, in its kind, similar to distance of space. It diminishes in our mind the idea of what we are assured is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and importance. If any of us were informed that we should certainly die before this day closes, what a sudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts? That we all must die, is a truth, of which we are no less certain, than that we are now alive. But, because it is possible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for several years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the Scripture as a divine revelation, I need offer you no other proof that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the present state of things, and introduce a state unchangeable and eternal. Then 'the Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and

with the trump of God. The earth, and all its works, will be burnt up.' The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race must give an account of themselves to God, and according to his righteous award, be happy or miserable in a degree beyond expression or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly assured that this tremendous scene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am speaking, we should be startled with the signs of our Lord's coming in the air, what confusion and alarm would overspread the congregation? Yet, if the Scripture be true, the hour is approaching, when we must all be spectators of this solemn event, and parties nearly interested in it. But, because it is at a distance, we can hear of it, speak of it, and profess to expect it, with a coolness almost equal to indifference. May the Lord give us that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, that while I aim to lead your meditations to the subject of my text, we may be duly impressed by it; and that we may carry from hence such a consideration of our latter end, as may incline our hearts to that which is our true wisdom!

Many curious inquiries and speculations might be started from this passage, but which, because I judge them to be more curious than useful, it is my intention to waive. I shall confine myself to what is plainly expressed, because I wish rather to profit than to amuse my hearers. The principal subject before us is the resurrection of the dead, in the most pleasing view of it; for my text speaks only of those who shall change the mortal and corruptible, for incorruption and immortality.

I. The introduction, 'Behold I show you a mystery.'

II. What we are taught to expect, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.'

III. The suddenness of the event, 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.'

IV. The grand preceding signal, 'The trumpet shall sound.'

I. The apostle apprises the Corinthians that he is about to 'show them a mystery.' As the word 'mystery,' has been treated with no small contempt, I shall embrace this occasion of offering you a short explanation of it, as it is used in the Scriptures. We are allowed to say, that there are mysteries in nature, and perhaps we may be allowed to speak of mysteries in Providence; but, though an apostle assures us that 'great is the mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. many persons will scarcely bear the application of the word to religion. And a late ingenious writer, who has many admirers in the present day, has ventured to affirm,

in print, that where mystery begins, religion ends. If the frequency of the case did not, in some degree, abate our wonder, *this* might seem almost a mystery, that any persons who profess to believe the Scripture, should so openly and flatly contradict what the Scripture expressly and repeatedly declares : or that while, as men of reason and philosophy, they are forced to acknowledge a mystery in every part of creation, and must confess it beyond their ability to explain the growth of a blade of grass ; they should, in opposition to all the rules of analogy, conclude, that the Gospel, the most important concern of man, and which is commended to us as the most eminent display of the wisdom and power of God, is the only subject so level to our apprehensions, as to be obvious, at first sight, to the most careless and superficial observers. That great numbers of people are very far from being accurate and diligent in their religious enquiries, is too evident to be denied. How often do we meet with persons of sense who talk with propriety on philosophical, political, or commercial subjects, and yet, when they speak of religion, discover such gross ignorance, as would be shameful in a child of ten years old, and amounts to a full proof that they have not thought it worth their while to acquire even a slight knowledge of its principles. Can we even conceive the possibility of a divine revelation that should have nothing in it mysterious to persons of this character ?

A *mystery*, according to the notation of the Greek word, signifies a secret. And all the peculiar truths of the Gospel may justly be styled mysteries or secrets, for two reasons.

1. Because the discovery of them is beyond the reach of fallen man, and they neither would nor could have been known without a revelation from God. This is eminently true of the resurrection. The light of nature, which we often hear so highly commended, may afford some faint glimmerings of a future state, but gives no intimation of a resurrection. The men of wisdom at Athens, the Stoic and Epicurian philosophers, who differed widely in most parts of their respective schemes, united in deriding this sentiment, and contemptuously styled the apostle Paul a babler for preaching it, Acts xvii. 18. But this secret is to us made known. And we are assured, not only that the Lord will receive to himself the departing spirits of his people, but that he will give commandment concerning their dust, and, in due time, raise their vile bodies to a conformity with his own glorious body.

2. Because, though they are revealed expressly in the Scripture, such is the grossness of our conceptions, and the strength of

our prejudices, that the truths of revelation are still unintelligible to us, without a further revelation of their true sense to the mind, by the influence of his Holy Spirit. Otherwise, how can the secret of the Lord be restrained to those who fear him, Psal. xxv. 14. when the book which contains it is open to all, and the literal and grammatical meaning of the words is in the possession of many who fear him not?

Books in the arts and sciences, may be said to be full of mysteries to those who have not a suitable capacity and taste for them; or who do not apply themselves to study them with diligence, and patiently submit to learn gradually one thing after another. If you put a treatise on the mathematics, or a system of music into the hands of a ploughman or labourer, you will not be surprised to find that he cannot understand a single page. Shall the works of a Sir Isaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable to one person, while another peruses them with admiration and delight? Shall these require a certain turn of mind, and a close attention; and can it be reasonably supposed, that the Bible is the only book that requires no peculiar disposition, or degree of application, to be understood, though it is designed to make us acquainted with the 'deep things of God?' 1 Cor. ii. 10. In one respect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unless they are taught of God, yet all who are sensible of their own weakness may expect his teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being mathematicians. They have not a genius for the science. But there is none teacheth like God. He can give not only light, but sight; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And, while his mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon him for instruction, he reveals them unto babes.

It may, perhaps, be thought that a belief of the doctrine of the resurrection does not require the same teaching of the Holy Spirit that is necessary to the right knowledge of some other doctrines of the Gospel. But such a belief as may affect, cheer, and animate the heart, must be given us from above, for we cannot reason ourselves into it. Nay, this divine teaching is necessary to secure the mind from the vain reasonings, perplexities, and imaginations, which will bewilder our thoughts upon the subject, unless we learn to yield, in simplicity of faith, to what the Scripture has plainly revealed, and can be content to know no further before the proper time.

II. What we are here taught to expect is thus expressed—‘We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.’ We are not to suppose that the whole human race will die, and fall from the earth, before the resurrection. Some will be living at the time, and among them some of the Lord’s people. Of the living, it cannot properly be said that they will be raised from the dead; but they will experience a change, which will put them exactly in the same state with the others. Their mortality shall be swallowed up in life. Thus we conceive it to have been with Enoch and Elijah. They did not die like other men; but their mortal natures were frail and sinful, like ours, and incapable of sustaining the glories of heaven without a preparation. Flesh and blood, in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption; but the dead shall arise, and the living shall be changed. Here is a wide field for speculation, but I mean not to enter it. Curiosity would be glad to know how our bodies, when changed, shall still be the same. Let us first determine how that body, which was once an infant, is the very same when it becomes a full-grown man, or a man in extreme old age. Let us explain the transmutation of a caterpillar or silkworm, which, from a reptile, becomes a butterfly. What a wonderful change is this, both in appearance and in powers? Who would suppose it to be the same creature? Yet who can deny it? It is safest and most comfortable for us, to refer to the wisdom and power of God the accomplishment of his own word.

III. These great events will take place unexpectedly and suddenly: ‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.’ We have reason to believe, that a part at least of mankind will be employed as they are now, and as they were in the days of Noah and Lot,’ Luke, xvii. 26—30. eating, drinking, buying, selling, building, and planting, having nothing less in their thoughts than the calamity and destruction which shall overwhelm them without warning. For while they are promising themselves peace, the day of the Lord shall come upon them, like a thief in the night, unlooked for, and, like the pangs of a labouring woman, unavoidable. ‘In that day, the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted, Isa. ii. 11. So large a part of divine prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, that I apprehend it is not probable that any of us shall be alive when this great and terrible day of the Lord shall be revealed. But are not some of us exposed to a similar dreadful surprise? If you die in your sins, the consequences will be no less deplorable to you, than if you saw the whole frame of nature perishing with you. Alas!

what will you do, whither will you flee for help, or where will you leave your glory, if, while you are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of this world, death should arrest you, and summon you to judgment? The rich man in the Gospel is not charged with any crimes of peculiar enormity. It is not said that he ground the faces of the poor, or that he, by fraud or oppression, kept back the hire of the labourers who had reaped his harvest: he only rejoiced in his wealth, and in having much goods laid up for many years, and that therefore he might securely eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,' Luke, xii. 20. Awful disappointment! Thus will it be, sooner or later, with all whose hearts and portions are in this world, but are not rich towards God! Consider this, you that are like-minded with him. Tremble at the thought of being found in the number of those who have all their consolation here, and who, when they die, must leave their all behind them. Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. Now, if you will seek the Lord, he will be found of you. Now, if you pray for grace and faith, he will answer you. But 'when once the Master of the house shall arise, and' with his own sovereign authoritative hand shall 'shut the door' of his mercy, it will then be in vain, and too late to say, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' Luke, xiii. 25.

IV. The great scene will be introduced by a signal: 'At the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound.' Thus the approach of a king or a judge is usually announced; and the Scripture frequently borrows images from our little affairs and customs, and, in condescension to our weakness, illustrates things in themselves too great for our conceptions, by comparing them with those which are more familiar to us.

It will indeed be comparing great things with small, if I attempt to illustrate this sublime idea by local customs which obtain in this kingdom. At a time of assize, when the judges, to whom the administration and guardianship of our laws are intrusted, are making their entrance, expectation is awake, and a kind of reverence and awe is felt, even by those who are not immediately concerned in their inquest. The dignity of their office, the purpose for which they come, the concourse of people, the order of the procession, and the sound of the trumpet, all concur in raising an emotion in the hearts of the spectators. Happy are they then upon whom the inflexible law has no demand! But who can describe the terror with which the sound of the trumpet is heard by the unhappy criminal; and the throbbings of his

heart, if he be already convicted in his own conscience, and knows or fears that there is sufficient evidence at hand to fix the fact upon him, and to prove his guilt? For soon the judge will take his seat, the books will be opened, the cause tried, and the criminal sentenced. Many circumstances of this kind are alluded to in the Scripture, to assist us in forming some conception of what will take place when all the race of Adam, small and great, shall stand before the Sovereign Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But the concourse, the solemnity, the scrutiny, the event in the most weighty causes that can come before a human judicature, are mere shadows, and trivial as the sports of children, if compared with the business of this tremendous tribunal. 'The Lord himself will descend, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.' What a trumpet will that be, whose sound shall dissolve the frame of nature, and awaken the dead? When the Lord is seated upon his great white throne,' Rev. xx. 11. the heavens and the earth shall flee from his presence; but the whole race of mankind shall be assembled before him, each one to give an account of himself, to him from whose penetrating knowledge no secret can be hidden, and from whose unerring, inflexible sentence, there can be no appeal. 'Where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?'

But it will be a joyful day to believers. They shall be separated as the wheat from the tares, and arranged at his right hand. When the Lord shall come, attended by his holy angels, his redeemed people will re-assume their bodies, refined and freed from all that was corruptible; and those of them who shall be then living, will be changed, and caught up to meet him in the air. He will then own them, approve and crown them before assembled worlds. Every charge that can be brought against them will be overruled, and their plea, that they trusted in him for salvation, be admitted and ratified. They will be accepted and justified. They will shine like the sun in his train, and attend, as assessors with him, when he shall pass final judgment upon his and their enemies. Then he will be admired in and by them that believe. Their tears will be for ever wiped away, when he shall say to them, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' Matth. xxv. 34.

Beloved, if these things are so, 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Pet. iii. 11. Should we not 'give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' that we may be found of him in peace? He who will then be seated upon the throne of judgment, is to us made known

as seated upon a throne of grace. It is time, it is high time, and blessed be God, it is not yet too late, to seek his mercy. Still the Gospel invites us to hear his voice, and to humble ourselves before him. Once more you are invited, some of you, perhaps, for the last time; how know you but sickness or death may be at the very door? Consider, Are you prepared? Examine the foundation of your hope—and do it quickly, impartially, and earnestly, lest you should be cut off in an hour when you are not aware, and perish with a lie in your right hand.

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## SERMON XLIII.

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### DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

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1 CORINTHIANS, XV. 54.

*Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!*

**DEATH**, simply considered, is no more than a privative idea, signifying a cessation of life; or, that what was once living, lives no longer. But it has been the general, perhaps the universal custom of mankind, to personify it. Imagination gives death a formidable appearance, arms it with a dart, sting, or scythe, and represents it as an active, inexorable, and invincible reality. In this view death is a great devourer; with his iron tongue he calls for thousands at a meal. He has already swallowed up all the preceding generations of men; all who are now living are marked as his inevitable prey; he is still unsatisfied, and will go on devouring till the Lord shall come. Then this destroyer shall be destroyed; he shall swallow no more, but be swallowed up himself in victory. Thus the Scripture accommodates itself to the language and apprehensions of mortals. Further, the metaphorical usage of the word 'swallow' still enlarges and aggrandizes the idea. Thus the earth is said to 'have opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah, and his accomplices, Numb. xvi. 32. And thus a pebble, a millstone, or a mountain, if cast into the ocean, would be swallowed up, irrecoverably lost and gone, as though they had never been, Rev. xviii. 21. Such shall be the triumphant victory of MESSIAH in the great

day of the consummation of all things. Death, in its cause and its effects, shall be utterly destroyed. Man was created upright, and lived in a paradise, till, by sin, he brought death into the world. From that time death has reigned by sin, and evils abound. But MESSIAH came to make an end of sin, to destroy death, and him that hath the power of it; to repair every disorder, and to remove every misery; and he will so fully, so gloriously accomplish his great undertaking in the final issue, that every thing contrary to holiness and happiness shall be swallowed up and buried beyond the possibility of a return, as a stone that is sunk in the depths of the sea. Thus, 'where sin has abounded, grace will much more abound.'

This victory, however, being the Redeemer's work, and the fruit of his mediation, the Scripture teaches us to restrain the benefits of it to the subjects of his church and kingdom. 'In Adam all die.' A depraved nature, guilt, sorrow, and death, extend to all his posterity. The 'All,' who 'in Christ shall be made alive,' and those who, by faith in him, are delivered from the sting of death, which is sin, and are made partakers of a new nature. There is a 'second death,' which, though it shall not hurt the believers in Jesus, Rev. ii. 11. will finally swallow up the impenitent and ungodly. We live in an age when there is, if I may so speak, a resurrection of many old and exploded errors, which, though they have been often refuted and forgotten, are admired and embraced by some persons as new and wonderful discoveries. Of this stamp is the conceit of a universal restitution to a state of happiness of all intelligent creatures, whether angels or men, who have rebelled against the will and government of God. This sentiment contradicts the current doctrine of Scripture, which asserts the everlasting misery of the finally impenitent, in as strong terms, in the very same terms, as the eternal happiness of the righteous, and sometimes in the very same verse, Matth. xxv. 46. Nor can it possibly be true, if our Lord spake the truth concerning Judas, when he said, 'It had been good for that man if he had never been born,' Matt. xxvi. 24. If I could consider this notion as harmless, though useless, and no worse than many mistakes which men of upright minds have made, through inattention and weakness of judgment, I should not have mentioned it. But I judge it to be little less pernicious and poisonous than false. It directly tends to abate that sense of the evil of sin, of the inflexible justice of God, and the truth of his threatenings, which is but too weak in the best of men. Let us abide by the plain declarations of his word, which assures us, that 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26, 27.

no future relief against it, for those who now refuse the Gospel; and that they who cordially receive it shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall one day sing, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

I would further observe, that many prophecies have a gradual and increasing accomplishment, and may be applied to several periods; though their full completion will only be at the resurrection and last judgment. This passage, as it stands in the prophecy of Isaiah, (Isa. xxv. 8.) from whence the apostle quotes it, appears to have a reference to the comparatively brighter light and glory of the Gospel state, beyond what was enjoyed by the church under the Levitical dispensation; and especially to the privileges of these happy days, when 'the fulness of the Gentiles and the remnant of Israel shall be brought in, and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.' I would not exclude these subordinate senses; I have already considered them. But my text calls our attention to the end of all things. Then, in the most emphatical sense, 'Death will be swallowed up in victory.'

Let us endeavour to realize the great scene before us, to contemplate the redeemed of the Lord when they shall return with him to animate their glorified bodies. Let us ask the question which the elder proposed to John, 'Who are these clothed with white robes, and whence came they?' Rev. vii. 13. 'They came out of great tribulation;' they were once under the power of death, but now death, as to them, is swallowed up in victory. In every sense in which death ruled over them, they are now completely delivered.

I. They were once dead in law. They had revolted from their Maker. They had violated the holy order of his government, and stood exposed to his righteous displeasure, and to the heavy penalty annexed to the transgression of his commandments. But mercy interposed. 'God so loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son' to make an atonement for their sins, and to be their 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30. They received grace to believe in this Saviour, and now they are delivered from condemnation. They are accepted in the Beloved.' They are considered as one with him, and interested in all that he did, and in all that he suffered. Now they are the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. 'Though they were afar off, they are brought nigh,' admitted into a nearer relation than the holy angels to him who sitteth upon the throne. For he took upon him, and is still pleased to wear, not the nature of angels, but the human nature. Their former guilt is cancelled,

blotted out, swallowed up. All their sins are covered, sunk in his precious blood as in a deep sea, so that, even if sought for, they can no more be found. That they have sinned, will always be a truth; and probably they will never lose a consciousness of what they were by nature and practice while in this world. But this, so far from abating their joy, will heighten their gratitude and praise 'to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood,' Rev. i. 5. Their happiness principally consists in a perception of his love to them, and in their returns of grateful love to him. 'And they love him much,' because, for his sake, 'much has been forgiven them,' Luke vii. 47.

II. Once they were dead in sin. They were destitute of the knowledge and love of God. 'They were foolish, deceived, and disobedient, enslaved to divers lusts,' Titus iii. 3. to inordinate, sensual, unsatisfying pleasures; they lived in malice and envy, they were hateful, and they hated one another. In a word, 'they were dead while they lived,' 1 Tim. v. 6. But by the power of grace they were awakened and raised from this death, and made partakers of a new a spiritual, and divine life. Yet the principle of sin and death still remained in them; and their life upon earth, though a life of faith in the son of God, was a state of continual warfare. They had many a conflict, and were often greatly distressed. 'They sowed in tears,' to the end of their pilgrimage, 'but now they reap in joy,' Psal. cxxvi. 5. This 'death is' also 'swallowed up in victory.' They are now entirely and for ever freed from every clog, defect, and defilement. By beholding their Lord as he is, in all his glory and love, without any interposing veil or cloud, they are made like him, and, to the utmost measure of their capacity, conformed to his image. Now they are absolutely spotless and impeccable; for though mutability seems no less essential to a creature than dependence, yet they cannot change, because their Lord is unchangeable, for 'their life is hidden with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 3. They cannot fall from their holiness or happiness, because he has engaged to uphold and maintain them by his almighty power.

III. One branch of the death due to sin is the tyranny and power of Satan. For a time he ruled in their hearts, as in his own strong hold; and while they were blinded by his influence, they were little affected with their bondage. Hard as his service was, they did not often complain of it. They were led by him according to his will for the most part without resistance, or, if they attempted to resist, they found it was in vain. But in his own hour their Lord, who had bought them, dispossessed their strong

enemy, and claimed their hearts for himself. Yet, after they were thus set free from his ruling power, this adversary was always plotting and fighting against them. How much have some of them suffered from his subtle wiles and his fiery darts! from his rage as a roaring lion, from his cunning as a serpent lying in their path, and from his attempts to deceive them under the semblance of an angel of light! 2 Cor. xi. 14. But now they are placed out of his reach. Death and Satan are swallowed up. The victory is complete. The wicked one shall never have access to touch or disturb them any more. Now he is shut up in his own place, and the door sealed, no more to open. While he was permitted to vex and worry them, he acted under a limited commission, which he could not exceed; all was directed and overruled, by the wisdom and love of their Lord for their advantage. Such exercises were necessary then, to discover to them more of the weakness and vileness of their own hearts, to make them more sensible of their dependence upon their Saviour, and to afford them affecting proofs of his power and care engaged in their behalf. But they are necessary no longer. Their warfare is finished. They are now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, Job iii. 17.

IV. While they were in the world, they had a share, many of them a very large share of the woes and sufferings incident to this mortal state; which, as they are the fruits and effects of sin, and greatly contribute to shorten the life of man, and hasten his return to dust, are as I formerly observed, properly included in the comprehensive meaning of the original sentence, 'death.' They belong to its train, and are harbingers of its approach. None of the race of Adam are exempted from these; but especially the servants of God have no exemption. Their gracious Lord who frees them from condemnation, and gives them peace in himself, assures them that in this world they shall have tribulation, John xvi. 33. This is so inseparable from their calling, that it is mentioned as one special mark of their adoption and sonship, Heb. xii. 6—8. If the prosperity of the wicked sometimes continues for a season without interruption, 'their day is coming;' Psalm xxxvii. 13. but the righteous may expect chastisement and discipline daily. Thus their graces are refined, strengthened, and displayed, to the praise of their Heavenly Father. There is no promise in the Bible that secures the most eminent and exemplary believer from participating in the heaviest calamities in common with others, and they have many trials peculiar to them-

selves. Thus, while upon earth, they endure hardship for his sake. Because he chose them out of the world, and they would no longer comply with its sinful maxims and customs, 'the world hated them,' John, xv. 19. Many of them were the mark of public scorn and malice, accounted the off-scouring of all things; they were driven to deserts, and mountains, and caves; they suffered stripes, imprisonment, and death. Others had trials of pains, sickness, and poverty, of sharp bereaving dispensations. Their gourds withered; and the desire of their eyes was taken away with a stroke. They had fightings without, and fears within. So that if their pressures and troubles were considered, without taking into the account their inward supports, and the consolation they derived from their hopes beyond the grave, they might be deemed 'of all men the most miserable,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. But they were supported under these exercises, brought safely through them, and now their sorrows are swallowed up in victory. 'Now the days of their mourning are ended,' Isa. lx. 20. They now confess, that their longest afflictions were momentary, and their heaviest burdens were light, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. iv. 11.) which they have entered upon. Sorrow and sighing have taken their everlasting flight, and joy and gladness have come forth to meet them, and to dwell with them for ever, Isa. li. 11.

V. In their collective capacity, the seeds of sin often produced bitter fruits. Through remaining ignorance and prejudice, they often mistook and misunderstood one another. They lost much good which they might otherwise have enjoyed, and brought upon themselves many evils, through their intemperate heats and unsanctified zeal, which divided them into little parties and separate interests. The children of the same family, the members of the same body, were too often at variance, or at least cold and distant in their regards to each other. Yea, Satan could foment discord and jealousies among those who lived in the same house, or met at the same table of the Lord. But now grace has triumphed over every evil; sin and death are swallowed up in victory. Now all is harmony, love, and joy. They have one heart and one song, which will never more be blemished by the harshness of a single discordant note.

May this prospect animate our hope, and awaken in those who have hitherto been afar off, a desire of sharing in the happiness of the redeemed! Awful will be the contrast to those who have had their portion in this world! Is it needful to address any in this auditory, in the language which our Lord used to his impenitent hearers? 'Wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full; for ye shall hun-

ger. Wo unto you that laugh now ; for ye shall mourn and weep !' Luke, vi. 24, 25. When the rich man, who had lived in honour and affluence here, was torn from all that he loved, and lifted up his eyes in torment ; the remembrance of his former state, that he once had his good things, Luke, xvi. 25. but that they were gone, for ever gone, could only be a keen aggravation of his misery. Dreadful will be the condition of all who die in their sins ; but the case of those who are now frequently envied by the ignorant, in the view of a mind enlightened by the truth, must appear doubly and peculiarly pitiable. They have the most to lose, they have the most to account for. Alas, how terrible, how sudden the change ! From a state of honour and influence amongst men, to fall in a moment under the contempt and displeasure of the Holy God—to pass from a crowd of dependants and flatterers, to the company of Satan and his angels ; from grandeur and opulence, to a state of utter darkness and horror, where the worm dieth not, and the fire cannot be quenched, Mark, ix. 44, 46, 48. These are sensible images, it is true ; the things of the unseen world cannot be described to us as they are in themselves ; but we may be certain that the description falls unspeakably short of the reality. The malicious insults of the powers of darkness, the mutual recriminations of those who, having been connected in sin here, will be some way connected in misery hereafter, (Matth. xiii. 30.) remorse, rage, despair, a total and final exclusion from God, the fountain of happiness, with an abiding sense of his indignation :—this complicated misery cannot be expressed in the language of mortals—like the joy of the blessed, it is more than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Add the ideas of *unchangeable* and *eternal* to the rest, that it will be a misery admitting of no intermission, abatement, or end ; and then seriously consider, what can it profit a man, should he gain the whole world, if at last he should thus lose his soul ? Matth. xvi. 26. No longer make a mock at sin ; it is not a small evil ; it is a great evil in itself, and, unless pardoned and forsaken, will be productive of tremendous consequences. No longer make light of the Gospel ; it points out to you the only possible method of escaping the damnation of hell. To refuse it, is to rush upon remediless destruction. No longer trust in uncertain riches ; if you possess them, I need not tell you they do not make you happy at present, much less will they comfort you in the hour of death, or profit you in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Waste not your time and talents (which must be accounted for) in the pursuit of sensual pleasure ; in the end

it will bite like a serpent. For all these things God will assuredly bring you into judgment, unless in this day of grace you humble yourselves to implore that mercy which is still proposed to you, if you will seek it sincerely and with your whole heart; and which I once more entreat, charge and adjure you to seek by the great name of MESSIAH, the Saviour; by his agonies and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death, and by the consideration of his future glorious appearance, to subdue all things to himself.

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## SERMON XLIV.

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### TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

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I CORINTHIANS, XV. 55, 56, 57.

*O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

THE Christian soldier may with the greatest propriety, be said 'to war a good warfare,' 1 Tim. i. 18. He is engaged in a good cause; he fights under the eye of the Captain of his salvation. Though he be weak in himself, and though his enemies are many and mighty, he may do that which in other soldiers would be presumption, and has often been the cause of a defeat; he may triumph while he is in the heat of battle, and assure himself of victory before the conflict is actually decided; for the Lord, his great Commander, fights for him, goes before him, and treads his enemies under his feet. Such a persuasion, when solidly grounded upon the promises and engagement of a faithful, unchangeable God, is sufficient, it should seem, to make a coward bold. True Christians are not cowards; yet, when they compare themselves with their adversaries, they see much reason for fear and suspicion on their own parts; but when they look to their Saviour, they are enlightened, strengthened, and comforted. They consider who he is, what he has done; that the battle is not so much theirs as his; that he is their strength and their shield, and that his honour is concerned in the event of the war. Thus out of weakness they are made strong; and however press-

ed and opposed, they can say, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us!' Rom. viii. 37. The whole power of the opposition against them is summed up in the words 'sin,' and 'death:' but these enemies are already weakened and disarmed. It is sin that furnished death with a sting: a sting sharpened and strengthened by the law. But Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin, and has so fulfilled and satisfied the law on their behalf, that death is deprived of its sting, and can no longer hurt them. They may therefore meet it with confidence, and say, 'Blessed be God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

We have here two unspeakably different views to take of the same subject: Death armed with its formidable sting; and Death rendered harmless, and its aspect softened by the removal of the sting.

I. The first is a very awful subject. I entreat your attention. I am not now about to speak upon a point of speculation. It is a personal, a home concern to us all. For we must all die. But should any of you feel, not only the stroke, but the sting of death when you leave this world, it were better for you that you had never been born.

The love of life, and consequently a reluctance to that dissolution of the intimate union between soul and body which we call death, seems natural to man. But if there was no hereafter, no state of judgment and retribution to be expected; if there was no consciousness of guilt, no foreboding of consequences upon the mind; if we only considered death as inevitable, and had no apprehensions beyond it; death would be divested of its principal terrors. We see that when conscience is stupified, or when the mind is poisoned with infidelity, many people, notwithstanding the natural love of life, are so disgusted with its disappointments, that a fit of impatience, or the dread of contempt, often prevail on them to rush upon death by an act of their own will; or to hazard it in a duel, rather than be suspected of wanting what they account spirit. But death has a sting, though they perceive it not till they feel it, till they are stung by it past recovery.

But usually, and where the heart is not quite hardened, men are unwilling and afraid to die. They have some apprehension of the sting. Death can sting at a distance. How often and how greatly does the fear of death poison and embitter all the comforts of life, even in the time of health! Perhaps some of you well know this to be true. But in health people can in some measure run away from themselves, if I may so speak. They

fly to business, company, and amusements, to hide themselves from their own reflections. Their fears are transient, occasional, and partial: they would tremble, indeed, if they knew all; or if they were steadfastly and deliberately to contemplate what they do know. How sin is the sting of death, is best discovered when conscience is alarmed in a time of sickness; when the things of the world can no longer amuse, and death is approaching with hasty strides. These scenes are mostly kept secret; and very often they are not understood by those who are the spectators of them. Perhaps the unhappy, terrified sinner, is considered as delirious, because the sting of death in his conscience extorts from him such confessions and complaints as he never made before. What was once slighted as a fable, is now seen and felt as a reality. Such cases, I am afraid, are more frequent than we are in general aware of. But they are suppressed, ascribed to the violence of the fever, and forgotten as soon as possible. Yet they do sometimes transpire. I believe there is no reason to doubt the truth of what we have heard of one who, in the horrors of despair, vainly offered his physicians many thousand pounds to prolong his life but a single day. The relation is in print of another, who, pointing to the fire in his chamber, said, if he were only to lie twenty thousand years in such a fire, he should esteem it a mercy compared with what he felt, and with what he saw awaiting him. It is not always thus. Many persons die insensible as they lived, and can perhaps trifle and jest in their last moments. But the Scripture assures us, that when they who die in their sins breathe their last in this world they open their eyes in the other world in torments. For the sting of death, the desert of sin, unless timely removed by faith in Jesus, will fill the soul with anguish for ever. It derives a strength, and efficacy, and a continuance from the law.

This law, which gives strength to sin, and sharpens the sting of death, is the law of our creation, as connected with the penalty which God has annexed to the breach of it. Our relation to God, as we are his creatures, requires us, according to the very nature of things, supremely to love, serve, trust, and obey him who made us, and 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts xvii. 28. And our revolting from him, and living to ourselves in opposition to his will, is such an affront to his wisdom, power, authority, and goodness, as must necessarily involve misery in the very idea of it, if his perfections, the capacity of our souls, and our absolute dependence upon him, be attended to. And they must be attended to, sooner or later. Though he

keep long silence, and the sinner presumes upon his patience, 'and thinks him such a one as himself,' he will at length 'reprove him;' Psal. l. 21. and set his sins in order before him, in contrast with the demands of his law. The nature, authority, extent, and sanction of his law, all combine to give efficacy to the sting of death.

1. The law to which our tempers and conduct ought to be conformed, is not an arbitrary appointment; but necessarily results from our state as creatures, and the capacities and powers we have received from our Creator. It is therefore holy, wise, and good; indispensable, and unchangeable. To love God with all our heart and strength, to depend upon him, to conform to every intimation of his will, was the duty of man from the first moment of his existence; was the law of his nature, written originally in his heart. The publication of it, as it stands in the Bible, by precepts and prohibitions, would not have been necessary, had he continued in that state of rectitude in which he was created. It became necessary, after his fall, to restrain him from evil, and to convince him of sin; but this could not properly increase his primitive obligation to obedience.

2. We are bound to the observance of this law by the highest authority. It is the law of God, our Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor, who has every conceivable right to govern us. His eye is always upon us, and we are surrounded by his power; so that we can neither avoid his notice, nor escape his hand. Men are usually tenacious of their authority; they seldom allow their dependents to dispute or disobey their commands with impunity. It is expected that a son should honour his father, and a servant his master, Mal. i. 6. And when men have power to execute the dictates of their pride, they frequently punish disobedience with death. But how will these haughty worms, who trample upon their fellow-worms, and think they have a right to the most implicit obedience from their inferiors; how will they tremble when they shall appear before God, who is no respecter of persons, to answer for their contempt of the authority of the sovereign Lawgiver, who, alone, is able to save or to destroy? That 'we ought to obey God rather than man,' Acts v. 29. will, perhaps, be allowed as a speculative truth; but whoever will uniformly make it the rule of his practice, must expect, upon many occasions, to be deemed a fool or a madman by the world around him. But sovereignty, majesty, authority, and power, belong to God. He is the Governor of the universe, and his throne is established in righteousness. He is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious; but he will not forego his right. Sin is the sting of

death indeed, when the authority of him against whom it was committed is perceived by the conscience.

3. The extent of the law adds to the strength by which sin acts as the sting of death. Human laws can only take cognizance of words and actions. But the law of God reaches to the thoughts and inward recesses of the heart. It condemns what is most specious and most approved amongst men, if not proceeding from a right intention, and directed to the right end, which can be no other than the will and glory of him who made us. It condemns the sinner, not only for the evil which he has actually committed, but for every sinful purpose formed in his heart, and which was only rendered abortive for want of opportunity, Matt. v. 28. It likewise takes exact notice of every aggravation of sin, arising from circumstances, from the abuse of superior light and advantages, and from the long train of consequences, increasing in proportion to the influence which the rank, wealth, or extensive connexions of the offender give to his example.

4. The sanction of the law, which thus strengthens the malignity of sin, is the very *point*, if I may so express myself, of the 'sting' of death. This is the displeasure of the Almighty. His holy, indelible love of order will exclude those who violate it, from his favour. They must be miserable, unless they are reconciled and renewed by the grace of the Gospel. They must be separated from him, and they cannot be happy without him. They are not so even in this world, which they love. How miserable then must they be, when torn from all their attachments, pleasures, and possessions: having no longer any thing to divert them from a fixed attention to their true state, they shall be made keenly sensible of what is implied in that sentence, 'Depart from me, ye accursed, into devouring fire.' We cannot now conceive what it will be to lose the only good which can satisfy a soul: to be shut out from God, whose favour is life, and in whose presence there is fulness of joy: and to be shut up where neither peace nor hope can enter. The images of fire unquenchable, and a never-dying worm, are but faint emblems of that despair and remorse which will sting the sinful soul in a future state. This is the second death: this is eternal death: for the wicked, and all they who forget God, when thrust into hell, will for ever desire to die, and death will for ever flee from them, Rev. ix. 6.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to a more pleasing theme, and attempt to take a view of death as softened into a privilege by him who has brought life and immortality to light. Jesus died. His death was penal: he died for sin, though not for his own.

and therefore suffered the penalty due to sin, the curse of the broken law. The torment and shame of his crucifixion were preceded and accompanied by unknown agonies and conflicts which caused him to sweat blood, and to utter strong cries and groans. Death stung him to the heart; but, (as it is said of the enraged bee) he lost his sting. The law having been honoured and sin expiated, by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God for us, and in our nature, death has no longer power to sting those who believe in him. They do not properly 'die,' they 'fall asleep' in Jesus, Acts vii. 60. 1 Thess. iv. 15. To them this last enemy acts a friendly part. He is sent to put an end to all their sorrows, and to introduce them into a state of endless life and joy.

1. Dying believers can sing this song before their departure out of the world. We expect it when we are called to attend them in their last hours; and if their illness leaves them in possession of their faculties and speech, we are seldom disappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this subject cannot be collected from what we observe of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We must be in similar circumstances ourselves before we can see as they see, or possess the ideas which they endeavour to describe, and which seem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable testimony, that many faithful servants of God, when called to suffer for his sake, have not only been supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the severest tortures, and even in the midst of the flames. We suppose, I think with reason, that such communications of light and power as raise a person, in such situations, above the ordinary feelings of humanity, must, either in kind or degree, be superior to what is usually enjoyed by Christians in the smoother walks of prosperity and outward peace. God, who is all-sufficient, and always near, has promised to give his people strength according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not disappointed. A measure of the like extraordinary discoveries and supports is often vouchsafed to dying believers, and thus the gloom, which might otherwise hang over their dying hours, is dispelled; and while they contemplate the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they stand upon the threshold of heaven. It seems, in many cases, as if the weakness of the bodily frame gave occasion to the awakening of some faculty, till then dormant in the soul, by which invisibles are not only believed, but seen, and unutterables are heard and understood:—

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,  
Lets in new light through chinks——

Instances are frequent of those who are thus blessed when they die in the Lord; and it does not appear that old age, or great knowledge, or long experience, give any considerable advantage in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for sin, and the hope solidly fixed upon the Saviour, persons of weak capacities and small attainments, yea, novices and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often the present comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inspire them with dignity of sentiment and expression far beyond what could be expected from them; and perhaps their deportment, upon the whole, is no less animating and encouraging, than that of the most established and best informed believers. Thus, 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' the Lord 'ordains strength, and perfects his praise,' Psalm viii. 2. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more of the certainty and importance of divine things, than can be derived from the ordinary methods of instruction in the course of many years. In the midst of agonies and outward distress, we hear them with admiration declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleasure in their happiest days of health equal to what they enjoy when flesh and heart are fainting. For death has lost its sting as to them; and while they are able to speak, they continue ascribing praise to him 'who has given them the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Every word in this doxology is emphatical.

First, 'Thanks be to God.' This blessedness is all his work. The means are of his gracious appointment. The application is by his gracious power. He gave his Son for them; he sent his Gospel to them. It was the agency of his Spirit that made them a willing people. The word of promise, which is the ground of their hope, was of his gratuitous providing; and it was he who constrained and enabled them to trust in it, Psalm cxix. 49.

Secondly, 'Who giveth us the victory.' This is victory indeed; for it is over the last enemy; and after the last enemy is vanquished there can be no more conflicts. In this sense, believers are more than conquerors. In other wars they who have conquered once and again, may have been finally defeated, or they may have died, (like our long-lamented general Wolfe,) upon the field of battle, and have left the fruits of their victory to be enjoyed by others. But the Christian soldier, though he may occasionally be a loser in a skirmish, is sure to conquer in the last great, deciding battle; and when, to an eye of sense, he seems to fall, he is instantly translated to receive the plaudit of

his commander, and the crown of life which he has prepared for them that love him.

Thirdly, This victory is 'through our Lord Jesus Christ.' They 'gained it not by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them,' Psalm xliv. 3. He died to deliver them, who would otherwise, through fear of death, have been always subject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly say, 'not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory and the praise,' Psalm cxv. 1. And this consideration enhances their pleasure; for, because they love him above all, they rejoice not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it possible there could be several methods of salvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would most gladly and deliberately choose that method which should bring them under the greatest obligations to him.

2. This triumphant song will be sung to the highest advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed shall be collected together to sing it with one heart and voice at the great resurrection-day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was snatched from the impending destruction of Sodom. Yet his lingering (Gen. xix. 16.) showed, that he had but an imperfect sense of the greatness of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably stronger afterwards, when he stood in safety upon the mountain, and actually saw the smoke rising, like the smoke of a furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At present we have very faint ideas of the misery from which we are delivered, of the happiness reserved in heaven for us, or of the sufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and see from thence the smoke of that bottomless pit, which might justly have been our everlasting abode, we shall then more fully understand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the riches of 'the inheritance of the saints in light.' And then we shall sing in more exalted strains than we can at present even conceive of, 'Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

## SERMON XLV.

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### DIVINE SUPPORT AND PROTECTION.

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ROMANS, viii. 31.

[*What shall we then say to these things ?*] *If God be for us, who can be against us ?*

THE passions of joy or grief, of admiration or gratitude, are moderate when we are able to find words which fully describe their emotions. When they rise very high, language is too faint to express them ; and the person is either lost in silence, or feels something which, after his most laboured efforts, is too big for utterance. We may often observe the apostle Paul under this difficulty, when attempting to excite in others such sensations as filled his own heart, while contemplating the glories and blessings of the Gospel. Little verbal critics, who are not animated by his fervour, are incapable of entering into the spirit of his writings. They coldly examine them by the strictness of grammatical rules, and think themselves warranted to charge him with solecisms and improprieties of speech. For it must be allowed, that he sometimes departs from the usual forms of expression, invents new words, or at least compounds words for his own use, and heaps one hyperbole upon another. But there is a beautiful energy in his manner, far superior to the frigid exactness of grammarians, though the taste of a mere grammarian is unable to admire or relish it. When he is stating the advantage of being with Christ, as beyond any thing that can be enjoyed in the present life, he is not content with saying, as his expression is rendered in our version ‘it is far better,’ Phil. i. 23. In the Greek another word of comparison is added, which, if our language would bear the literal translation, would be, *Far more better*, or *Much more better*. And when he would describe the low opinion he had of himself, great as his attainments were in our view, he thinks it not sufficient to style himself ‘The least of all saints,’ but ‘less than the least,’ Eph. iii. 8. Such phrases do not imply that he was ignorant of the rules of good writing, but they strongly intimate the fulness of his heart. In the course of the chapter before us, having taken a rapid survey of the work of grace, carried on by successive steps in the hearts of believers, till at length consumma-

ted in glory ; in this verse, instead of studying for words answerable to his views, he seems to come to a full stop, as sensible that the strongest expressions he could use would be too faint. He makes an abrupt transition from describing to admiring. He has said much, but not enough ; and therefore sums up all with ‘ What shall we say to these things ?’ Surely they who can read, with the utmost coolness and indifference, what he could not write without rapture and astonishment, do not take his words in his sense. If the apostle’s phraseology is now become obsolete, and sounds uncouth in the ears of too many who would be thought Christians, is there not too much reason to fear that they are Christians only in name ?

Though this short, lively question is omitted in the musical composition, I am not willing to leave it out. It stands well, as the sequel to what we have lately considered. The sting of death is taken away. Death itself is swallowed up in victory. Sinners, who were once burdened with guilt, and exposed to condemnation, obtain a right to sing, ‘ Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘ What shall we say to these things ?’

It stands well, likewise, as introducing the following question, ‘ If God be for us ;’ if his promises, his power, his wisdom, and his love, be all engaged on our behalf, ‘ who can be against us ?’ What ‘ shall we,’ or can we or need we, ‘ say,’ more than this ? What cause can we have for fear, or our enemies for triumph, if God be for us ?

We may consider,

I. What is implied in the supposition.

II. The meaning of the inference.

I. The form of the question is hypothetical. If the assumption be right, that God is for us, the conclusion that none can be effectually against us, is infallibly sure. Many serious persons will allow, that if God be indeed for them, all must, and will, be well in the end. But they hesitate at the *if*, and are ready to ask, How shall I know that God is for me ? I would offer you a few considerations towards the determining of this point, in the first place.

Sin has made an awful breach and separation between God and mankind. They are alienated in their minds from him, and he is justly displeased with them. The intercourse and communion with God, which constitute the honour and happiness of the human nature, were no longer either afforded or desired when man rebelled against his Maker, except to the few who understood and embraced this gracious purpose of reconciliation ; the first intimation of which was revealed in the promise of the ‘ seed of the woman who

should bruise the serpent's head,' Gen. iii. 15. The clear and full discovery of this reconciliation is made known to us by the Gospel: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. God is already reconciled in this sense, that having provided and accepted a satisfaction to his law and justice, he can now, in a way worthy of himself, receive and pardon the returning sinner. And he accompanies the word of his grace with the power of his Holy Spirit, to make sinners willing to be reconciled to him. If we be for God, he is assuredly for us. If we seek him, he has been beforehand with us; for, in the first instance, he is always 'found of those who sought him not,' Isa. lxv. 1. If we love him, it is because he first loved us. True believers walk with God. 'But two cannot walk together,' with confidence and comfort, 'unless they be agreed,' Amos, iii. 3. This agreement is chiefly with respect to three particulars, proposed by the Lord God in his word, and to which the believing sinner cheerfully and thankfully accedes.

1. In the ground of the agreement; this is MESSIAH, the Mediator between God and man. When he entered upon his office, a voice from heaven commended him to sinners, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,' Matt. iii. 17. And they who are enlightened to behold the glory of God in his person and engagement, accept him as the beloved Saviour, in whom and with whom they are well pleased. Without this acceptance of the Mediator there can be no agreement. Jesus is the only door, the only way of a sinner's access to the knowledge and favour of God. This is the precious and sure foundation which he has laid in Zion, 1 Pet. ii. 6.; and to presume to build our hope upon any other, is to build upon a quicksand. In this point, reason, in its present distempered state, would lead us, if followed, directly contrary to the simplicity of faith. Reason suggests, that if we have acted wrong, we must repent and amend, and what can we do more? But the law against which we have sinned makes no provision for repentance. Nor is such a repentance as includes a change of heart, (and nothing short of this deserves the name,) in our own power. 'Repentance unto life,' Acts xi. 18. is the gift of God; and Jesus, who is exalted 'to be a prince and Saviour,' Acts v. 31. bestows it upon those who acknowledge him, and implore it of him. But God will only treat with us as those who are condemned already, who have nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but misery. When we feel this to be our proper state, we are referred to Jesus, in whom God is well pleased, and for whose sake sins are pardoned, and sinners accepted and justified, without condition and without exception.

And then likewise we begin to see the necessity, propriety, and sufficiency of this appointment. Herein all who are taught of God are of one mind. However they may differ in some respects, they agree in cordially 'receiving Christ Jesus the Lord,' Col. ii. 6. as he is made of God for us, 'wisdom, righteousness, and salvation.'

2. They agree with God in the great design of the Gospel, which is to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who being delivered from their fears and their enemies, shall serve him with an unreserved and persevering obedience, Luke i. 74, 75. A deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, a devotedness to God, and a conformity to the mind and pattern of his dear Son, are included by every true believer in the idea of salvation. He knows that he can be happy in no other way. This is a turning point. There are convictions of sin excited by a dread of punishment, which, though distressing to the conscience, leave the heart and affections unchanged. They who are thus impressed, if no further, would be satisfied with an assurance of pardon. But 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) teaches us to renounce,' to abhor 'all ungodliness in the present world;' to give ourselves unto him 'who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,' and to walk worthy of God, who calls us to his kingdom and glory,' 1 Thess. ii. 12. 'This is the will of God, even our sanctification.' And this is the desire of his people, that they may be sanctified wholly; that their whole persons, spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless; that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ; that they may walk as the sons of God, without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. Though their attainments are imperfect, in their judgment and desires, they are fully agreed with God as to their aim and design.

3. They are agreed with him likewise as to the ultimate great end, the final cause of their redemption, which is 'the praise of the glory of his grace,' Eph. i. 6. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men may be abased, and the Lord alone may be exalted; 'and that he who glorieth may glory only in the Lord,' 1 Cor. i. 31. Salvation is of the Lord in every sense; the plan, the price, the power, the application, the consummation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the object of it. The praise, therefore, is wholly due to him, and he claims it. To this claim his people fully consent. It is the desire of their souls that his name, which alone is excellent, may alone be extolled; and with one heart and voice they say, 'Not

unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee be all the glory and all the praise!' Psalm cxv. 1.

If we truly understand and approve these things, then we are certainly engaged for God, and of course he is for us. For he alone could either enable us to see them in their true light, or incline our hearts to embrace them. Who then can be against us?

II. We are not to understand the question, 'Who can be against us?' as designed to encourage us to expect that they who have the Lord on their side will meet with no opposition; but that all opposition against them will be in vain.

1. They whom God is for, will, on that very account, have many opposers.

First, the men of the world. This our Lord expressly teaches us to expect: 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,' John xv. 19. And his apostle, 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you,' John iii. 13. Till we declare for him, the world will bear with us, but no longer: as the Gibeonites were in a state of honour and friendship with the neighbouring cities, till they submitted to Joshua, Joshua x. 1—4.; but when they obtained peace from him, they were immediately involved in war with their former friends. While Saul persecuted the church, the world smiled upon him, and he seemed to be, as we say, in the way of preferment. But when he yielded himself to the service of Christ, and his defection from the common cause became generally known, bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place; and they who before had employed and caressed him, sought his life. I do not mean to sound a trumpet of defiance. I believe that young converts, by their warm, but injudicious zeal, often, more than is necessary, provoke the spirit of the world, and thereby increase their own difficulties. The Gospel, when rightly understood, inspires a spirit of benevolence, and directs to a conduct which is suited to conciliate good-will and esteem. And when the apostle exhorts us, 'If it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men,' Rom. xii. 18. he gives us hope that much may be done to soften prejudices, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to make them at least ashamed, by a patient perseverance in well-doing. A consistent Christian, whose integrity, humility, and philanthropy, mark his character and adorn his profession, will, in time, command respect; but his attachment to unfashionable truths, and his separation from the maxims and pursuits of the many, will render him, in their eyes, singular and precise, weak and enthusiastic. If they say, 'He is a good sort of man, but has some strange pe-

cularities, it is the most favourable judgment he can hope for; from some persons, and at some times, he will meet with tokens of a settled dislike. For, though a religious character may be formed, which even the world will approve, 'yet all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. They walk in the midst of observers, who watch for their halting, who lay snares for their feet, and will endeavour to bribe or intimidate them to forsake the path of duty. It is difficult to stem the torrent, to avoid the infection of the world; and to live superior to the fear of man, as becomes us, if we know whose we are, and whom we serve. But though difficult, it is practicable and attainable, and actually attained by believers: 'for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' 1 John v. 4.

Secondly, The powers of darkness. Satan will not ordinarily trouble while he bears rule. He is, indeed, an enemy to his own servants, and seeks their destruction, both soul and body, by pushing them on in sin, which, if persisted in, will prove their ruin; but while they make no resistance, he gives them no disturbance. It is otherwise with those whom the Lord has freed from his bondage. He will pursue them like a lion seeking his prey, 1 Pet. v. 8. and lie in wait for them like a serpent in the path. This is one cause of the world's hatred: for the Scripture styles him 'the god of this world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. and he sets all that he can influence, tongues, and pens, and swords, against those who are on the Lord's side. Therefore the people of God may be known by two marks. Satan, by himself and by his instruments, fights against them, and they also fight against him. The former without the latter is not conclusive. A mere outward profession of religion may excite opposition, and mere pretenders may take pleasure in it for a time, if it does not come too close. It may feed their vanity, and give them a sort of consequence, by having sufferings to talk of. But I would entreat my hearers seriously to examine, Is your heart really set against sin, which is the strength of Satan's kingdom? Are you against his will and interest in the world? Have you renounced his service? If so, fear not, God is for you, and none can harm you. For,

2. No opposition can prevail against us, if God be for us. It is impossible to deny, or even to doubt this truth, upon the principles of reason; for who, or what, can injure those who are under the protection of Omnipotence? And yet it is not always easy to maintain the persuasion of it in the mind, and to abide in the exercise of faith, when, to an eye of sense, all things seem against us. But, though we believe not, he continueth faithful,

and will not forsake those whom he once enables to put their trust in him. Job was a faithful and approved servant of God, yet for a season his trials were great, and his confidence was sometimes shaken. He was supported, and at length delivered. There are many instances recorded in Scripture to confirm our faith, and to teach us that God manifests himself to be for his people, and in different ways renders them superior to all their difficulties and enemies.

At one time he prevents the threatened danger. They only see it, or expect it; for he is better to them than their apprehensions and fears. Thus, when Sennacherib was furious against Jerusalem, and supposed he could easily prevail, he was not suffered to come near it, Isa. xxxvii. 29, 33. When he thought to destroy it, he felt a hook and a bridle which he could not resist, and was compelled to retire, disappointed and ashamed.

At another time the enemies go a step further. His people are brought into trouble, but God is with them, and they escape unhurt. So Daniel, though he was cast into the den of lions, Dan. vi. 23. received no more harm from them than if he had been among a flock of sheep. He permitted three of his servants to be thrown into a furnace of fire, but he restrained the violence of the flames, so that not even a hair of their heads was singed, Dan. iii. 27.

The most that opposers can do is to kill the body, Luke, xii. 4. If God permits his people to be thus treated, still they are not forsaken. Their death is precious in his sight, Psalm cxvi. 15. They who die in the Lord are blessed. They are highly honoured who are called and enabled to die for him. If he is pleased to comfort them with his presence, and then to take them home to himself, they can desire no more. Stephen, though apparently given up to the power of his adversaries, and cruelly stoned to death, was no less happy than those who die in composure upon their beds, with their friends around them. Nor was he less composed: for the heavens were opened to him, and he saw his Saviour in glory, approving his fidelity, and ready to receive his spirit, Acts, vii. 56—60.

In brief, whatever men or devils may attempt against us, there are three things which, if we are true believers, they cannot do. They may be helpful to wean us from the world; they may add earnestness to our prayers; they may press us to greater watchfulness and dependence; they may afford fair occasions of evidencing our sincerity, the goodness of our cause, and the power of that God who is for us—Such are the benefits that the Lord teaches his people to derive from their sufferings, for he will not

let them suffer or be oppressed in vain. But no enemy can deprive us of the love with which God favours us, or the grace which he has given us, or the glory which he has prepared for us. 'Now what shall we say to these things?'

Alas! there are too many who say, at least in their hearts, (for their conduct betrays their secret thoughts,) we care but little about them. If they were to speak out, they might adopt the language of the rebellious Jews to the prophet. 'As to the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth,' Jerem. xlv. 16, 17. And there are others who plainly say, Let us then 'continue in sin that grace may abound.' They do not so expressly reject the Gospel, as to take encouragement from it to go on in their wickedness. The case of the former is very dangerous, that of the latter is still worse. But grace, though long slighted, though often abused, is once more proclaimed in your hearing. The Lord forbid that you should perish with the sound of salvation in your ears!

At present, and while you persist in your impenitence and unbelief, I may reverse the words of my text. Oh! consider, I beseech you, before it be too late, 'If God be against you, who can be for you?' Will your companions comfort you in a dying hour? Will your riches profit you in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of your sinful pleasures give you confidence to stand before this great and glorious Lord God, when you shall be summoned to appear at his tribunal? May you be timely wise, and 'flee for refuge to the hope set before you!'

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## SERMON XLVI.

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### ACCUSERS CHALLENGED.

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ROMANS, viii. 33.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

THOUGH the collating of manuscripts and various readings, has undoubtedly been of use in rectifying some mistakes which, through the inadvertency of transcribers, had crept into different

copies of the New Testament ; yet such supposed corrections of the text ought to be admitted with caution, and not unless supported by strong reasons and authorities. The whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God : and they who thankfully receive it as his book, will not trifle with it by substituting bold conjectural alterations, which, though, they may deem them to be amendments, may possibly disguise or alter the genuine sense of the passage. Some fancied emendations might be pointed out, suggested by very learned men, which do not seem to afford so strong a proof of the sound judgment of the proposers, as of their vanity and rashness. Let the learned men be as ingenious as they please in correcting and amending the text of Horace or Virgil, for it is of little importance to us whether their criticisms be well founded or not, but let them treat the pages of divine revelation with reverence.

But the pointing of the New Testament, though it has a considerable influence upon the sense, is of inferior authority. It is a human invention, very helpful, and for the most part, I suppose, well executed. But in some places it may admit of real amendment. The most ancient manuscripts are without points, and some of them are even without a distinction of the words. With the pointing, therefore, we may take more liberty than with the text : though even this liberty should be used soberly. A change in the pointing of this verse and the following, will not alter the received sense, but, as some critics judge, will make it more striking and emphatical. If two clauses should be read with an interrogation instead of a period, the apostle's triumphant challenge may be expressed in the following brief paraphrase :—

‘ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? Shall God himself ? So far from it, ‘ it is he who justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? Shall Christ ? Nay, he loves them, and accepts them. Shall ‘ he who died for them, yea, rather who is risen again, is even at the right hand of God, ’ on their behalf, ‘ who also maketh intercession for them ? ’ There is not the least ground to fear that he who has promised to justify them will lay any thing to their charge ; or that he will condemn them who died to deliver them from condemnation. Nor can any charge of their enemies prevail to the condemnation of those whom God is pleased to justify, and for whom Christ died, and now intercedes before the throne.

The death, the resurrection, and ascension of MESSIAH, we have already considered : I shall speak only to two points from this verse.

I. The title here given to believers, 'God's elect.'

II. Their great privilege, they are justified: 'It is God who justifieth' them.

I. The persons who will be finally justified by God are here styled his 'elect.' Very near and strong is the connexion between peace and truth. Yet a mistaken zeal for truth has produced many controversies, which have hurt the peace of the people of God among themselves; and at the same time have exposed them to the scorn and derision of the world. On the other hand, a pretended or improper regard for peace has often been prejudicial to the truth. But that peace which is procured at the expense of truth, is too dearly purchased. Every branch of doctrine, belonging to the faith once delivered to the saints, is not equally plain to every believer. Some of these doctrines the apostle compares to milk, the proper and necessary food for babes; others to strong meat, adapted to a more advanced state in the spiritual life, when experience is more enlarged, and the judgment more established, Heb. v. 13, 14. The Lord, the great teacher, leads his children on gradually, from the plainer to the more difficult truths, as they are able to bear them. But human teachers are often too hasty; they do not attend sufficiently to the weakness of young converts, but expect them to learn and receive every thing at once; they are not even content with offering strong meat prematurely to babes, but force upon them the *bones* of subtilties, distinctions, and disputations. But, though a judicious minister will endeavour to accommodate himself to the state of his hearers, no Gospel truth is to be tamely and voluntarily suppressed from a fear of displeasing men. In fact, however, the controversies which have obtained among real Christians, have not so much affected the truth as it lies in the Scripture, as the different explanations, which fallible men of warm passions, and too full of their own sense, have given of it. They who professedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called Calvinists; and the name is used by some persons as a term of reproach. They would insinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or, at least, that he borrowed it from Austin, who, according to them, was the first of the fathers that held it. It is enough for me that I find it in the New Testament. But many things advanced upon the subject by later writers, I confess I do not find there. If any persons advance harsh assertions, not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itself is plainly taught both by our Lord and his apostles, and is of great importance, when rightly understood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and com-

fort of believers, I think it my duty to state it as plainly as I can. I shall offer my view of it in a series of propositions so evidently founded (as I conceive) on acknowledged principles of Scripture, that they cannot be easily controverted by any persons who have a real reverence for the word of God, and any due acquaintance with their own hearts.

I. All mankind are sinners (Rom. iii. 23.) by nature and practice. Their lives are stained with transgressions, their hearts are depraved, their minds blinded, and alienated from God. So that they are not sensible either of their guilt or their misery; nor so much as desirous of returning to God, till he prevents them with his mercy and begins to draw their hearts towards himself. Were I to prove this at large, I might transcribe one half of the Bible. Nay, it is fully proved by experience and observation. The Heathens felt and confessed it. My present subject does not require me to account for it, or to reason upon it. That it is so, I appeal to fact.

II. The inestimable gift of a Saviour, to atone for sin, and to mediate between God and man, John iii. 16.; that there might be a way opened for the communication of mercy to sinners, without prejudice to the honour of the perfections and government of God—this gift was the effect of his own rich grace and love, Rom. v. 6. 8. no less unthought of and undesired, than undeserved by fallen man.

III. Wherever this love of God to man is made known by the Gospel, there is encouragement, and a command given to 'all men every where to repent,' Acts xvii. 30, 31. The manifestation of the eternal Word in the human nature, and his death upon the cross, are spoken of as the highest display of the wisdom and goodness of God; designed to give us, in one and the same transaction, the most affecting sense of the evil of sin, and the strongest assurance imaginable, that there is forgiveness with God, Rom. iii. 24, 25.

IV. Men, while blinded by pride and prejudice, enslaved to sinful passions, and under the influence of this present evil world, neither can nor will receive the truth in the love of it,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. John vi. 44. v. 40. They are prepossessed, and pre-engaged. This, at least, is evidently the case with many people in this favoured nation, who, when the Gospel is proposed to them in the most unexceptionable manner, not only disregard, but treat it with a pointed contempt and indignation. Such was its reception at the beginning, Luke iv. 20, 29. Acts xvii. 18. and we are not to wonder, therefore, that it is so at this day.

V. As all mankind spring from one stock, there are not two different sorts of men by nature; consequently they who receive

the Gospel are no better in themselves than they are who reject it, Eph. ii. 3. The apostle, writing to the believers at Corinth, having enumerated a catalogue, in which he comprises some of the most flagitious and infamous characters, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 11. and allowed to be so by the common consent of mankind, adds, 'Such were some of you.' Surely it cannot be said that they who had degraded themselves below the brutes, by their abominable practices, were better disposed than others to receive that Gospel which is not more distinguished by the sublimity of its doctrine, than by the purity and holiness of conversation which it enjoins!

VI. It seems, therefore, at least, highly probable, that all men universally, if left to themselves, would act as the majority do to whom the word of salvation is sent; that is, they would reject and despise it. And it is undeniable, that some, who in the day of God's power have cordially received the Gospel, did for a season oppose it with no less pertinacity than any of those who have continued to hate and resist it to the end of life. Saul of Tarsus was an eminent instance, Acts ix. 1. He did not merely slight the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; but, according to his mistaken views, thought himself bound in conscience to suppress those who embraced it. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter, and, as he expresses it himself, was exceedingly mad against them,' Acts xxvi. 11. and made havoc of them. His mind was filled with this bitter and insatiable rage, at the moment when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in his way to Damascus. Is it possible that a man thus disposed should suddenly become a preacher of the faith which he had long laboured to destroy, if his heart and views had not been changed by a supernatural agency? or that the like prejudices in other persons can be removed in any other manner?

VII. If all men had heard the Gospel in vain, 'then Christ would have died in vain.' But this is prevented by the covenanted office and influence of the Holy Spirit, John xvi. 8. who accompanies the word with his energy, and makes it the power of God to the salvation of those who believe. He prepares the minds of sinners, and, as in the case of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. opens their hearts to understand and receive the truth, in the love of it.

VIII. But who will presume to say, that when God was pleased to make a proposal of mercy to a race of rebels, he was likewise bound to overcome the obstinacy of men in every case, and to compel them to accept it by an act of his invincible power? If he does thus interpose in favour of some, it is an act of free mercy to which they have no claim. For if we had a

claim, the benefit would be an act of justice, rather than of mercy. May not the great Sovereign of the world 'do what he will with his own?' Matt. xx: 15. And nothing is more peculiarly and eminently his own than his mercy. Yes, we are assured that 'he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy;' Rom. ix. 18. and whom he will, he may justly leave to be hardened in their impenitence and unbelief. We have all deserved to be thus left; but he, as the potter over the clay, has power and right to make a difference, as it seemeth good in his sight. And 'who will say unto him, What doest thou?' Job ix. 12.

IX. When sinners are effectually called by the Gospel, then they are visibly chosen out of the world, John xv. 19. in the spirit and tempers of which they before lived, disobedient and deceived, even as others. 'Old things pass away, and all things become new,' 2 Cor. v. 17. Their hopes and fears, their companions and pleasures, their pursuits and aims, are all changed. The change in these respects is so evident, that they are soon noticed and marked, pitied or derided, by those from whom they are now separated. And I think they who really experience this change will willingly ascribe it to the grace of God.

X. But if they are thus chosen in time, it follows of course that they were chosen from everlasting. Both these expressions, when applied to this subject, amount to the same thing; and the seeming difference between them is chiefly owing to our weakness and ignorance. To the infinite and eternal God our little distinctions of past, present, and future, are nothing. We think unworthily of the unchangeable Jehovah, and liken him too much to ourselves, if we suppose that he can form a new purpose. If it be his pleasure to convert a sinner to-day, he had the same gracious design in favour of that sinner yesterday, at the day of his birth, a thousand years before he was born, and a thousand ages (to speak according to our poor conceptions) before the world began. For that mode of duration which we call *time*, has no respect to him 'who inhabiteth eternity,' Isa. lvii. 15.

With regard to those who reject the declaration of the mercy of God; who, though called and invited by the Gospel and often touched by the power of his Holy Spirit, will not come to the Saviour for life, but persist in their determination to go on in their sins, their ruin is not only unavoidable, but just in the highest degree. And though, like the wicked servant in the parable, Matt. xxv. 24. they cavil against the Lord, their mouths will be stopped, Rom. iii. 19. when he shall at length appear, to plead with them, face to face. Then their cobweb-excuses will fail

them, and the proper grounds of their condemnation will be, that when he sent them light, they turned from it, 'and chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,' John iii. 19.

XI. The great privilege of the elect, comprehensive of every blessing, is, that they are justified, finally and authoritatively justified, from all that can possibly be laid to their charge; for 'it is God,' himself 'who justifieth' them.

The justification of a sinner before God by faith in the obedience and atonement of Christ, is considered by many persons, in these days of refinement, in no better light than as a branch of a scholastic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obsolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning point between the Protestants and Papists. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flourishing or a falling church; that is, he judged the church would always be in a thriving or a declining state, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to. How important it appeared to our English reformers, many of whom sealed their testimony to it with their blood, may be known by the writings of Crammer, Latimer, Philpot, and others; and by the Articles of the Church of England, which are still of so much authority by law, that no person can be admitted into holy orders amongst us, till he has declared and subscribed his assent to them. But I hope never to preach a doctrine to my hearers which needs the names and authority of men, however respectable, for its support. 'Search the Scriptures,' John v. 39. and judge by them of the importance of this doctrine. Judge of it by the text now before us. The apostle speaks of it as sufficient to silence every charge, to free from all condemnation, and inseparably connected with eternal life; for those 'whom God justifies he will also glorify,' Rom. viii. 30. Though volumes have been written upon the subject, I think it may be explained in few words. Every one must give an account of himself to God; and the judgment will proceed according to the tenour of his holy word. 'By the law no flesh can be justified, for all have sinned: Rom. iii. 19, 20. but they who believe in the Gospel will be 'justified from all things,' Acts xiii. 39. for which the law would otherwise condemn them; and, as 'they who believe not are condemned already,' John iii. 18. so believers are already 'justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. v. 1. in the present life. They plead guilty to the charge of the law; but they can likewise plead, that they renounce all hope and righteousness in themselves, and upon the warrant of the word of promise, put

their whole trust in Jesus, 'as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' Rcm. x. 4. : and this plea is accepted. 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Rom. iv. 5. and his sins are no more remembered against him, Heb. viii. 12.

This justification, in its own nature, is authoritative, complete, and final. It is an act of God's mercy, which, because founded upon the mediation of Jesus, may, with no less truth, be styled an act of his justice, whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the law, from the guilt and power of sin, and is translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, Col. i. 13. It includes the pardon of all sin, and admission to the state of a child of God. It is a 'passing from death unto life,' John, v. 24. By faith of the operation of God, the sinner, once afar off, is brought nigh, is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes one with him, as the branch is united to the vine, and the members with the head, John, xv. 5. The sanctification of a believer is imperfect and gradual; but his justification in this sense, from the moment when he begins to live a life of faith in the Son of God, is perfect, and incapable of increase. The principle of life in a newborn infant, and the privileges dependent upon his birth, (if he be the heir of a great family,) are the same from the first hour, as at any future time. He is stronger as he grows up to the stature of a man, but is not more alive; he grows up likewise more into the knowledge and enjoyment of his privileges, but his right to them admits of no augmentation; for he derives it, not from his years, or his stature, or his powers, but from the relation in which he stands as a child to his father. Thus it is with those who are born from above; they are immediately the children and heirs of God, though for a time, like minors while under age, they may seem to 'differ but little from servants,' Gal. iv. 1, 2.; and it doth not yet appear what they shall be.

But, though justification in the sight of God be connected with the reality of faith, the comfortable perception of it in our own consciences, is proportionable to the degree of faith. In young converts, therefore, it is usually weak. They are well satisfied that Jesus is the only Saviour, and they have no doubt of his ability and sufficiency in that character, in favour of those who put their trust in him; but they are suspicious and jealous of themselves; they are apprehensive of something singular in their own case, which may justly exclude them from his mercy, or they fear that they do not believe aright. But the weakest believer is a child of God; and true faith, though at first like a grain of mustard-seed, is interested in all the promises of the Gospel. If it be

true, it will grow, (Mark, iv. 26.) it will attain to a more simple dependence upon its great object, and will work its way through a thousand doubts and fears, (which, for a season, are not without their use,) till at length the weak Christian becomes strong in faith, strong in the Lord, and is enabled to say, 'I know whom I have believed!' 2 Tim. i. 12. Who shall lay any thing to my charge? Who shall condemn? It is God who justifieth. It is Christ who died for me and rose again.

But especially at the great day, the Lord the Judge shall ratify their justification publicly before assembled worlds. 'Then every tongue that riseth in judgment against them, Isa. liv. 17. shall be put to silence. Then Satan will be utterly confounded, and many who despise them on earth will be astonished, and say, 'These are they whose lives we accounted madness, and their end to be without honour! How are they numbered among the children of God!' Wisdom, v. 4, 5.

The right knowledge of this doctrine is a source of abiding joy; it likewise animates love, zeal, gratitude, and all the noblest powers of the soul, and produces a habit of cheerful and successful obedience to the whole will of God. But it may be, and too often is, misunderstood and abused. If you receive it by divine teaching, it will fill you 'with those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God,' Phil. i. 11. But if you learn it only from men and books, if you are content with the notion of it in your head, instead of the powerful experience of it in your heart, it will have a contrary effect. Such a lifeless form, even of the truth itself, will probably make you heady and high-minded, censorious of others, trifling in your spirit, and unsettled in your conduct. Oh! be afraid of resembling the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 1—12. of having the lamp of your profession expire in darkness for want of the oil of grace; least when the Bridegroom cometh, you should find the door shut against you.

## SERMON XLVII.

### THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

ROMANS, viii. 34.

*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

THE redemption of the soul is precious. 'Fools make a mock of sin,' Prov. xiv. 9. But they will not think lightly of it who duly consider the majesty, authority, and goodness of him against whom it is committed; and who are taught by what God actually has done, what sin rendered necessary to be done, before a sinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveness. For wisdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of God would have been in vain, Gal. ii. 21. if the great design, in favour of sinful men, could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind from the beginning; so the great work he has accomplished, and the characters he sustains, when made known to the conscience, are, in fact sufficient to relieve in every case, to answer every charge, and to satisfy the believer in Jesus that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have observed) ready to accuse, but it is in vain; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who shall dare to condemn, if things be as the apostle states them in this passage? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, must prove (if he can) that Christ did not die; or that he did not rise from the dead; or that he was not admitted into the presence of God on our behalf; or that he is unmindful of his promise to make intercession for all who come unto God by him. For if these points are indubitable and sure, it is impossible that the soul, which has trusted in Jesus, and put its cause into his hands, can miscarry.

The death and resurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with glory, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the High Priest of our profession, can scarcely be considered too often. These old truths are always new to those who love him, and are the food by which their souls live. Yet I shall not at present repeat what I have offered upon them from

former passages, but shall chiefly confine myself to the subject of his intercession, which has not, until now, expressly occurred to our meditations.

The word the apostle uses here, and in Heb. vii. 25. 'seeing he ever liveth to make intercession,' occurs likewise Acts, xxv. 24. where Festus speaks of the process managed by the Jews against Paul; and also Rom. xi. 2. of Elijah's making intercession to God against Israel. From these passages, compared together, we may observe that the word is to be taken in a large sense. He pleads our cause, he manages our concerns, he answers our enemies. Who, then, shall condemn those for whom the Lord Jesus thus employs his power and his love? He is our 'Advocate,' 1 John, ii. 1. He takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a priest, and manages as a king, for those who come unto God by him.

I. He pleads as a priest. His office of intercession has a plain reference to his great instituted type, the high priest under the Levitical dispensation; who according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to present the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy seat, Lev. xvi. 2. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the design of this institution. 'Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,' Heb. ix. 6—12. &c. Thus Jesus 'is passed into the heavens,' entered into the holy of holies, with his own blood. His presence there, in our nature, with the marks of his sufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been slain, is an unceasing, virtual intercession on our behalf. I meddle not with curious questions on this subject, as to the manner in which his intercession is carried on: it is sufficient to know that he is there, and for us, as our representative.

This consideration is of continual use to animate and encourage sinners in their approach to God. There are three cases particularly, in which the heart that knows its own bitterness must sink, were it not for the relieving thought, that there is 'an Advocate with the Father,' a 'High Priest,' who, by his intercession is 'able to save to the uttermost.'

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the distress of an awakened conscience. The sinner now is sensible of wants, which God alone can supply, and of miseries, from which he cannot be extricated but by an Almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majesty and holiness of God, he is troubled, and adopts the language of the prophet, 'Wo is me! I am undone,' Isa. vi. 5. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep any longer at a distance from him. But when such a one is enabled to look to Jesus as the intercessor, what light and comfort does he receive! For the Gospel speaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy laden sinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your hearts to him, and think you hear him in effect saying, 'Father, there is another sinner who has heard of my name, and desires to trust in me. Father, I will, that he also may be delivered from going down into the pit, and interested in the ransom which I have provided.'

2. When we are deeply conscious of our defects in duty. If we compare our best performances with the demands of the law, the majesty of God, and the unspeakable obligations we are under; if we consider our innumerable sins of omission, and that the little we can do is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of selfish principles, aims, and motives, which, though we disapprove, we are unable to suppress: we have great reason to confess, 'To us belong shame and confusion of face,' Dan. ix. 7. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jesus, the High Priest, bears the iniquity of our holy things, perfumes our prayers with the incense of his mediation, and washes our tears in his own blood. This inspires a confidence, that though we are unworthy the least of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a share in the great blessings he bestows, because we are heard and accepted, not on account of our own prayers and services, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh intercession for us. Thus the wisdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, so far as it is rightly understood, and cordially embraced, while it lays the sinner low as the dust in point of humiliation and self-abasement, fills him, at the same time, with a hope full of glory, which, with respect to its founda-

tion, cannot be shaken; and with respect to its object, can be satisfied with nothing less than all the fulness of God. There are favoured seasons in which the believer, having a lively impression of the authority and love of the Intercessor, can address the great Jehovah as his Father, with no less confidence than if he was holy and spotless as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cause to say, 'Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!' Job. xl. 4. xlii. 6.

3. This powerful and prevalent intercession abundantly compensates for the poverty and narrowness of our prayers. Experience confirms what the Scripture declares of our insufficiency to order our own cause before the Lord, to specify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with such arguments as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections of our hearts: 'We know not how to pray as we ought,' Rom. viii. 26. And though the Holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often mistake and ask amiss; we often forget what we ought to ask, and we are too often cold, negligent, weary, distracted, and formal in prayer. How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's presence, as the thoughtless 'horse rushes into the battle?' Jer. viii. 6. to speak to God as if we were only speaking into the air, and to have our thoughts dissipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can ask or think; but that he actually does so, for such unworthy creatures, is owing to our Intercessor. He knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. He is not negligent, though we too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's safety, before Peter was himself aware of his danger,' Luke xxii. 31, 32. Have we not sometimes been, as it were, surprised, and shamed by the Lord's goodness, when he has condescended to bestow special and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of asking for them? These are affecting proofs of our Intercessor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But,

II. Jesus the High Priest is upon a throne. He is a King, 'King of saints and King of nations.' He is not only a righteous advocate, but he possesses all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, effectually to manage for those in whose behalf he intercedes. I have already observed, that the original word includes this sense.

1. He is the source and fountain of their supplies. All their springs are in him. The fulness of wisdom, grace, and consolation, out of which they are invited to receive, resides in him.

And, therefore, he says, 'If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it,' John, xiv. 14. Not merely I will present your petitions, but I will fulfil them myself. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he 'with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13. He therefore enjoins us, if we believe or trust in God, to 'believe also in him,' John, xiv. 1. His invitations, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;' John, vii. 37. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;' Rev. xxii. 17. equally express his sovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him wait, from age to age, and are not disappointed. 'He opens his hand, and satisfies them with good,' Psalm cxlv. 16. Nor is the store of his bounty diminished by all that he has distributed, for it is unsearchable and inexhaustible; like the light of the sun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done so from the beginning, and will continue to do so to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjusts their various dispensations, with an unerring suitableness to their several states, capacities, and circumstances. If a skilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the same plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual sunshine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulness. In his kingdom of providence, he so proportions the rain and the sunshine to each other, that the corn is usually brought forward from the seed to the blade, the ear and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always so, were it not for the prevalence of sin, which sometimes makes the 'heavens over our head brass, the earth under our feet iron,' Deut. xxviii. 23. and turns a fruitful land into barrenness. So in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exercises. He delights in their prosperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions in their present state are necessary; and his blessing makes them salutary. But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their crosses are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard, their sun and shield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none are unnoticed by him, none that can separate them from his love; and they all concur in leading them on to a state of unchangeable and endless joy, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. He is 'the Captain of their salvation,' Heb. ii. 10. They

are his soldiers, and fight under his eye; yet the battle is not theirs, but his. Israel of old were to muster their forces, to range themselves for the fight, to use every precaution and endeavour, as though success depended entirely upon themselves. Yet they obtained not the victory by their own sword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and they had little more to do than to pursue the vanquished, and to divide the spoil. And thus it is in the warfare which true Christians maintain, 'not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers;' Eph. vi. 12. against the spirit of the world, and, against Satan and his legions. They fight in his cause, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own strength; but he rebukes them, and pleads the cause of his people. His gracious interposition in their favour is beautifully set forth, together with its effects, in the vision which the prophet saw when he was sent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews against the difficulties they met with when rebuilding the temple. He 'saw Joshua the High priest,' who, in that character, represented the collective body of the people, 'standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him,' Zec. iii. 1—4. Such is our attire as sinners, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and such are the attempts of our enemy to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or to distress us when we appear before him. But when Joshua could not speak for himself, the Lord spake for him, claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, silenced his adversary, clothed him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodness in providing him a table in the midst of his enemies; Psalm xxiii. 5. who saw with envy his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in secret, or attending his public ordinances: and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to behold what is very near, though unseen, we should feel the force of the Psalmist's observation. The powers of darkness surround us, their malice against us is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd towards us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could presently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguish, if we were left exposed to their assaults, they are under a restraint, and can do nothing without his permission. When he is pleased to give quietness, 'who then can make trouble?' Job,

xxxiv. 29. He preserves and provides for his sheep, in the midst of wolves.

We may close this part of our subject with two or three reflections, which, though as to the substance of them I may have offered you before, are always seasonable and suitable when we are speaking of the power and grace of MESSIAH.

1. How precious is this Saviour! How justly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of those who know him! In the work of salvation, from the first step to the last, he is all in all. If he had not died and risen again, we must have died for ever. If he had not ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we must have been thrust down into the lowest hell. If he did not plead for us, we could not, we durst not, offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not, on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would soon be too hard for us. May we, therefore, give him the glory due to his name, and cleave to him, and trust in him alone.

2. How safe are the people of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power stretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promise, upon which he himself has caused them to hope; while he retains that faithfulness which encouraged them to commit their souls to him, it is impossible that any weapon or stratagem formed against them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will rise up against them, but God is for them, and with them, a very present help in trouble, Psalm xlv.

1. They are full of wants and fears, and in themselves liable to many charges; but since Jesus is their head, their security, their intercessor, no needful good shall be withheld from them, no charge admitted against them, none shall condemn them, for it is God himself who justifies the believer in Jesus.

3. If these things be so, how much are they to be pitied who hear of them without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? 'Oh taste and see that the Lord is good?' Psalm xxxiv. 8. Should you at last be separated from those with whom you now join in public worship; should you see them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourselves be thrust out, your present advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and misery. As yet, there is room. Strive to enter while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the solemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they who believe in the Son of God will be justified. Consider who will condemn them, 'God himself,' Psalm l. 6. From his inquisition there can be no retreat; from his sentence

there can be no appeal. And consider what the condemnation will be. A final exclusion from his favour; a never-ceasing sense of his awful displeasure! a state of eternal horror and despair, without mitigation, without the smallest ray of hope. Can you deliberately give up all claim to happiness, and determine to rush 'upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, Job. xv. 26. ; to defy his power, and to dare his threatenings, rather than forego the transitory and delusive pleasures of sin? and can you do this with the Gospel sounding in your ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, observe you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at last, after so many delays, so much perverseness on your part, you will honestly and earnestly seek him, he will be found of you. But if you persist in your obstinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and sure.

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## SERMON XLVIII.

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### THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

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REVELATION, v. 9.

—*Thou—hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, [out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.]*

THE extent, variety, and order of the creation, proclaim the glory of God. He is likewise *Maximus in minimis*. The smallest of his works that we are capable of examining, such, for instance, as the eye or the wing of a little insect, the creature of a day, are stamped with an inimitable impresssion of his wisdom and power. Thus in his written word, there is a greatness, considering it as a *whole*, and a beauty and accuracy in the smaller parts, analogous to what we observe in the visible creation, and answerable to what an enlightened and humble mind may expect in a book which bears the character of a divine revelation. A single verse, a single clause, when viewed (if I may so speak) in the microscope of close meditation, is often found to contain a fulness, a world of wonders. And though a connected and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole Scripture be desirable and useful, and is no less the privilege, than the duty, of those who have capacity and time at their own disposal to acquire it; yet there

is a gracious accommodation to the weakness of some persons, and the circumstances of others. So that in many parts of Scripture, whatever is immediately necessary to confirm our faith, to animate or regulate our practice, is condensed into a small compass, and comprised into a few verses; yea, sometimes a single sentence, when unfolded and examined, will be found to contain all the great principles of duty and comfort. Such is the sentence, which I have now read to you. In the *Messiah*, it is inserted in the grand chorus taken from the twelfth and thirteenth verses of this chapter. And as it may lead us to a compendious recapitulation of the whole subject, and, by the Lord's blessing, may prepare us to join in the following ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; I purpose to consider it in its own proper connexion, as a part of the leading song of the redeemed before the throne, in which the angels cannot share; though the angels from their love to redeemed sinners, and from their views of the manifold wisdom and glory of God in visiting such sinners with such a salvation, cheerfully take a part in the general chorus.

The redemption spoken of is suited to the various cases of sinners of every nation, people and language. And many sinners of divers descriptions, and from distant situations, scattered abroad into all lands, through a long succession of ages, will, by the efficacy of this redemption, be gathered together into one, John xi. 52. They will constitute one family, united in one great Head, Eph. iii. 14, 15. When they shall fully attain the end of their hope, and encircle the throne, day without night, rejoicing, their remembrance of what they once were, their sense of the happiness they are raised to, and of the great consideration to which they owe their deliverance and their exaltation, will excite a perpetual joyful acknowledgment to this purport. They were once lost, but could contribute nothing to their own recovery. Therefore they ascribe all the glory to their Saviour. They strike their golden harps, and sing in strains, loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blest voices, 'Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

But though this song, and this joy, will only be consummated in heaven, the commencement takes place upon earth. Believers, during their present state of warfare, are taught to sing it; in feebler strains indeed, but the subject of their joy, and the object of their praise, are the same which inspire the harps and songs in the world of light. May I not say that this life is the time of their

rehearsal? They are now learning their song, and advancing in meetness to join in the chorus on high, which, as death successively removes them, is continually increasing by the accession of fresh voices. All that they know, or desire to know, all that they possess or hope for, is included in this ascription.

I take the last clause of the verse into the subject. The words suggest three principal points to our consideration.

I. The benefit, 'Redemption to God.'

II. The redemption-price, 'By thy blood.'

III. The extent of the benefit—to a people 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.'

I. Thou hast redeemed us to God.' Redemption or ransom is applicable to a state of imprisonment for debt, and to a state of bondage or slavery. From these ideas, taken together, we may form some estimate of the misery of our fallen state; a theme which, if I cannot insist upon at large in every discourse, I would never wholly omit. For we can neither understand the grace, nor enjoy the comfort of the Gospel, but in proportion as we have a heart-felt and abiding conviction of our wretched condition as sinners without it. They who think themselves whole, know not their need of a physician; Matt. ix. 12. but to the sick he is welcome.

If a man shut up in prison for a heavy debt, which he is utterly incapable of discharging, should obtain his liberty, in consideration of payment made for him by another, he might be properly said to be redeemed from imprisonment. This supposition will apply to our subject. The law and justice of God have demands upon us which we cannot answer. We are therefore shut up under the law, in unbelief, helpless and hopeless, till we know and can plead the engagement of a surety for us. For a time, like Peter, we are sleeping in our prison, regardless of danger, Acts xii. 6—10. The first sensible effect of the grace of God, is, to awaken us from this insensibility. Then we begin to feel the horrors of our dungeon, and the strength of our chains, and to tremble under the apprehension of an impending doom. But grace proceeds to reveal the Saviour and friend of sinners, and to encourage our application to him. In a good hour the chains fall off, the bars of iron and brass are broken asunder, and the prison-doors fly open. The prisoner understands that all his great debt is forgiven, blesses his Deliverer, obtains his liberty, and departs in peace.

We are likewise in bondage, the servants, the slaves, of a harder task-master than Pharaoh was to Israel. Satan, though not by right, yet by a righteous permission, tyrannizes over us, till Jesus

makes us free, John viii. 34, 36. The way of transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 15. Though the solicitations, and commands of that enemy who worketh in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. are, in some respects, suited to our depraved inclinations; yet the consequences are grievous. A burdened conscience, a wasted constitution, a ruined fortune and character, swiftly and closely follow the habits of intemperance, and lewdness; and they who seem to walk in a smoother path are deceived, mortified, and disappointed daily. If persons who live openly and habitually in a course that is contrary to the rule of God's word, 'speak swelling words of vanity,' 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. and boast of their liberty, believe them not. We are sure they carry that in their bosom which hourly contradicts their assertion. Yea, sometimes their slavery is so galling that they attempt to escape, but in vain. They are soon retaken, and their bonds made stronger. The issue of the short-lived reformations, which they defer as long as possible, and at last set about with reluctance, usually is, that their latter end proves worse than their beginning. At most, they only exchange one sinful habit for another, sensuality for avarice, or prodigality for pride. The strong one armed will maintain his dominion till the stronger than he interposes and says, 'Loose him and let him go, for I have found a ransom.' Then, by virtue of the redemption-price, 'the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is delivered,' Isa. xlix. 24, 25. Then the enslaved sinner, like the man out of whom the legion was cast, sits at the feet of Jesus, in peace, 'and in his right mind,' Mark v. 15. He becomes the Lord's freed-man.

For he is not only delivered from guilt and thrall, he 'is redeemed to God.' He is now restored to his original state, as an obedient and dependent creature, devoted to his Creator, conformed to his will and image, and admitted to communion with him in love. These are blessings which alone can satisfy the soul, and without which it is impossible for man to be happy. While he is ignorant of his proper good, and seeks it in creatures, he is, and must be, wretched. Madness is in his heart, a deceived, disordered imagination turns him aside, and he feeds upon ashes, and upon the wind, Isa. xlv. 20. But by Grace he is renewed to a sound judgment, his mind receives a right direction, and he is 'turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God,' Acts xxvi. 18.

II. What unspeakably, and beyond conception, enhances the value of this deliverance, is, the consideration of the means by which it is effected. For it is not merely a deliverance, but 'a redemption.' It is not an act of mere mercy, but of mercy har-

monizing with justice. It is not an act of power only, but of unexampled and expensive love. 'Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood!

The sentence denounced by the law against transgressors, was death. And therefore when MESSIAH became our surety to satisfy the law for us, he must die. The expression of 'his blood,' is often used figuratively for his death, perhaps to remind us how he died. His was a bloody death. When he was in his agony in Gethsemane, his 'sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground,' Luke xxii. 44. His blood flowed when he gave his back to the smiters, under the painful strokes of the scourging he endured previous to his crucifixion. It flowed from his head, when the soldiers having mocked his character of King by crowning him with thorns, by their rude blows forced the thorns into his temples. His blood streamed from the wounds made by the spikes, which pierced his hands and his feet, when they fastened him to the cross. When he hung upon the cross, his body was full of wounds, and covered with blood. And after his death, another large wound was made in his side, from which issued blood and water. Such was the redemption-price he paid for sinners, his blood, the blood of his heart. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Nor could any blood answer the great design but his. Not any: not all the bloody sacrifices appointed by the law of Moses could take away sin, as it respects the conscience, nor afford a plea with which a sinner could venture to come before the High God, Micah vi. 6. But the blood of MESSIAH, in whom were united the perfections of the divine nature and the real properties of humanity, and which the apostle therefore styles 'the blood of God,' Acts xx. 28. this precious blood cleanses from all sin. It is exhibited as a propitiation of perpetual efficacy, 'by which God declares his righteousness,' no less than his mercy, 'in forgiving iniquities,' and shows himself just to the demands of his holiness, and the honour of his government, when he accepts and justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26.

If these things were understood and attended to, would it be thought wonderful that this Saviour is very precious to those who believe in him, and who obtain redemption by his blood? How can it possibly be otherwise? Grace like this, when known, must captivate and fix the heart! Not only to save, but to die, and to die for his enemies! Such costly love, productive of such glorious consequences, and to such unworthy creatures! Surely the apostle's mind was filled and fired with these considerations, when, authenticating an epistle with his own hand, he subjoined

this emphatical close, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha!' 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Do you think, my brethren, that the apostle took pleasure in denouncing so severe a sentence against all those who did not see (as we say) with his eyes? Had he so little affection for sinners, that he could thus consign them to destruction by multitudes, for differing from him in what some persons only deem an opinion? Rather consider him, not as breathing out his own wishes, but as speaking in the name and on the behalf of God. He knew it must be, and he declared it would be so. It was no pleasure to him to see them determined to perish. On the contrary, he had great grief and sorrow of heart for them, even for the Jews, who had treated him with the greatest cruelty. Even for their sakes, he could have been content to be made an Anathema himself, that they might be saved, Rom. ix. 3. But, upon the whole, he acquiesced in the will of God, and acknowledged it to be just, right, and equal, that if any man would not love the Lord Jesus Christ, after all he had done and suffered for sinners, he should be accursed. By this comparison of the apostle's severe language with his compassionate temper, I am led to digress a little further. It suggests an apology for ministers of the Gospel in general. When we declare the terrors of the Lord, when we assure you that there is but one solid foundation for hope, and that unless you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must perish, some of our hearers account us bigotted, uncharitable, and bitter. But if you could see what passes in secret, how faithful ministers mourn over those who reject their message, how their disobedience cuts them to the heart, and abates the comfort they would otherwise find in your services; if you could believe us when we say (I trust truly) that we are ready to impart unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but our own souls also because you are dear to us, 1 Thes. ii. 8. and we long for your salvation; then you would think more favourably of us. But after all, we cannot, we dare not, soften our message to please men. What we find in the word of God we must declare. It would be at the peril of our souls to 'speak smooth things,' to 'prophecy deceits' Isa. xxx. 10. to you; and, so far as we preach the truth, it will be at the peril of your souls if we are disregarded.

III. The benefits of this redemption extend to a numerous people, who are said to be redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation. I have, upon a former occasion, offered you my sentiments concerning the extent of the virtue of that blood which taketh away the sin of the world.\* But the clause now before

\* Ser. XVI.

us invites me to make a few additional observations upon a subject which, I conceive, it much concerns us rightly to understand.

The redeemed of the Lord are those who actually experience the power of his redemption, who are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and brought into a state of liberty, peace, and holiness. That the people of every kindred, nation, and tongue, are not redeemed in this sense, universally, is as certain as evidence of facts, and express declarations of Scripture can make it. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Multitudes thus disqualified, will be found trembling, on the left hand of the Judge, at the great day. But 'a remnant will be saved, according to the election of grace.' For they who differ, who are redeemed to the service of God, while others live and die in the love and service of sin, do not make themselves to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7. It becomes the potsherds of the earth to ascribe to their Maker the glory of his sovereignty, and to acknowledge, that if they have a good hope, it is because it pleased the Lord to make 'them his people, who once were not his people,' Hos. ii. 23. Yet a way of conceiving of the doctrines of the divine sovereignty, and of a personal election unto life, has often obtained, which seems to have a tendency to render the mind narrow, selfish, and partial, and to straiten the exercise of that philanthropy which the genius and spirit of the Gospel powerfully inculcate. The best of us, perhaps, are more prone than we are aware of to assimilate the great God to ourselves, and to frame our ideas of Him too much according to our own image. So that often much of a man's natural disposition may be observed in the views he forms of the divine perfections and conduct; as, on the other hand, his conceptions of the character of God strengthen and confirm him in his own tempers and habits. There are persons, who, being persuaded in their minds (we would hope upon sure grounds) that they themselves are of the elect, appear to be little concerned what may become of others. Their notions of God's sovereignty, and his right to do what he will with his own, though often insufficient to preserve them from repining and impatience under the common events of human life, raise them above all doubts and difficulties on a subject which the apostle speaks of as unsearchable and untraceable; where he acknowledges depths which he was unable to fathom, Rom. xi. 33. all appear to them quite plain and easy; where he admires and adores, they arrogantly dispute, and determine *ex cathedra*, and harshly censure all who are not so eagle-sighted as themselves. Methinks they who know the worth of a soul, from its vast capacity for happiness and misery, and its

immortal duration, cannot justly be blamed for allowing no limits to their benevolent wishes for the salvation of mankind but the will of God, as it is plainly made known to us in his word. To this we are to submit, not as of necessity only, but cheerfully; assured that his will is wise, holy, and good; that the Judge of all the world will do right; and to wait for the day when he will condescend to clear up every difficulty, and give us that satisfaction which, in our present state of ignorance and weakness, we are incapable of receiving. Shall mortal man be more just, or can he be more merciful than God? It is a false compassion, founded in a blameable disregard of what is due to the glory of his great name, that prompts us to form a wish that his unerringly wise appointments could be otherwise than they are. Yet it is a comfort to think that his mercy, in which he delights, in which he is peculiarly said to be rich, and which is higher than the heavens, will, in its exercise, far exceed the bounds which some fallible mortals would peremptorily assign to it. We must not indulge conjecture and hypothesis further than the Scripture will warrant; but while we humbly depend upon this infallible light, we need not be afraid to follow it, though it should, in some particulars, lead us a little beyond the outlines of some long received, and, in the main, very valuable human systems of divinity.

I have repeatedly expressed my belief, that many prophecies respecting the spread and glory of the kingdom of MESSIAH upon earth, have not yet received their full accomplishment, and that a time is coming when many (perhaps the greater part of mankind) of all nations, and people, and languages, shall know the joyful sound of the Gospel, and walk in the light of the Redeemer's countenance. At present, I would confine myself to consider what ground the Scripture affords us to hope that there are many of every nation, people, and tongue, even now, singing this song before his throne.

The Revelations vouchsafed to the beloved disciple in Patmos, exhibit a succession of great events, extending (I suppose) from the apostle's days to the end of time. But while only the learned can so much as attempt to ascertain from history the dates and facts to which the prophecies already fulfilled refer, or to offer probable conjectures concerning the events as yet future, (in which the most judicious commentators are far from being agreed) there are passages interspersed, which seem designed to administer consolation to plain believers, by representations suited to raise their thoughts to the state of the church triumphant. Though they are unable to explain the particulars of what they read, there is a glory resulting from the whole, which animates

their hope and awakens their joy. Of this kind I think is that vision, Rev. vii. 9. *ad finem.* in which the apostle saw the servants of God, who were sealed in their foreheads, in number one hundred and forty-four thousand; and, besides these, 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, and cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb,' &c. I confess myself unable to expound this sublime passage, and to give the full or even the principal sense of it with certainty. But that it has some reference to what is now passing within the veil which hides the unseen world from our view, I cannot doubt. I propose my thoughts upon it with caution and diffidence. I dare not speak with that certainty which I feel myself warranted to use, when I set before you, from Scripture, the great truths which are essential to a life of faith in the Son of God; yet I hope to advance nothing that is contrary to Scripture, or to any deductions fairly and justly drawn from it.

Having premised this acknowledgment of my incompetence to decide positively, I venture to say, that by the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in their foreheads, (a definite for an indefinite number, which is frequent in Scripture language,) I understand those, who, living to mature age, and where the Gospel is afforded, are enabled to make a public and visible profession of religion, and are marked, as it were, in their foreheads, and known to whom they belong, by their open and habitual separation from the spirit and customs of the world which lieth in wickedness. And the exceeding great multitude, contradistinguished from these, I conceive to be those who are elsewhere styled the Lord's 'hidden ones;' and that these are a great multitude indeed, gathered by him who knows them that are his, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. I may distribute them into the following classes:

1. Infants. I think it at least highly probable that when our Lord says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' Matt. xix. 14. he does not only intimate the necessity of our becoming like little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that, comparatively speaking, his kingdom may be said to consist of little children. The apostle speaks

of them as not having 'sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,' Rom. v. 14. that is, with the consent of their understanding and will. And when he says, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,' he adds, 'that every man may give an account of what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad,' 2 Cor. v. 10. But children who die in their infancy, have not done any thing in the body, either good or bad. It is true they are by nature evil, and must, if saved, be the subjects of a supernatural change. And though we cannot conceive how this change is to be wrought, yet I suppose few are so rash as to imagine it impossible that any infants can be saved. The same power that produces this change in some, can produce it in all; and therefore I am willing to believe, till the Scripture forbids me, that infants of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who have done nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace. They are born for a better world than this; they just enter this state of tribulation; they quickly pass through it; 'their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb,' and they are admitted, for his sake, before the throne. Should I be asked to draw the line, to assign the age at which children begin to be accountable for actual sin, it would give me no pain to confess my ignorance. 'The Lord knoweth.'

2. A people hidden among the most degenerate communities, civil or ecclesiastical, that bear the name of Christian, where ignorance and superstition, or errors which, though more refined, are no less contrary to the Gospel, have a prevailing dominion and influence. What can be more deplorable, in the view of an enlightened and benevolent mind, than the general state of the Roman and Greek churches? where the traditions, inventions, and doctrines of men, a train of pompous and burdensome ceremonies, a dependence upon masses, penance, and pilgrimages, upon legends and fictitious saints, form the principal features of the public religion. Many nations are involved in this gross darkness, but they are not wholly destitute of the Scripture; some portions of it are interwoven with their authorized forms of worship; and we cannot with reason doubt, but a succession of individuals among them have been acquainted with the life and power of true godliness, notwithstanding the disadvantages and prejudices of their education. There are likewise among Protestants schemes of doctrine, supported by learning and by numbers, which are not more conformable to the standard of the New Tes-

tament than the grossest errors of Popery; and yet, here and there, persons may be met with, who, by the agency of the Holy Spirit enabling them to understand the Scriptures, are made wiser than their teachers; and who, though still fettered by some mistakes and prejudices, give evidence, in the main, that their hopes are fixed upon the only atonement, that they are redeemed to God, and are partakers of that faith which worketh by love, purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

3. I will go one step further. The inferences that have been made by some persons from the apostle Peter's words, 'that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,' Acts, x. 34, 35. are undoubtedly rash and unscriptural. They would conclude from thence, that it is of little importance what people believe, provided they are sincere in their way; that the idolatrous Heathens, even the most savage of them, whose devotion is cruelty, who pollute their worship with human blood, and live in the practice of vices disgraceful to humanity, are in a very safe state, because they act, as it is supposed, according to their light. 'But if the light which is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness!' Such a lax candour as this, tends to make the Gospel unnecessary; if they who have it not are therefore excusable, though they neither love nor fear God, and live in open violation of the law of their nature. The declaration 'that without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14. holds universally, and without a single exception. But if we suppose a Heathen, destitute of the means of grace by which conversion is usually wrought, to be brought to a sense of his misery, of the emptiness and vanity of worldly things, to a conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a desire of mercy; and that, though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme, to this purport, *Enscutium, miserere mei*—Father, and source of beings, have mercy upon me! who will prove that such views and desires can arise in the heart of a sinner, without the energy of that Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow? Who will take upon him to say, that his blood has not sufficient efficacy to redeem to God a sinner who is thus disposed, though he has never heard of his name? Or who has a warrant to affirm, that the supposition I have made, is, in the nature of things, impossible to be realized? But I stop—I do not often amuse you with conjecture; and though, for want of express warrant from Scripture, I dare not give the sentiments I have

now offered a stronger name than probable or conjectural, I hope I do not propose them for your amusement. They will prove to your advantage and my own, if they are helpful to guard us against a narrow, harsh, and dogmatical spirit: and if, without abating our reverent submission to the revealed will of God, they have a tendency to confirm our views of his goodness, and the power and compassions of the great Redeemer.

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## SERMON XLIX.

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### THE CHORUS OF ANGELS.

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#### REVELATION, v. 12.

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!*

It was a good report which the queen of Sheba heard, in her own land, of the wisdom and glory of Solomon. It lessened her attachment to home, and prompted her to undertake a long journey to visit this great king, of whom she had heard so much. She went, and she was not disappointed. Great as the expectations were which she had formed from the relation made her by others, they fell short of what she saw and heard herself, when she was admitted into his presence. Good, likewise, is the report of the Gospel. It has a powerful effect upon those who receive it by faith. It is abundantly sufficient to convince them of the comparative insignificance of all that they most admired and esteemed in this world. From that hour they become strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They set out, in the way God has prescribed, in hopes of seeing Him who is greater than Solomon; and the report they have heard of him is their subject, their song, and their joy, while they are on their journey, and their great support under the difficulties they meet with on the road. What then will it be to see him as he is? As yet, the one half is not told them: or, at least, they are not yet capable of conceiving the half, or the thousandth part, of what they read in the Scripture, concerning his wisdom, his glory, and his grace. We weaken, rather than enlarge, the sense of such a passage as this, by our feeble comments. We must die before we can understand it. To the bulk of mankind, 'Wait the great teacher death,' is cold, is dangerous advice. If they are not taught by the Gospel while

they live, the teaching of death will be too late. Dreadful will be the condition of those who cannot be convinced of their mistakes till repentance and amendment will be impracticable. But death will be a great teacher indeed to a believer; he will then know more by a glance, and in a moment, of the happiness he is now expecting, than by all he could collect from the inquiry and experience of a long course of years, in this world.

The scenery of this chapter, if attentively considered, is sufficient to snatch our thoughts from the little concerns of time, and to give us some anticipation of the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Come, all ye that are wearied and burdened with afflictions and temptations, look up, and for a while, at least, forget your sorrows! The Lamb is upon his throne, surrounded by a multitude of his redeemed people, who once were afflicted and burdened like yourselves; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes. They have a song peculiarly their own, and are represented as taking the first and leading part in worship and praise. The angels cannot sing their song, they were not redeemed to God by his blood; but they are interested in the subject. Their highest views of the manifold wisdom of God are derived from the wonders of redemption. Therefore they join in the chorus, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' If you have an humble hope of bearing a part in this immortal song, will you hang down your heads like a bulrush, because you have the honour of following your Lord through many tribulations to his kingdom?

The number of the angels is expressed indefinitely, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, myriads and millions, to intimate to us that, with respect to our capacities and conceptions, they are innumerable. Their number is known to him who 'tellethe the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names,' Psalm cxlvii. 4. and to him only. The Scripture intimates a diversity of ranks and orders among them, 'Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers;' but, as to particulars, there is little said that might gratify our curiosity. It is enough for us to know, that the highest of them, and that all of them, worship him who is clothed in our nature. My text expressly informs us that the object of their worship 'is the Lamb that was slain.' Not that the humanity of Christ, which is but a creature, is, simply and formally, the object of their worship; but they worship him who has assumed the human nature into personal union with himself; 'God manifest in the flesh,' God in Christ.

Though the world censure or despise us for 'honouring the Son as we honour the Father,' John v. 23. we have here a good precedent, as we have, in many places of Scripture, the warrant of an express command. Whether men are pleased or not, we will, we must, worship the Lamb that was slain. To animate our devotion, let us thankfully consider, why he was slain, and how he was slain.

I. Why he was slain. The redeemed say, 'For us.' 'He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,' Rev. i. 5. They were sinners and enemies; they were slaves to sin and Satan: yet he loved them and died to redeem them. It is by virtue of his blood and death that they are now before the throne. Nothing less than his death could have made them duly sensible of their misery; nothing less could have relieved them from it. He was lifted up upon the cross, that by the powerful magnetism of his dying love, he might, in the hour of his grace, draw their hearts to himself, John xii. 32. This was the design, this was the effect, of his sufferings. A crucified Saviour, though a stumbling block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to vain reasoners, was to them the power and the wisdom of God for salvation. They looked unto him, and were enlightened; they trusted in him, and were not ashamed. By faith in his name, they obtained peace with God, they renounced the ways of sin, they warred the good warfare, they overcame the world; and were at length made more than conquerors. For his sake they endured the cross, and despised the shame. They met with bad treatment from the world; but it was from the world that crucified him. While they were here, their characters were obscured by their own imperfections, and by the misrepresentations and reproaches of their enemies. But now their reproach is removed, and 'they shine, each one like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father,' Matt. xiii. 43. What an immense constellation of suns! This their full salvation was the joy set before him, for the sake of which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And now they see him as he is, they ascribe all their victories and honours to him, and unite in one song of endless praise to the Lamb that was slain.

II. Their praises are heightened, when they consider, How he was slain. He did not die a natural death; 'He was slain.' Nor did he fall like a hero, by an honourable wound in the field of battle. The impression which the death of the late general Wolfe made upon the public, is not yet quite forgotten. He conquered for us; but it cost him his life. But he died honourably, and was lamented by his country. Not so the lamb of God. He died the death of a slave, of a malefactor. Cruelty, malice,

and contempt, combined to give his sufferings every possible aggravation. And, after he was slain, very few laid it to heart. The world went on as it did before, as though nothing extraordinary had happened. But on this dark ground, the perfections of God were displayed in their fullest lustre; and they are the perfections of the great Redeemer, and therefore distinctly ascribed to him by the angels in the words which follow—‘Power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.’

Though each of these words have a distinct sense, a nicety in defining them, and stating their precise meaning, is of less importance than to feel the combined efficacy of them all, to impress our hearts with sentiments of reverence, confidence, and love. The fulness of expression may teach us, that every kind of excellence is the indubitable right and possession of the Lamb that was slain. He is worthy to have them all attributed to him in the most absolute sense, and consequently worthy of our adoration, dependence, and praise.

1. ‘Power.’ It is spoken once, yea twice we have heard the same, that ‘power belongeth unto God,’ Psalm lxii. 11. It belongeth to him eminently and exclusively. All the power of creatures is derived from him. Such is the power of the Lamb. He styles himself *ὁ ὑποστηρῶν*, Rev. i. 8. 11. the Omnipotent, the Upholder and Possessor of all things. He exerciseth his power in the human nature, Matt. xxviii. 18. ‘He doeth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?’ Dan. iv, 35. He has, therefore, all-sufficiency, and uncontrollable authority, for the discharge of his office, as the Mediator and Head of his church. The divine perfections, being infinite, are not distinct in themselves, though the Scripture, in condescension to our weakness, authorises us to speak of them as distinguishable. God is one. And the ‘power’ which can preserve and govern the world, involves in the idea of it every other excellence which are separately mentioned in this passage.

2. ‘Wisdom.’ He is the only wise God, and our Saviour,’ Jude 25. His knowledge is perfect, his plan is perfect. In himself he is essentially the wisdom of God, Prov. viii. 22. and he is our wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is ‘life eternal to know the only true God,’ John xvii. 3. and therefore it is ‘life eternal to know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.’ For he is the only way, and the only door, to this knowledge; no one can come unto God, or attain to any just conceptions of him, but in and by the Son of his love, who so perfectly represents God to us, is so

completely the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, that whoso hath seen him, 'hath seen the Father.' John xiv. 9. By him is opened to us the unsearchable wisdom of the divine counsels, particularly in the great work of redemption. 'No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him.' John i. 18. xv. 15. It is by wisdom communicated from him, that his people are made wise unto salvation. Though there are few scholars and philosophers among them, and many of them are despised for their ignorance and weakness, yet, in truth, they have all a good understanding, for they know the Lord and his will; they know wherein their proper happiness consists, and how it is to be obtained. They are instructed how to walk and to please God, how to bear afflictions with patience, and to meet death with composure. This wisdom is far superior to that of the schools. But He bestows and maintains it. The eyes of their mind are opened, and they see by his light; but they have no light of their own, or in themselves. They wait upon him for direction in every difficulty, for the solution of every hard question which perplexes their spirits; and he makes the crooked straight, teaches them to avoid the snares that are laid for them, or extricates them when entangled. Therefore in time, and to eternity, they will admire and adore his wisdom.

3. 'Riches.' All the stores of mercy, grace, and comfort are in him, as light in the sun, or water in the ocean. The apostle, speaking 'of the unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. iii. 8. gives us the idea of a mine, the height, length, depth, and breadth of which cannot be investigated, nor the immense wealth it contains exhausted. Of this fulness the poor are invited to receive freely, and multitudes, from age to age, have been enriched, and the treasure is still undiminished. None are sent away empty; and when all have been supplied, it will be full as at first.

4. 'Strength:' that energy and efficacy of his power, by which he accomplishes his holy purposes. Who can conceive of this? How just is the Psalmist's reasoning, 'He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?' Psal. xciv. 9. So we may say, How strong is he from whom all created strength is derived, and before whom the strength of all creatures, if collected into one effort, would be as chaff before the whirlwind! The Lord of all power and might speaks, and it is done; he commandeth, and it standeth fast. Though the waves of the stormy sea toss themselves, they cannot prevail; Psal. xciii.

3, 4. he checks them in the height of their rage, setting bounds to their violence which they cannot pass, saying, 'Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud billows be stayed,' Job xxxviii. 10, 11. With equal sovereignty, certainty, and ease, he rules over moral agents. He formed the heart of man, and he can fill it with terror or with comfort in a moment, in any assignable circumstances. He can make it happy in a dungeon, Acts xvi. 25. or impress it with dismay and despair upon a throne, Dan. v. 5, 6. All hearts are thus incessantly under his influence. And the hedge of his promise and protection surrounds those who trust in him, as with mountains and walls of brass and fire, impenetrable to the assaults of the powers of darkness, unless so far as he, for wise and holy ends, is pleased to give permission. With the arm of his strength he 'upholdeth them that are falling, raiseth up them that are bowed down;' Psal. cxlv. 14. and is, in one and the same instant, a present and immediate help in trouble to all who call upon him, Psal. xlvi. 1. Therefore those that abide under his shadow are safe; they pass unhurt through floods and flames, because their Redeemer is strong. And when, in defiance of all their enemies, he has brought them together in his heavenly kingdom, they will, with one consent, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.

5. 'Honour.' He is the fountain of it. All the honour of his creatures, and of his people, is from him; as the sun beautifies and gilds the objects he shines upon, which, without him, are opaque and obscure. Because his people are precious in his sight, they are honourable. 'He clothes them with the garments of salvation, covers them with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, as a bride adorneth herself with jewels,' Isa. lxi. 10. But who can speak of his own inherent honour, as God-man and Mediator! We must wait till we see him without a cloud or vail, receiving the homage and adoration of angels and men. For as yet the one half cannot be told us! Then, however, it will be universally known, that he who possesses the fulness of wisdom and power, riches and strength, is worthy to receive all honour. Ah! how different will he then appear from that humble form he once assumed, when, for our sakes, he was a man of sorrows, despised, rejected, and nailed to the ignominious cross.

6. 'Glory.' The manifestation of God, that by which he is known and magnified, in the view of finite intelligences; the result, the combined effulgence of his holiness, grace, wisdom, truth, and love: this is his glory, and this glory is revealed and

displayed in Christ. He is glorious in his works of creation and providence, but these do not fully exhibit his character. But in the Lamb upon the throne his glory shines, full orbéd. And all in heaven, and all in earth, who behold it, take up 'the song of Moses and the Lamb,' 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord? who is like unto thee? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!' Rev. xv. 3.

7. 'Blessing.' He is the author of all blessings, of all the happiness and good which his people receive, and he is the deserved object of their universal praise. The different senses in which we use the word 'blessing,' taken together, may express that intercourse or communion which is between the head and the mystical members of his body. He blesses them effectually with the light of his countenance, with liberty, grace, and peace. He blesses them daily. His mercies are renewed to them every morning. He will bless them eternally. 'Blessed are the people who have this Lord for their God.' They can make him no suitable returns, yet in their way they bless him. They admire, adore, and praise him. They call upon all the powers of their souls to bless him. They proclaim his goodness, and that he is worthy to receive the ascription of power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. In proportion to their attainments in this delightful exercise of worship, love and gratitude, they enjoy a heaven upon earth; and to stand before him continually, to behold his glory, to live under the unclouded beams of his favour, and to be able to bless and praise him as they ought, without weariness, abatement, interruption, or end, is what they mean when they speak of the heaven they hope for hereafter. Such is the blessedness of those who have already died in the Lord. They see his face, they drink of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand, they cast down their crowns before him, and say, 'Thou art worthy.' 'Let us not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience,' Heb. vi. 12. have finished their course, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

Of all this glory and honour the Scripture declares the Lamb that was slain to be worthy. Wisdom, riches, and strength, are his. His power is infinite, his authority supreme. He is the author and giver of all good. He has life in himself, and he is the life of all that live; the Lord and Head of the church, and of the universe. Can language express, or can heart conceive, a higher ascription and acknowledgment than this? Can all this be due to a creature, to one of a derived and dependent character?

Then surely the Scripture would have a direct tendency to promote idolatry. Far be the thought from us! The Scripture teaches us the knowledge of the true God, and the worship due to him. Therefore MESSIAH, the Lamb that was slain, is the true God, the proper and immediate object of the worship of angels and of men.

Let us, therefore, take up a lamentation for those who slight the glorious Redeemer, and refuse him the honours due to his name. Their mistake should excite, not our anger or scorn, but our pity and prayers. Are there any such amongst us? Alas, my fellow-sinners, you know not what you do! Alas, you know him not, nor do you know yourselves! I am well aware that a thousand arguments of mine will not persuade you; but I can simply tell you what would soon make you at least desirous of adopting our sentiments upon this subject. If he who has that power over the heart which I have been speaking of, was pleased to give you this moment a sense of the holiness and authority of God, and of your conduct towards him as his creatures, your strongest objections to the high honours we attribute to the Saviour would this moment fall to the ground; and you would be immediately convinced, that either Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, or that you must perish. You would no longer expect mercy; but in a way perfectly consonant with the righteousness and truth of God, declared in his word, and with the honour and purity of his moral government. This would lead you to perceive the necessity of an atonement, and the insufficiency of any atonement but that which the Lamb of God has made by the sacrifice of himself; Heb. ix. 26. and that the efficacy even of his mediation depends upon his divine character. The Scriptural doctrines of the depravity of man, the malignity of sin, the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, the necessity and efficacy of his mediation, and the inevitable, extreme, and endless misery of those who finally reject him, are so closely connected, that if the first be rightly understood, it will open the mind to the reception of the rest. But, till the first be known and felt, the importance and certainty of the others will be suspected if not openly denied.

Though the doctrines I have enumerated are, in these sceptical days, too generally disputed and contradicted, I am fully confident that it is impossible to demonstrate them to be false. Upon the lowest supposition, therefore, they possibly may be true; and the consequences depending upon them, if they should be found true at last, are so vastly momentous, that even the peradventure, the possibility of their truth, render them deserving of your most

serious consideration. Trifle with yourselves no longer. If they be truths, they are the truths of God. Upon the same authority stands the truth of that gracious promise, that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let me entreat you to make the experiment. This is the proper point to begin with. Instead of indulging reasonings and speculations, humble yourselves before the Lord, and pray for the light and influence which he has said he will afford to them who are willing to be taught. Read the Scripture with deliberation, and do not labour to fortify yourselves against conviction. Break off from those practices, which your own consciences admonish you cannot be pleasing to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. 'Then shall you know, if you will sincerely follow on to know the Lord,' Hos. vi. 3. But if not, if you will, in a spirit of levity, presume to decide upon points which you will not allow yourselves seriously to examine, should you at last perish in your obstinacy and unbelief, your ruin will be of yourselves. You have been faithfully warned, and we shall be clear of your blood.

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## SERMON L.

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THE UNIVERSAL CHORUS.

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REVELATIONS, v. 13.

*[And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying,] Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

MEN have generally agreed to dignify their presumptuous and arrogant disquisitions on the works and ways of God with the name of wisdom; though the principles upon which they proceed, and the conclusions which they draw from them, are, for the most part, evident proofs of their depravity and folly. Instead of admiring the effects of his wisdom and power in the creation, they have rashly endeavoured to investigate the manner of its production. A variety of hypotheses have been invented to account for the formation of the world, and to state the laws by which the frame of nature is governed; and these different and inconsistent

accounts have been defended with a magisterial tone of certainty, and an air of demonstration, by their respective authors, as though they had been by-standers and spectators, when God spoke all things into being, and produced order out of confusion by the word of his power. They have, however, been much more successful in showing the absurdity of the schemes proposed by others, than in reconciling their own to the sober dictates of plain common sense.

But if, by indulging their speculations on the creation of the world, the causes of the deluge, and similar subjects, their employment has been no better than 'weaving spiders' webs;' the result of their reasoning on morals has been much worse. Here they have, with much industry, 'hatched cockatrice' eggs;' Isa. lix. 5. and their labours have been not only fallacious, but mischievous. Their metaphysical researches, while they refuse the guidance of revelation, if pursued to their just consequences, will always lead into the labyrinths of scepticism, weaken the sense of moral obligation, rob the mind of the most powerful motives of right conduct, and of the only consolations which can afford it solid support in an hour of trouble. One insuperable difficulty which they will undertake to solve, though it does not properly lie in their way, is concerning the origin of evil. That evil is in the world, is felt and confessed universally. The Gospel points out an effectual method of deliverance from it; but, alas! the simple and infallible remedy is neglected, and men weary themselves with vain inquiries,

And find no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.

The more they reason the more they involve themselves in uncertainty and error, till at last they make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as so many undoubted axioms, opinions which are equally dishonourable to God, and contradictory to truth and experience, 2 Thess. ii. 11. Thus much is certain, that by the occasion of evil, the character of God is manifested with superior glory to the view of angels and men, who are in a state of holiness and allegiance, and a higher accent is thereby given to their praises; for now his justice and his mercy, which could not have been otherwise known, are revealed in the strongest light; and the redemption of sinners affords the brightest display of his wisdom and love.

The redeemed are represented as taking the first part in this sublime song, verse 8—10. The angels join in the chorus, verse

11, 12, which now becomes universal. All the angels, all the saints upon the earth, in the state of the dead, or *hades*, whether their bodies are buried under the earth, or in the sea, with one heart, aim, and voice, unite in worship and praise. In the preceding verse, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power,' are ascribed unto the Lamb; but here the ascription is 'unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' I shall not add to what I have already observed to you from the words of the doxology. A few remarks, which offer from this verse, taken in connexion with the former will bring me to a conclusion of the whole subject. And, oh! for a coal of fire from the heavenly altar, to warm your hearts and mine, that our love, joy, and gratitude may be awakened into lively exercise, and that the close of our meditations on the *Messiah* may leave us deeply impressed with desires and well-grounded hopes of meeting ere long before the throne, to join with the angels and the redeemed in singing the praise of God and the Lamb!

I. The Lord Jesus is not only the head of the church redeemed from among men, but of the whole intelligent creation that is in willing subjection to God. It belonged to his great design 'to gather together in one,' Eph. i. 10. (to reduce under one head, as the Greek impression is,) even in himself, 'all things that are in heaven and upon earth.' He is the Lord and the life both of angels and of men. Mutability and dependence are essential to the state of creatures, however exalted; and the angels in glory owe their preservation and confirmation in holiness and happiness to him. Hence they are styled 'the elect angels,' 1 Tim. v. 21. in distinction from those who left their first habitation, and sunk into sin and misery. Angels, therefore, constitute a branch of that great family, which is named of him in heaven and earth. And, having made peace by the blood of his cross, he has effected a reconciliation, not only between God and sinners, but also between angels and men. How those inhabitants of light are disposed to sinful men, considered as sinful, we may learn from many passages of Scripture. They are devoted to God, filled with zeal for his honour, and wait but for his command to execute vengeance upon his enemies. When Herod, infatuated by his pride and by the flattery of the multitude, received their idolatrous compliment with complacence, 'an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory,' Acts xii. 23. The pestilence which destroyed the people towards the end of David's reign, was under the direction of an angel, 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. and David saw him with his arm stretched out against Jerusalem. And in this prophecy angels are spoken of as employ-

ed in pouring forth the vials of wrath upon the earth. And still they are ready, we may believe, to avenge their Maker's cause upon the wicked, when they are commissioned. And if the history of modern times was written by an inspired pen, and events, as in the Scriptures, were assigned to their proper causes, perhaps the death of many a haughty worm would be recorded in words to this effect:—'And an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory.' But, viewing sinners as the subject of redemption, the angels copy from their Lord. They regard them with benevolence, and rejoice over every one that repenteth. They willingly attend to them, and assist them, in ways beyond our conception, Heb. i. 14. They esteem believers in Jesus as their fellow-servants, Rev. xxii. 9. We have reason to think, that they are present in our worshipping assemblies; and perhaps, always so present, that they could discover themselves to us in a moment, were it consistent with the rules of the divine government, established in this lower world, suited to the state of those who are to walk by faith, not by sight. Thus far, however differing in other respect, the angels and the redeemed are united and related in one common head, and have fellowship in worship and service. When sinners are enabled by grace to renounce this world, they are admitted to an honourable alliance with a better.

II. From hence we may form some judgment of the true nature and high honour of that spiritual worship, which is the privilege and glory of the church of God under the Gospel dispensation. When we meet in the name of Jesus as his people, and with a due observance of his institutions, we come to the 'innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born,' Heb. xii. 22, 23. the first born ones, (for the expression is plural.) We draw nigh by faith, to the very gate of heaven, to the holiest of all. Men, unacquainted with spirituality, are soon weary even of the form of worship, unless their minds are amused by a splendid ceremonial. The first rise and subsequent increase of that pomp and pageantry, which in some countries, has quite obscured the simplicity and beauty of the Gospel-worship, is to be ascribed to this disposition of the human mind. Our thoughts, while we are in a natural state, are too weak and wavering, and too gross, to be pleased with a worship in which there is nothing suited to affect the imagination by sensible objects. And, therefore, when men think themselves wise, and profess to despise the pageantry which captivates the vulgar, their wisdom affords them no real advantage, if they have nothing better to substitute in the room of what they reject as insignificant. The

very appearance of devotion will languish, they will grow remiss, and neglect the Sabbath and public assemblies, for want of something to keep up their attention. We have abundant proof of this in our own land, and at this time. Protestants pride themselves in not being Papists; but when the Protestant religion is understood to mean no more than a renunciation of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome, it is, with respect to individuals, little, if at all, better than Popery itself. Among us enlightened Protestants, no expedient but preaching the Gospel of Christ will be found sufficient to retain people in a stated observance of the Lord's day. But true believers, who understand and love the Gospel, do indeed draw nigh to God; and they account, a day in his courts better than a thousand,' Psalm lxxxiv. 10. because they can take a part in the songs of heaven, and in spirit and in truth, worship him 'that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb who redeemed them to God by his blood.' They know by happy experience, that his promise, to be in the midst of those who assemble in his name, is truth. Their worship is not a mere bodily service, a lifeless form, a round of observances, which neither warm the heart, nor influence the conduct; but they are instructed, comforted, and strengthened, by waiting upon God. Their spiritual senses are exercised; they behold his glory in the glass of the Gospel, they hear his voice, they feel an impression of his power and presence, they taste his goodness, and the virtue of that name which, as ointment poured forth, perfumes their tempers and conversation.

III. Though the Lamb is worthy of all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, there is a distinct ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne.

The Scripture, which alone can teach us to form right conceptions of God, and to worship him acceptably, guides us in a medium, between opposite errors and mistakes. Too many persons, ignorant of their own state as sinners, and of the awful majesty and holiness of the Most High, presume to think of him, to speak of him, and, in their way to speak to him, without being aware of the necessity of a Mediator. But they who are without Christ, who is the only door and way to the Father, are without God, atheists, in the world, Eph. ii. 12. There is a mistake likewise on the other hand, when, though the Deity of the Saviour be acknowledged, yet what we are taught of the ineffable distinction in the Godhead, is not duly attended to. It is written, 'In the beginning—the word was God,' John, i. 1. It is likewise written, 'the word was with God.' This latter expression undoubtedly has a meaning, which though perfectly consistent, is not

coincident with the former. The truth contained in it is proposed, not to our curiosity as the subject of speculation, but to our faith. I do not attempt to explain it. But what God expressly declares, we are bound, upon the principles of right reason, to believe. For he is Truth, and cannot deceive us. 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and Holy Spirit,' 1 John, v. 7. These three are frequently spoken of in the Scripture—to each of them a distinct part in the economy of salvation is ascribed; to each of them the perfections and honours of Deity are attributed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one. Consequently these three are one God. This doctrine may be above our comprehension, but cannot be contrary to our reason, if it be contained in a revelation from God. If it be simply received, upon the authority of the Revealer, it approves itself to be true, for it is found to be a key to the whole Scripture, which renders the general sense and scope every where consistent and plain. They who proudly reject it, and yet admit the Bible to be a divine revelation, are involved in difficulties from which all their sagacity and learning cannot free them. In vain they labour by singular interpretations, by the minutiae of criticism, and by an appeal to various readings and ancient versions, which, in a few passages, differ from the copies more generally received—in vain they endeavour, by these refinements, to relieve themselves, when pressed by the obvious and natural sense of a thousand texts, which confirm the faith and hopes of plain Christians. The Gospel is designed for the poor. But the poor and unlearned would be at a great disadvantage, if the Scripture could not be rightly understood, without the assistance of such learning and such criticism as we often see pressed into the service. But the Holy Spirit graciously leads those who pray for his teaching, into such views of this high subject as are sufficient to comfort their hearts and to animate their obedience. The faith of those who are taught of God, is exercised in their approaches to him under two different modifications. Both are Scriptural, and therefore both are safe, and witnessed to by his gracious acceptance and blessing.

1. They come to God by Christ. They have access through him, Eph. ii. 18. Unworthy to speak for themselves, they bow their knees in his name, Phil. ii. 10. Christians are sufficiently distinguished and described by saying, 'They come to God by him,' Heb. vii. 25. They come to God, they cannot live without him in the world, as they once did. They are now conscious of wants and desires, which only God can satisfy; but they are conscious likewise that they are sinners, and therefore they durst not approach him, if they had not the in-

vation of his promise, and an assurance of 'an advocate with the Father,' 1 John, ii. 1.

2. They come to God in Christ. He is the great temple, in whom the 'all-fulness dwells,' Col. i. 19; ii. 9.; and they are not afraid of idolatry, when they worship and honour the Son even as the Father. This distinct application to God, in the person of the Son of his love, perhaps becomes more frequent and familiar, as they advance in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, 2 Peter, iii. 18. They who seek to him for deliverance from sin and misery, at first, I believe, chiefly consider him as the Advocate and High Priest; who, by the virtue of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. But when the apostle distributes Christians, according to their growth in grace, into the state of babes, young men, and fathers, John, ii. 13. he speaks of a more distinct and appropriate knowledge of him who is from the beginning, as the peculiar privilege and distinguishing attainment of the fathers. He speaks of him that is from the beginning, so often that we can be at no loss to determine whom he intends by the expression. He applies it to him who was in the beginning with God, 1 John, i. 1. and whom he and the other apostles had heard and seen with their eyes, and touched with their hands, 1 John, i. 1—3. An eminent divine,\* points out some special seasons in the Christian life, in which he thinks the peculiar pressures of the soul may obtain the most sensible and immediate relief, by direct application to the Saviour. But there are some believers, who find themselves almost continually in one or other of the situations which he marks as occasional. However this may be, I am ready to take it for granted, that they who really and cordially believe the Deity of Christ, do, at least at some seasons, and upon some occasions, expressly direct their prayers to him. If precedents be required to warrant this practice, the New Testament will furnish them in abundance. I shall select but a few. The apostle Paul 'bowed his knees to the God and father of our Lord Jesus; but he often prayed to the Lord Jesus. He prayed to him in the temple, Acts, xxii. 17—21. and when he obtained that answer, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, 2 Cor. xii. 9. To him the prayer of the apostles and disciples was addressed previous to the lot, which was to determine a successor to Judas, Acts, i. 24. And to him Stephen committed his departing spirit, Acts, vii. 59.: an act of trust and worship of the highest kind, and at the most solemn season. In short, it is a strange inconsistency, if any, who acknowledge his Deity, question the propriety of praying to him. What is it, more or less, than to question the propriety of praying to God?

\* Owen in his *Christologia*.

IV. This solemn worship and praise is referred ultimately to him who sitteth upon the throne. To the great and glorious God, thus known and manifested, in and by, and with, the Lamb that was slain.

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ will have a period. He will reign as mediator till he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and perfected his whole work. Then his kingdom in this sense will cease; he will deliver it up to the father, 'that God may be all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28. This passage is difficult, that is, the subject is too great for our faculties, in their present state of imperfection, fully to comprehend; for the difficulties we meet with in the Scripture are more properly to be ascribed to our ignorance. The Son, as man, is even now subject to the father; and God is undoubtedly all in all, at present, and from everlasting to everlasting. But his kingdom here is to be taken figuratively for the subjects of his kingdom, his people, whom he received as a trust and a treasure. These he will deliver up, and the form of his administration and government over them will be changed. They will then have no more sins to confess; there will be no more dangers requiring the care and tenderness of a shepherd, no enemies to be controlled, and the ordinances and means of grace, accommodated to their wants and weakness while in this world, will be no longer necessary. But MESSIAH, the Lamb that was slain, will ever be the head and Lord of the creation; the medium of communication of the light and love of God to his people; and God in him, the object of their eternal adoration and praise.

Then the grand, ultimate, final cause of all the manifestations of God will be completely obtained. The glory of the great Creator and Lawgiver, the splendour of all his perfections, will for ever shine, without a veil or cloud, and with a brightness which could not have been known by creatures, had not the entrance of evil given occasion for a display of his wisdom and love, in over-ruling it to the praise of his glorious grace.

Thus, according to the measure of my ability and experience, I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning and importance of the well-chosen series of Scriptural passages, which are set to music in the Oratorio of the *Messiah*. Great is the Lord MESSIAH, and greatly to be praised! I have attempted to set before you a sketch of what Scripture teaches us concerning his person, undertakings, and success; the misery of those whom he came to save, the happiness to which he raises them, and the wonderful plan and progress of redeeming love. But who is sufficient for these things? Alas! how small a portion of his ways

are we able to trace! But I would be thankful, that the desire of attempting this great subject was put into my heart, and that having obtained help of God, I have been preserved and enabled to finish my design. Imperfect as my execution of it has been, I cannot doubt that the various topics I have been led to insist on are the great truths of God. For what is properly my own, the defects and weaknesses which mix with my best services, I entreat his forgiveness, and request your candour. But I do not hesitate to say, that the substance of what I have advanced deserves and demands your very serious attention.

It is probable that those of my hearers who admire this Oratorio, and are often present when it is performed, may think me harsh and singular in my opinion, that of all our musical composition, this is the most improper for a public entertainment. But while it continues to be equally acceptable, whether performed in a church or in the theatre, and while the greater part of the performers and of the audience are the same at both places, I can rate it no higher than as one of the many fashionable amusements which mark the character of this age of dissipation. Though the subject be serious and solemn in the highest sense, yea, for that very reason, and though the music is, in a striking manner adapted to the subject; yet, if the far greater part of the people who frequent the Oratorio, are evidently unaffected by the Redeemer's love, and uninfluenced by his commands, I am afraid it is no better than a profanation of the name and truths of God, a crucifying the Son of God afresh. You must judge for yourselves. If you think differently from me, you will act accordingly. Yet, permit me to hope and to pray, that the next time you hear the *Messiah*, God may bring something that you have heard in the course of these sermons, nearly connected with the peace and welfare of your souls, effectually to your remembrance.

I would humbly hope, that some persons who were strangers to the power and grace of MESSIAH when I entered upon this service, are now desirous of seeking him with their whole hearts. Yes, I trust I have not laboured wholly in vain. The Gospel is 'the rod of his strength,' Psal. cx. 2. which, when accompanied by the power of his Spirit, produces greater effects than the wonder-working rod of Moses. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live. A faithful minister will account a single instance of success a rich recompense for the labour of a life. May this joy be mine! May the Lord encourage you to go on seeking him! Then he will surely be found of you. An

open door is set before you ; Rev. iii. 8. and if you are truly willing to enter none shall be able to shut it.

But may I not fear that I am still speaking to others, who, to this hour, have no cordial admiring thoughts of the great Saviour? Alas! should you die in your present frame of mind, let me, once more, entreat you to consider what your situation and employment will be, when all his redeemed people, and all his holy angels, shall join in worshipping and praising him, in the great day of his appearance.

Unless you repent, lay down your arms, and submit to his golden sceptre, your doom is already pronounced. Awful are the words of the Lord, by the prophet, and very applicable to your case, if, (which may his mercy prevent!) you should die in your sins. ‘Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit,’ Isa. lxxv. 13, 14. If the Scribes and Pharisees were filled with envy and grief when the children in the temple sung Hosanna to the Son of David; Matt. xxi. 15. what must be their anguish and remorse, their rage and despair, when the ‘whole creation’ shall join in his praise? If your thoughts of him now are like theirs, tremble at your danger; for unless you repent, your lot must be with them hereafter.

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# Apologia :

FOUR LETTERS

TO

A MINISTER OF AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

BY

A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



—Quid me alta silentia cogis  
Rumpere—?                      VIRG.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-  
with one may edify another. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any  
thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love—Rom. xiv. 19. Gal. v. 6.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1784.]

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## APOLOGIA.

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### LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

YOU have more than once gently called upon me for the reasons which induced me to exercise my ministry as a Clergyman of the Church of England, rather than among the Dissenters, where my first religious connexions were formed, and with many of whom I still maintain a cordial friendship. Hitherto I have usually waived the subject, and contented myself with assuring you, in general terms, that as the preference I gave to the establishment was the result of serious, and, I trust, impartial inquiry; so I had never seen reason to repent of it, no, not for a minute, since the day of my ordination. I now purpose to give you a more particular answer: and as you are not the only person who has expressed a friendly surprise at my choice, I shall communicate my reasons from the press, that all my friends who have been at a loss to account for my conduct, may have such satisfaction as it is in my power to give them. I shall, however, keep *you* particularly in my eye, while I write, that a just sense of the candour and affection with which you have always treated me, may regulate my pen, and preserve me (if possible) from that harsh and angry spirit, into which writers upon controversial points are too often betrayed.

I confess, that, as in this business my conscience is clear in the sight of Him to whom alone I am properly accountable, I could wish still to continue silent, and submit to be a little misunderstood by some persons whose good opinion I prize, rather than trouble the public with what more immediately relates to myself. But something upon this subject seems expedient in the present day; not so much by way of apology for one or a few individuals, as with a view of obviating prejudices, and preventing, or at least abating, the unhappy effects of a party spirit.

There was a time when the Non-conformists groaned under the iron rod of oppression, and were exposed to fines, penalties, and imprisonment, as well as to cruel mockings, and the lawless rage of a rabble, for worshipping God according to the light of their consciences. Yet I apprehend their non-conformity was rather

the occasional and ostensible, than the real cause of the hard treatment they met with. The greater part of the non-conformist, ministers of that day were the light and glory of the land. They were men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost ; penetrated with a deep sense of the Redeemer's glory and love, and of the worth of souls. Their ministrations were accompanied with unction and power, and they were instrumental in turning many sinners from their evil ways. It is no wonder that the world hated such men ; that snares were spread for their feet, their liberty abridged, and that many said, " Away with them, they are not worthy to live !" It is probable, that if these servants of the Most High could have enjoyed that freedom for their persons and assemblies, which, in answer to their prayers, is now possessed by those who bear the same name, they would have been well satisfied that the established church should have remained in peaceful possession of its own order and ritual. And several among them, not the lowest in repute for wisdom and piety, continued long to worship occasionally in the parish churches, after they had been rejected from them as preachers. But things were studiously carried against them with a high hand. The exaction of re-ordination, and the little time allowed for subscribing the book of Common-Prayer, which many of the ministers had not been able to procure when the law called for their assent to it, were two circumstances which greatly contributed to swell the Bartholomew-list. It was well known to some of the leaders in that unhappy business, that there were among the Non-conformists wise and moderate men, who were not disposed to quit their parochial cures, unless they were constrained by the harshest and most violent measures ; such, therefore, were the measures they adopted.

It is our mercy to live in more quiet times. We are on all sides freed from restraints in religious concerns ; and every person is at liberty to profess, preach, worship, or print, as he thinks proper. But it is still to be lamented, that they who are united upon the same foundations, and agree in the same important leading principles, should lay so much stress upon their circumstantial differences in sentiment, as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance ; and that, instead of labouring in concert within their respective departments, to promote the common cause, they should be at leisure to vex and worry each other with needless disputation, and uncharitable censure. I hope, amongst us, the High Church principles which formerly produced unjustifiable and oppressive effects, are now generally exploded. But may we not lay a claim in our turn, to that moderation, candour, and tenderness, from our dissenting brethren which we cheerfully

exercise towards them? But as we (I think) are no longer the aggressors, so they seem no longer content to stand upon the defensive. We wish to join them with heart and hand, in supporting and spreading the great truths of the Gospel; and such as you, my friend, approve our aims, and rejoice with us, if God is pleased to give us success. But there are those among you, whose persons and general conduct we respect, from whom we do not find equal returns of good-will, because we cannot join with them in the support of a palladium which bears the name of the *Dissenting Interest*. I know not whether this phrase was in use a hundred years ago; but were I to meet with it as referring to that period, I should understand by it little more or less than the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. At present, when I consider the various names, views, and sentiments which obtain among those who form this aggregate, styled the *Dissenting Interest*, I am at a loss what sense to put upon the term. May I not say, without offence, that it is at least a very heterogenous body? May I not hope, without presumption, that though you and I are not agreed on the subject of Church Government, yet I am related to you by a much nearer and stronger tie than that which binds you to the *Dissenting Interest*? I confess, that so far as it is the interest of those who depreciate the person and blood of the Saviour, and deny the agency and influence of the Holy Spirit, or the total depravity of fallen man, so far I cannot (in a religious view) be a friend to it. On the other hand, so far as it regards those who love, avow, and preach the doctrines, experience, and practice, which both you and I include in our idea of the Gospel, so far I can truly say, though not a Dissenter myself, the *Dissenting interest* is dear to my heart, and has a share in my daily prayers. And in this I am persuaded I speak the sentiments of many, both ministers and laymen, in the establishment. We are sorry, therefore, (at least I am sorry,) though not angry, when books are written, or declarations\* (perhaps in the most solemn occasions of worship) unseasonably made, which seem not so much designed to confirm Dissenters in their own principles, as to place those who cannot accede to them in an unfavourable light; the ministers especially, who, according to some representations, must be supposed to be almost destitute of common sense, or else of common honesty.

When I write a letter, especially to a friend, I think myself released from that attention to method which I might observe if I was composing a treatise. As my heart dictates, my pen moves. I therefore hope you will bear with me if I do not come directly

\* Some of these letters were written in the year 1777.

to what I proposed ; which was to give you some account of the motives of my own conduct. It may not be improper to premise a few preliminary observations. I shall not weary you by attempting to justify every thing that obtains in our way, nor call your attention to all the minutiae which might furnish subject for debate to those who know not how to employ their time better. It would be mere trifling to dispute for or against a surplice or a band, a gown or a cloak ; or to inquire whether it be the size or the shape, which renders some of these habiliments more or less suitable for a minister than the others. But, perhaps, a few strictures upon establishments and liturgies may not be wholly impertinent to my design.

That national religious establishments, under the New Testament dispensation, are neither of express divine appointment, nor formed in all points upon a Scriptural plan, I readily admit. Whether upon this account they cannot be submitted to without violating the obedience we owe to the Lord Jesus, as head and lawgiver of his church, I shall consider hereafter. At present, permit me only to hope (for my own sake) that such submission is not absolutely sinful : and in that view, to offer a word in favour of their expedience. I plead not for this or that establishment, or the administration of one preferably to another : but chiefly for that circumstance which I suppose is common to them all ; I mean, the parcelling out a country, the government of which is professedly Christian, into certain districts, analogous to what we call parishes, and fixing in each of those districts a person with a ministerial character, who by his office is engaged to promote the good of souls within the limits of his own boundary. I think the number of parishes in England and Wales is computed to be not much fewer than ten thousand. The number of dissenting churches and congregations in England and Wales (if those whom I have consulted as the most competent judges are not mistaken) will not be found greatly to exceed one thousand. In how many, or in how few of these, the old puritan Gospel (if I may so call it) is preached or prized, I deem you a better judge than myself. It is certain, that the number of dissenting ministers who are very willing it should be publicly known that they differ widely from the sentiments of their forefathers, is not small. However, we will take them all into the estimate. Now let us for a moment suppose the establishment, with all its provisions, removed and annihilated. In this case some of the dissenting ministers might indeed change their situations, and fix in places where they might hope for more extensive influence ; but as none of them could be in two places at once, about nine-tenths of the kingdom would be deprived, at a stroke, of the very form of

public religion, and reduced, in a short time, (for any relief the Dissenting Interest could afford,) to a state little better than Heathenism. That there is any regard paid to the Lord's day through the greater part of the land; that the holy Scriptures are publicly read to thousands, who, probably, would otherwise know no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran, are good effects of the national establishment, which, I think, can hardly be denied even by those who are most displeased with it. For this reason, if I could not conform to the establishment myself, I think I should speak respectfully of it, and bless God for it. Some established form of religious profession, with a full and free toleration for all who think they can serve God more acceptably upon a different plan, appears to me the most desirable and promising constitution, for preserving the rights of conscience, and for promoting the welfare of souls. I believe, therefore, that the church of England, as by law established, (for it claims no higher title,) though it be not a perfect institution, and notwithstanding its real or supposed defects, and the faults of individuals within its community, has been, upon the whole, and will be a blessing to the nation; and that its preservation is an effect of the wise and gracious providence of the Great Head of the Church Universal.

From the expediency of parochial order, I would further deduce the expediency of a rubric and liturgy. For I cannot conceive of an established church, without including in my idea some determinate rule or line respecting doctrine and worship, by which it is discriminated from other churches which are not so established. As to our liturgy, I am far from thinking it incapable of amendment; though, when I consider the temper and spirit of the present times, I dare not wish that the improvement of it should be attempted, lest the intended remedy might prove worse than the disease. As I am not called to defend it, I shall only say, what I believe will be allowed by many candid persons on your side, that the general strain of it is Scriptural, evangelical, and experimental. It recognizes with precision the One Great Object of worship, in his personal distinctions and glorious attributes, the honours and offices of the Redeemer, the power and agency of the Holy Spirit, the evil of sin, the depravity of man, and all the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel. As to the composition. I question if any thing in the English language (our version of the Bible excepted) is worthy of being compared with it for simplicity, perspicuity, energy, and comprehensive fulness of expression. But I suppose the objection does not lie so much against our liturgy in particular, as in general against the use of liturgies of any kind. And, for aught I know, if the compilers of our liturgy could have expected, that all the parishes

in the kingdom, and from age to age, would be supplied with ministers competently acquainted with the mysteries of the Gospel, and possessed of the spirit of grace and supplication, they might have left them under less restraint in conducting public worship. I believe many of the Dissenters take it for granted, that a considerable part of our clergy are not only unable to pray in public, to the edification of their hearers, without a form, but are unfit for the ministerial office in every view. Should this be true, it is a truth which I hope would excite lamentation, rather than ridicule or invective, in all who profess a regard to the glory of God, or love to the souls of men. But, upon this supposition, I should think an evangelical liturgy a great blessing; as it must secure the people (that is, the bulk of the nation) from being exposed to the same uncertainty and disappointment from the reading-desk, as they are liable to from the pulpit. For they who cannot, or do not, preach the Gospel, are not likely to pray agreeably to the spirit of the Gospel, if that part of the public service was likewise left to their own management. Or shall we say, it is an advantage to some dissenting congregations, that their ministers not being confined to a form of sound words, there is little more of Christ or of grace to be found in their prayers than in their sermons? Is it not too hastily taken for granted by many, that God cannot be worshipped in spirit and truth by those who use a form of prayer? or that he will not afford them who so approach him any testimony of his acceptance? If the words of a form suit and express the desires and feelings of my mind, the prayer is as much *my own* as if I had conceived it upon the spot. On the other hand, if I have the greatest readiness and fluency in diversifying expressions, so that my prayer should always appear unstudied and new; yet if my spirit, or the spirit of those who join with me, be not engaged in it, though I may admire my own performance, and be applauded by others, it is no better than a mere lifeless form in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart. Not to say, that many who profess to pray extempore, that is, without either a printed or a written form, go so much in a beaten path, that they who hear them frequently can tell, with tolerable certainty, how they will begin, when they are about the middle, and when they are drawing towards the close of their prayer.

It is said, that a prescribed form precludes the exercise of a gift in prayer; which is true: but then, as I hinted before, it in some good measure supplies the want of such a gift; and, blessed be the Lord, there are many living witnesses who can declare, to his praise, that a form does not restrain, much less preclude, the exercise of grace. They know, and are sure, that their Lord and

Master owns and comforts them in what their brethren hastily condemn them for. It is well for us, that He seeth not as man seeth, and is no more a respecter of parties than of persons.

It cannot be denied that the Lord himself appointed forms of prayer and praise to be used in the Old Testament Church. When the ark set forward, and when it rested, Moses addressed the Lord, not according to the varied emotions of his own spirit, but statedly in the same determinate expressions, Numb. x. 35, 36. So likewise in the solemn benediction which the high priest was to pronounce upon the people, Numb. vi. 23—27. Again, at the presenting of the first-fruits, though the heart of the offerer might be filled with gratitude, he was not to express it in his own way; but the Lord himself prescribed the form of his acknowledgment, confession, and prayer, Deut. xxvi. 12—15. But it may be said, these were enjoined under the Levitical institution, which is now abrogated, and that we live under a dispensation of greater light and liberty. I wish, however, with all our light and liberty, we could more fully come up to the spirit of some of the devotional parts of the Old Testament, which were recorded for our instruction, and most certainly are not abrogated. The book of Psalms especially, contains a rich variety of patterns for prayer, if we may not call them forms, adapted to all the various exercises of the life of faith. And if, when I read or repeat such Psalms as the sixty-third, eighty-fourth, or eighty-sixth, I could feel, in the manner I wish, the force of every expression, I should think I prayed to good purpose, though I were not to intermingle a single word of my own. So, likewise, with respect to that summary which our Lord condescended to teach his disciples; though, I believe, it had a peculiar reference to the state in which they were before his passion, and while he was still with them; yet, agreeably to the fulness of his wisdom, it is so comprehensive, that I apprehend every part of a believer's intercourse with God in prayer may be reduced, without forcing, to one or the other of the heads of this prayer. And I should esteem it a golden hour indeed, one of the happiest seasons I ever enjoyed in prayer, if I could repeat it with a just impression of the meaning of every clause. But, alas! such are the effects of our unhappy differences, or rather of a wrongness of spirit in maintaining them; and so prone are we to think we cannot be too unlike those whom we are not pleased with, that even the words which our Lord himself has taught us are depreciated and disused by many, I fear, upon no better ground than because they are retained in the usage of the church of England. Though, besides giving us a pattern to pray after that manner, he has, at least permitted us

to use it as a form, directing us, *when we pray*, to say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven,’ &c. If Scriptural warrant be required, I think we have one more clear and express for the use of this prayer, than can be found for some things upon which no small stress is laid by our dissenting brethren.

Some persons might possibly allege, that if the use of Scriptural forms of prayer were admitted, it would plead nothing in favour of such forms as are of human composition. But, as I believe the more judicious part of the Dissenters would not make this distinction, a few words may suffice for an answer. Most of us, when we preach, profess to preach *the word of God*; and, I think, we are sufficiently authorized to use the expression, so far as our sermons are explanatory of Scriptural truths, and agreeable to them. For though the system of truth contained in the holy Scriptures has a peculiar authority, as the fountain from whence we are to derive our public discourses, and the standard by which they are to be tried, yet truth, as to its nature, does not admit of degrees; but all propositions, if they be true, must be equally true; and every conclusion which is *rightly* inferred from Scriptural premises, must be, in whatever words it is expressed, (if they are precise and clear,) as true as the premises from which it is drawn. If I give a just definition or explication of the doctrine of the Bible in my own words, the truth or importance of that doctrine are not affected or weakened by the vehicle in which I convey it: nor would a hearer have a right to withhold his attention or assent, from a pretence that, though the proposition itself was true, he was not concerned in it, because I had not expressed it in Scriptural phrases. It is only upon this ground that the propriety and authority of preaching can be maintained; and the like reasoning may be applied to prayer. A prayer is Scriptural, if conformable to the promises, patterns and truths of Scripture, though it should not contain one phrase taken *totidem verbis* from the Bible.

May I not here appeal, to the practice of the Dissenters themselves? I suppose Dr. Watt’s Hymns, and his imitation of David’s Psalms, especially the latter, are used by a large majority of dissenting congregations in their public worship. Many of these are devotional; that is, they are in the strain of prayer and praise. They are, therefore, forms of prayer or praise; and when the first line is given out, it is probable that several persons in the assembly know before-hand every word they are to sing. In some congregations the psalm or hymn is delivered line by line; and in most, the bulk of the people are provided with books. Now it appears to me, that when a worshipper, who attends to what is going forward, and is not content with a mere lip service,

joins in singing verses, which express the desire and petitions of his heart, to the Lord, he prays; and if he uses verses with which he was before acquainted, he prays by a form; he does the very thing for which we are condemned; unless it can be proved that the fault and evil, which is essential to a form in prose, is entirely removed if the substance of the obnoxious form be expressed in metre and chime.

Crito freely will rehearse  
Forms of prayer and praise in verse;  
Why should Crito then suppose,  
Forms are sinful when in prose?  
Must my form be deem'd a crime,  
Merely for the want of rhyme?

I have heard of a minister who used to compose hymns in the pulpit. It was his custom to give out one line; and by the time the congregation had sung the first, he had a second ready for them, and so on, as long as he thought proper to sing. These were not forms; they were composed *pro re nata*. Before he had finished a second stanza, the former, (as to the verse and cadence,) was in a manner forgotten, and the same hymn was never heard twice. I know not what these unpremeditated pieces were in point of composition; but were I persuaded of the unlawfulness of forms of prayer, and at the same time approved of the practice of singing in public worship, I should extremely covet talent of extempore hymn-making, as one of the most necessary gifts a minister could possess, in order to maintain a consistency in his whole service.

I here close what I intended by way of introduction. In my subsequent letters I propose to acquaint you more directly with the reasons which determined my own choice, and which still satisfy me, that in receiving episcopal ordination, and exercising my ministry in the established church I have not acted wrong. At present, I shall relieve your attention, by subscribing myself,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother.

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## LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

As such I address you; as such, notwithstanding our different views of church-government, you acknowledge me. You have confirmed your love to me by many repeated proofs; and it is the desire of my heart, that nothing may take place on either

side to weaken the exercise of that friendship which, having the faith and hope of the Gospel for its basis, is calculated to subsist and flourish in a better world. With this thought upon my mind, it is impossible that I should write a single line with an intention of grieving or offending you; and I am persuaded the same consideration on your part will dispose you to a candid perusal of what I offer. I had rather be silent than plead, even for truth, in an angry, contentious spirit; for every year of my life strengthens my conviction of the importance of that Divine aphorism, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

How far what I have suggested in favour of establishments and liturgies may appear conclusive to you, I know not. I depend much upon your candour; but I make allowances for the unavoidable influence of education, connexion, and habit, both in you and in myself. We generally ascribe the dissent of those who differ from us, in part at least, to prejudice of this kind; but as it is very natural to think favourably of ourselves, we almost take it for granted that *we* have either escaped or outgrown every bias. Though some of the principles we maintain have been instilled into us from our childhood, and we have been confirmed in what we say is *right*, by the instruction, advice, and example of friends, exactly as others have been confirmed in what we call *wrong*: yet that positiveness, which in them is the effect of ignorant prejudice, is in us a very different thing—a just attachment to truth, and the result of impartial examination and full conviction. For my own part, I dare not say that I am free from all bias and prepossession; but I desire and endeavour to guard against their influence.

But though I have ventured to defend the propriety of a national establishment, and, upon that ground, the expediency of a liturgy, I need not tell you that I had no hand in forming either the one or the other. By the allotment of Divine Providence, I was born in a nation where these things had taken place long before I came into the world; therefore, when the Lord gave me a desire to preach his Gospel, and it became necessary to determine under what character I should exercise my ministry, the question before me was not, What form of church-government I might propose as the most Scriptural, if all parties amongst us were willing to refer themselves to my decision? but my inquiry was rather directed to this point, What would be my path of duty, *rebus sic stantibus*, living as I did in the island of Great-Britain, and in that part of it named England? At first, indeed, I saw but little room for deliberation. For about six years after I was awakened to some concern for my soul, my situation in life had seclu-

ded me equally from every religious party. During this period, in which I walked alone, the Lord was pleased to show me the way to the throne of grace, and to lead me to study and prize his holy word. By his blessing, I made some advances in knowledge, though slowly under such discouragements and disadvantages, as they, who from the beginning of their inquiries, are favoured with public ordinances and the help of Christian conference, can have no proper conception of. At length I became acquainted with some of his people, and had frequent opportunities of hearing the Gospel. My first connexions of this sort were chiefly with Dissenters, and brought me as it were, into a new world; for till then I had hardly an idea of the different names and modes by which professing Christians were distinguished and subdivided, nor of the animosity with which their various disputes were carried on. But, as I received benefit and pleasure from my intercourse with my new friends, it is no wonder that, while my heart was warm, and my experience and judgment unformed, I should enter with readiness into all their views. Thus, together with the real advantages I obtained among them, I imbibed at the same time a strong prejudice against the established church; and hastily concluded that, though I might occasionally communicate with it as a private person, it would be impossible to officiate in it as a minister, without violating my conscience. Accordingly, my first overtures were to Dissenters; and, had not the Providence of God remarkably interposed to prevent it, I should probably have been a *brother* with you in every sense. But my designs were over-ruled. A variety of doors by which I sought entrance (for I did not give up upon the first disappointment) were successively shut against me. These repeated delays afforded me more time to think and judge for myself; and the more I considered the point, the more my scruples against conformity gave way. Reasons increased upon me, which not only satisfied me that I might conform without sin, but that the preference (as to my own concern) was plainly on that side. Accordingly, in the Lord's due time, after several years' waiting to know his will, I sought and obtained episcopal ordination: and I seriously assure you, that, though I took this step with a firm persuasion that it was right, I did not at that time see so many reasons to justify my choice, nor perhaps any one reason in so strong a light, as I have since. Far from having regretted this interesting part of my conduct for a single hour, I have been more satisfied with it from year to year. You will please, therefore, to accept what I am about to offer, not merely as an account of the motives which influenced me twenty years ago, but rather as the considerations which, at this minute, call upon me to

be heartily thankful to the Lord for leading me by a way which I knew not, to labour in that part of his vineyard, which experience has proved to be most suitable for maintaining my personal peace and comfort, and (I verily believe likewise) for promoting my usefulness as a minister.

Some of our dissenting brethren, who, I hope, are willing to think as well of the awakened clergy as they can, kindly allow us to be well-meaning people. They believe we desire to be useful, and think it not impossible but that, in some instances, we may be so; but they pity us, either for not having more light, or for not having courage to follow that light which they suppose, *must* force itself upon us, if we did not wilfully shut it out. From what they hear of us they are staggered. They are loath to deny that the Lord is with us at all; but then, if the Lord be with us indeed why are we thus? It is almost unaccountable to them, upon this supposition, how we can remain where we are. They are expecting from day to day, that if we are enlightened, as we profess, and honest men, as they wish to find us, we shall surely come out from Babylon, renounce our slavery and will-worship, and openly attach ourselves to the Dissenting Interest. Could we do this, and persuade our people to follow us, they would, probably, no longer doubt whether the Lord had wrought by our ministry or not.

I could wish you not to think of me while you read the paragraph I am now beginning. You know many of our ministers, and you know that there are amongst them men of sound sense, solid judgment, and extensive reading; men whom the Lord has been pleased to favour with an eminency in gifts and spiritual knowledge; in a word able ministers of the New Testament: men who, though in the sight of the Lord, they lie low in the dust, conscious of inherent defilement, and that their best services need forgiveness; yet, with regard to their fellow-creatures, can in the integrity of their hearts, appeal to all around them, that their conversation is not unbecoming the Gospel which they preach. Some of these men, at least, have carefully studied the subject-matter of debate between us and Dissenters; have read the books, and considered the arguments which are supposed sufficient to convert and reform us; but, after all their endeavours to obtain information, though they agree with the evangelical Dissenters in their views of the Gospel, (which yet they received not from them, but from the holy Scripture,) they are still constrained to differ on the question of church form and order. Now why should this be imputed to their ignorance and blindness? Does it require a sharper eye to perceive the precise delineation of a Gospel church in the New Testament, if it be really there, than to

apprehend and embrace what the Scripture teaches concerning the person and Character of the Redeemer, the way of a sinner's acceptance, or the nature of the life of faith? These things, we are assured by the apostle, the natural man, however qualified, cannot discern. Surely the external form of a Gospel church cannot be equally mysterious with these doctrines; especially as it is professedly seen with the glance of an eye, by some persons who declare themselves enemies to mysteries of any kind. Or why should their not acceding to you be imputed to interested motives? There are with us men whose integrity and ingenuousness are in every other respect unimpeachable; and it is hard that, without sufficient evidence, they should be charged with prevarication in a business which concerns the honour of their Saviour, and the uprightness of their consciences in his sight. Besides, what can be the powerful motives for such hypocrisy? Do they, by remaining in the establishment, avoid the offence of the cross, and find a shelter from that *opprobrium* and opposition which must be their lot if they had the fortitude to unite with the Dissenters? Here, at least, however, we may be mistaken. I apprehend the Lord has assigned to *us* the post of honour; and that in the treatment we meet with from an unbelieving world, our lot rather resembles that of the Dissenters in the last century than of the present. It is true, we are no more exposed to fines and imprisonment than you are; but if it be an honour to suffer shame for his name's sake, I think *we* have the pre-eminence. As to money-matters, I could name several of our clergy who are not so plentifully provided for in the establishment, but that if they were to leave us, and go over to your side, it is very probable the manner in which converts of such characters and abilities would be received amongst you, might prove considerably to their emolument. Nor can it upon better grounds be ascribed to obstinate prejudice and incurable bigotry, that your arguments do not prevail. For it is well known that many of our ministers show a cordial and liberal spirit to the Dissenters, receive them gladly into their houses, attend occasionally upon their preaching, recommend and encourage applications for the support of their ministers or places of worship, and are ready to concur with them in every plan of usefulness. And I believe this disposition would be more general, had not experience shown that the candour of some clergymen, in these respects, has been too often improperly requited, by ungenerous attempts to prejudice and perplex our people, and to weaken our hands.

Yet one or other, or all these charges, must be insinuated against us, rather than fallible men will suppose themselves any thing less than infallible, even in points of a circumstantial nature;

and though others, whom they have no reason to think inferior to themselves either in judgment or integrity, are compelled to differ from them :—

If not so frequent, would not this be strange ?  
That 'tis so frequent—this is stranger still!

Be assured, dear sir, that in thus apologizing for my brethren, I write, not only without their desire, but without their knowledge. I think I have now finished all my preambles, and I proceed immediately to acquaint you with my reasons for conforming to the established church, and continuing in it.

My first and principal reason is, **THE REGARD I OWE TO THE HONOUR AND AUTHORITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS HEAD AND LAWGIVER OF HIS CHURCH.** I do not mean that this consideration obliges me absolutely to prefer the form of the Church of England to any other form, but only that it will not permit me to join with those who make dissenting from it necessary in point of conscience.

I cannot suppose that any true Christian, in our land of light and liberty, will hesitate a moment to acknowledge that Christ is the one infallible, authoritative Legislator and Governor of his church; that he is the Lord, and the only Lord of conscience; that nothing inconsistent with his revealed will should be practised, nothing that he has enjoined be omitted, by those who profess allegiance to him. But, however generally acknowledged these principles are, I believe the misconstruction and misapplication of them have contributed more to divide the people of God, and to alienate their affections from each other, than any other cause that can be assigned. It seems reasonable to expect that they whose hopes are built upon the same foundation, who are led by the same spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, and interested in the same promises, would look upon each other with mutual complacence, would love as brethren, would bear each other's burden's, and so fulfil their Master's law, and copy his example. But, alas! a mistaken zeal for his honour fills them on all sides with animosity against their fellow-disciples, splits them into a thousand parties, gives rise to fierce and endless contentions, and makes them so earnest for and against their respective peculiarities, that the love, which is the discriminating characteristic of His religion, is scarcely to be found amongst them in such a degree of exercise, as to satisfy even candid observers whether they bear his mark or not.

The visible church of Christ comprises all who call themselves by his name, and who profess to receive his Gospel as a divine

revelation. It is a floor on which the grain and the chaff are promiscuously mingled, a field in which the wheat and the tares grow together, a net inclosing a multitude of fishes both good and bad. But the visible church of Christ, taken in this large extent, is not the proper subject of his government, as He is the King of saints. For his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, which none can understand, and his rule a spiritual rule, which none can receive or obey, until born from above, and made new creatures by the power of the Holy Spirit. If these regenerated persons, who it is to be feared are seldom the largest number in any denomination, be considered as detached from the visible church, the remainder is a mere *caput mortuum*, differenced from the world which lies in wickedness, in nothing but a name, and in the privilege of having the oracles of God committed to it. But nominal Christians, though they have, or may have, in their hands, the Scriptures, which are able to make sinners wise unto salvation, are no less distant and alienated from the life of God, (until he is pleased to reveal his power in their hearts,) than Mahomedans or Heathens. And with respect to these, the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ is but little concerned with the different ways in which they may think proper to constitute themselves into national or particular churches, and please themselves with a lifeless form of worship, while their hearts are in a state of enmity to his grace. Admitting that the plan of a Gospel-church was described with the same precision in the New Testament, as the institutions of the Levitical worship in the Old, and punctually complied with to the minutest circumstance; though the worshippers might applaud and admire their own exactness, and censure and despise all who differed a hair's breadth from them, yet, if they did not serve God in spirit and in truth, their boasted church order would avail them nothing. All that related to the worship of God under the law was confessedly of divine appointment; and the people, in the time of the prophets, were not so much charged with neglecting the prescribed forms, as with resting in them. When this evil became general, and they thought to compensate for their want of spirituality, by their feasts, fasts, and sacrifices, the Lord expresses himself as displeased with his own institutions. Isa. i. 11—15; lxvi. 3, 4.; Jer. vii. 8—14. 22, 23. They could plead his prescription for their observances; but in vain they trusted to the temple, and said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when the Lord of the temple was departed from them. And certainly he will be no more pleased with a form without the heart now than he was then.

I must therefore, confine my inquiry to the church of Christ in

a more limited and proper sense; as expressive of his mystical body, composed of all who by faith are united to him as their foundation and root, of all to whom he is the head of vital influence, who have fellowship with him in his death, and are partakers of the power of his resurrection. These are infallibly known only to himself. They are scattered far and wide, separated from each other by seas and mountains; they are a people of many nations and languages. But wherever their lot is cast, they hear his voice, are under his gracious eye, and the life which they live in the flesh is by faith in his name. They have not all equal degrees of light, or measures of grace; nor are they all favoured with equal advantages for knowing or enjoying the full extent of the liberty of the Gospel; but they are all accepted in the Beloved and approved of God. They are spiritual worshippers, joint partakers of grace, and will hereafter appear together at their Saviour's right hand in glory.

At present they are in an imperfect state. Though created anew in Christ Jesus, they are not freed from a principle of indwelling sin. Their knowledge is clouded by much remaining ignorance; and their zeal, though right in its aim, is often warped and misguided by the corrupt influence of self. For they still have many corruptions, and they live in a world which furnishes frequent occasions of exciting them; and Satan their subtle and powerful enemy, is always upon his watch to mislead and ensnare them. They are born, educated, and called, under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early connexions, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a tincture and turn to their manner of thinking; so that though, in whatever is essential to their peace and holiness, they are all led by the same spirit, and mind the same things; in others of a secondary nature their sentiments may, and often do, differ as much as the features of their faces. A uniformity of judgment among them is not to be expected, while the wisest are defective in knowledge, the best are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of human nature, which are common to them all, are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which arise from their various situations. They might, however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love, were it not that every party, and almost every individual, unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience to prescribe their own line of conduct as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform. They are comparatively but few who consider this requisition to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist, or expect, that every man's shoes should be exactly of one size.

Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and right of the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, the various apprehensions they frame of the rule to which he requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to their own expositions of it, separate them almost as much from each other, as if they were not united to him by a principle of living faith. Their little differences form them into so many separate interests; and the heat with which they defend their own plans, and oppose all who cannot agree with them to a tittle, makes them forget that they are children in the same family and servants of the same master. And while they vex and worry each other with disputations and censures, the world wonders and laughs at them all. The spirit of love is restrained, offences are multiplied, and Satan is gratified by beholding the extensive effects of his pernicious and long practised maxim, *Divide et impera*.

I am far from supposing that all the various modes of church government under which spiritual worshippers are cast, are equally agreeable to the spirit and genius of the Gospel, or equally suited to the purposes of edification. Perhaps there is no considerable body of people who profess themselves Christians, however erroneous in their plans of doctrine or worship, among whom the Saviour has not some hidden ones, known to himself, though lost to human observation in the crowd of pretenders which surround them. The power of his grace can break through all disadvantages, and make a few individuals wiser than their teachers, by revealing his truth to their hearts, sooner or later, so far as is necessary to salvation. But it must be owned, that some communities which bear the name of Christian, have departed so very far from the simplicity of the Gospel, that if we reason *a priori*, we are ready to conclude it is almost impossible for a converted person to continue a single day in such a communion. But hypothesis cannot be maintained against plain facts. Thus the church of Rome, not merely by adopting an unmeaning burdensome train of ceremonies, but by her doctrines of papal infallibility, invocation of saints and angels, purgatory, absolution, the mass, and others of the like stamp, is become so exceedingly adulterated, that possibly some persons who may read these letters will form an unfavourable opinion of me, for declaring that I have not the least doubt but the Lord Jesus has had, from age to age, a succession of chosen and faithful witnesses within the pale of that corrupt church. Yet I should hope that they who, having themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, and know the language of a heart under the influence of his Spirit, would, in defiance of Protestant prejudices, be of my mind, if they had opportunity of perusing the writings of some Papists. If such per-

sons as De Fenelon, Paschall, Quenell, and Nicole, (to mention no more,) were not true Christians, where shall we find any who deserve the name? In the writings of these great men, notwithstanding incidental errors, I meet with such strains of experimental godliness, such deep knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God and of the heart of man, and such masterly explications of many important passages of Scripture, as might do honour to the most enlightened Protestant. And yet these men lived and died in the Popish communion, and to their latest hours, (for any thing that appears to the contrary,) thought they could not separate from it without sin. And, though I have not equal means of information, I can as little doubt that the Lord has a people likewise in the Greek church, which, as to its external frame, seems to be little less unscriptural than the church of Rome itself.

However, I desire to be thankful that I am not a Papist. I am at least one step nearer to the true and acceptable worship of God. For I believe the most rigid of our dissenting brethren will allow, that the church of England, if *almost*, yet is not *altogether* so depraved and corrupt in its constitution as the church of Rome. I am now in my track, and shall trouble you with fewer digressions in the sequel. My next point will be to examine the different claims of Protestant churches to the honour they all assume, that their respective institutions are most conformable to the rules the apostles have laid down on the subject of church-government, and express the greatest regard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the undoubted Head and Lawgiver of his church. And to avoid, as much as I can, encumbering what I write in an epistolary way to a friend, with the stiffness of argumentation, I shall content myself with giving you a simple account of what occurred to me upon this head, when I made the inquiry for my own direction. But it is time to conclude this letter by assuring you that I am

Your affectionate Friend.

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### LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

IF the authority of men truly respectable for learning, judgment, and grace, were sufficient to determine the question, which of the various forms of church-government now obtaining among Christians is most agreeable to the letter and spirit of the New Testament? a modest inquirer, who wishes the sanction of those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself would probably

without hesitation, join himself to that party to which he might be first led to apply for direction. For whatever difference there may be in the merit of their several claims for pre-eminence, the claim itself is made with an equal degree of confidence by them all. At a time when I was very sensible of my own incompetency to decide upon this point myself, I received (as I hope) much benefit from the writings of bishop Hall, Reynold's Davenant, Mr. Hooker, and other divines of the church of England. I perceived they were persons of strong sense, extensive literature, sound in the faith; and, from such accounts of their lives as I could collect, I judged they had been zealous and diligent in their callings, and burning and shining lights in the world. I could not perceive that any of them were dissatisfied with the established church in which they lived and died; and some of them I found were very strenuous in its defence, not only pleading that it was lawful to maintain communion with it, but offering many arguments to prove that it was even sinful to separate from it: and that it was the only resemblance of the primitive apostolical church. I own to you that I thought some of their assertions upon this head were too strong, and some of their arguments not fully conclusive. Yet I was a little staggered, and it gave me pain to be forced to differ in any point from men who I believed to have been full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. However, some general idea I possessed of the liberty of the Gospel, a conviction that the Lord had a people and a work in other countries, where the form of the church of England could not take place, and the previous attachment I had to the Dissenters, with whom, as I have said, I was first acquainted, prevented me from becoming what is called a High Churchman. But as, for these reasons, I could not give the church of England an exclusive preference, or think myself authorized to brand those who dissented from it with the hard names of schismatics and fanatics; so, on the other hand, I could not go into the opposite extreme, or suppose that a church in which the Lord employed and owned such valuable men, and had a numerous spiritual people, was no better than a Babylon, from whence all who loved his name and salvation, were in duty and conscience bound to withdraw.

Many books, likewise, came in my way, written by divines of the church of Scotland. In the writings of Durham, Fleming, Halyburton, and others, I found proofs that they were not inferior in light, holiness, and sound spiritual judgment, to the most eminent luminaries of our own church. In what concerned the life and power of religion, I could perceive no considerable difference between them. As they were all taught by the same Spirit, so they were all teachers of the same truths. But in their senti-

ments upon church-government they differ very widely. Wherein they agreed, I could fully agree with them; wherein they differed, I was left to the uncertainty of a traveller, who, inquiring his way of two persons, is told by one to turn to the right, and by the other, directly opposite, to the left. My English guides would persuade me that the form of the church from the apostles' days was episcopal; my Scotch guides were rather more positive that our prelacy was, almost equal with papacy, a branch and a mark of antichrist. If I compared the sufficiency of each to decide for me, I knew not which to prefer. On both sides were men of wisdom and grace, and who I believed would not wilfully mislead me; on both sides they confessed themselves in general to be, like myself, fallible, and liable to mistake. Only in this one point both sides appeared confident that they could not be mistaken; and yet their opinions were not only diverse, but contradictory.

The suspense in which I was held by these incompatible claimants, sent me more readily and attentively to renew my inquiries amongst my former friends of your denomination. By these I was instructed, that I need not trouble myself with weighing and comparing the arguments which the English and Scotch churches had to offer in favour of their respective constitutions, for they were both equally destitute of any foundation in truth or Scripture: that I had only to read the New Testament for myself, and it must appear very plain, that the Lord Jesus Christ had not left a concern of this importance undetermined; but had directed his apostles to leave in their writing a pattern according to which it was his pleasure all his churches in future ages should be formed: that the first churches were Congregational or Independent; and that every other plan was unscriptural, and a presumptuous deviation from the declared will of the Lord. As I had been a debtor to some of their writers likewise, and was personally acquainted with several of their ministers, their representations had so much weight with me as to increase my embarrassment.

My difficulties grew upon me, when I found by consulting different independent writers, who had professedly treated this subject, that though they were of one mind in asserting that a plain and satisfactory pattern for this Congregational order, might be easily collected and stated from a perusal of the New Testament; yet, when they came to delineate and describe it according to their own ideas, they were far from being agreed among themselves as to the nature and number of officers, powers, and acts, which are requisite to the constitution and administration of a regularly organized Gospel church. I formerly employed much time and attention in this disquisition; but not having for many

years past reviewed a controversy which I think rather dry and uninteresting, I cannot from memory enter into a detail of particulars; nor is it needful. Of the fact I think I may be confident, that there is not such an agreement among them as might be expected, if the plan from which they all profess to copy was clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament, as obligatory upon all Christians. Here I was at a loss again; for if I could have admitted their principle, that every circumstance of worship and government in a church ought to have the warrant of a precept or a precedent from the Scripture, still I needed help to digest and put together the several regulations which were dispersed in so many different parts of the Gospels and Epistles; for I found myself unable to frame the detached materials into one orderly structure by my own skill. But when they who professed to have the light which I wanted, were themselves divided upon the point, I was precluded from the hope of any certain assistance; for as to probabilities and conjectures, I might as well depend upon my own, as upon those of another.

Nor was this the whole of my difficulty. I was honestly advised to read and examine for myself. I did so; and it appeared to me, by comparing what I read with what I saw, that the Independents could not, at least did not, keep closely to their own principles. I thought I met with usages in the churches planted by the apostles, which did not obtain in any of the congregational churches I was acquainted with. And, on the other hand, I noticed some usages among these, of which I could find no traces in the inspired account we have of the primitive churches. Permit me, by way of specimen, to mention one instance in each kind. If it was necessary, I could mention several; but I wish not to be tedious.

The apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians as a church of Christ; and we have from him a larger and more particular account of the practices of their church, than of any other. In chap. xiv. of his First Epistle, after censuring and correcting some improprieties which had obtained in their public assemblies, he gives them this direction: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophecy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted." The general practice of congregational churches in our time, seems not to comply with the apostolic injunction. I think, my friend, in your assemblies, especially in your solemn stated worship on the Lord's day, there is seldom more than one speaker. The same minister who preaches, usually begins and ends the service. Should it be pleaded, that the apostle speaks of

prophesying, and evidently supposes that the church of Corinth was favoured with extraordinary gifts and revelations which are now ceased, and that therefore the rule cannot in that respect extend to us; I have two answers to make.

In the first place, though we do not expect extraordinary revelations, we have encouragement to hope for the presence of our Saviour, and the gracious influences of his Spirit, when we meet in his name, sufficient to enable us to speak to his praise, and to the edification and comfort of our brethren, if not in foreign tongues, at least in our own; and it is probable that you have more than once been a hearer in a public assembly, when your heart has been so warmed and impressed with the truths of the Gospel, that you would not have been unwilling to have ascended the pulpit yourself, either to confirm or correct what you have been hearing, or to indulge the liberty you found in your mind upon some other important subject. Perhaps something was *then reveal'd to you*, which might have been very suitable to the occasion, and to the state of the congregation. Why did you not then declare it? Why did you neglect to stir up the gift of God that was in you? Would it have been contrary to the custom of your churches? But would you not, upon your principles, have been justified by the custom of a New Testament church, and the injunction of an apostle?

But, secondly, and chiefly, I answer, if it be admitted that, because the primitive churches had extraordinary gifts, there are some things in their practice which are not proper for our\* imitation, who have not the same gifts: then I quite give up the hope of being able to determine the exact and invariable form of a church, by such lights as the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles afford me; unless some man or set of men be qualified and commissioned to draw the line for me, and to show me distinctly how far, and in what instances, the state of the first Christians is limited from being a pattern to us, by the extraordinary dispensations of that age; and how far, and in what cases, their pattern is binding upon us still, notwithstanding those dispensations have long since ceased. To be directed to study these churches as a model, and to be told at the same time, that some parts of their practice were not designed for the imitation of future ages, without distinctly specifying which were and which were not, is rather the way to perplex and bewilder an inquirer, than to help him to information. Upon this ground, though I might refuse to trust the assumed infallibility of the Pope, I must feel the need of an infallible visible guide to reside somewhere in the church; for

\* See Neal's History of the Puritans, v. i p. 379. 2d. edit. 1732

without such assistance I could not take a single step with certainty, but must be liable to stumble at the very threshold of my inquiry.

I think it is the usual practice in your churches, to require from all persons who wish to be admitted into your communion, an account, either verbal or written, of what is called their experience; in which, not only a declaration of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their purpose by grace, to devote themselves to him, is expected, but likewise a recital of the steps by which they were led to a knowledge and profession of the Gospel. I select this as one instance in which, I conceive, you have neither precept nor precedent in the Scripture for your warrant. A profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of acceptance of him, and submission to him in his offices and characters, supported by the evidence of a gospel conversation, should, I apprehend, be deemed sufficient to entitle a person to church-membership; and especially by those who so loudly insist upon the evil of superadding any regulations to those which are already provided by our Lord and his apostles. The authority which makes it a pre-requisite for admission, that a person shall relate how and when he was awakened, what exercises of mind he has passed through, and other particulars of a like nature, appears to me to be as merely human as the authority which prescribes the canon of an established church. If the practice be defensible, it must be on the plea of expediency. It is not my present business to inquire how far it may be expedient for young converts, for young persons, especially for young women, to be compelled to speak before a public assembly; or if that be dispensed with, for the sake of other interfering expediencies, how far it is expedient to trust to a written experience; otherwise I could say a good deal upon this head. But it is sufficient for my purpose, if no shadow of this practice can be found in the New Testament. On the contrary, I read, that when Saul, after he escaped from Damascus, essayed to join himself to the disciples, it was Barnabas, and not\* Saul himself, who informed them both of his conversion, and of the extraordinary manner in which it was effected, subjoining a testimony of his conduct from the time he had professed a change. But if expediency may warrant a measure in your churches not expressly commanded, why not likewise in ours? Be it either right or wrong in one case, it must be so in both; and therefore my remark on this particular, will, at least, have the force of *argumentum ad hominem*.

I am afraid I shall weary you, by only giving a brief account of

\* See Dr. Guise on Acts ix. 27

the long and intricate road which I travelled, to discover, if I could, the best constituted church. But I must entreat your patience a little longer, till I bring you to the end of my journey. It may be necessary to inform some of my readers, though not you, that a considerable part of the congregational churches differ from the rest, with respect, to the mode and subjects of baptism. At the time when my thoughts were most engaged about church-order, I lived in intimate habits of friendship with several Baptists, who were very willing to assist me in settling my judgment. These, though they would have been pleased to see me yield to the arguments of their Pædo-baptist brethren, would not be satisfied that I should stop where they stopped. They urged Scripture precepts and precedents to lead me further; and said, that none of the congregational churches but their own were agreeable to the mind of Christ. They told me, that though I should acknowledge and embrace the Congregational order, which, undoubtedly, was the only one countenanced by Scripture, still I could not be right till I had renounced what I called the baptism I had received in my infancy, and submitted (as they termed it) to baptism by immersion, to which I was bound, not only by the practice of the primitive church, but by the example of our Lord himself, who, when he was baptized, said, for our instruction, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I own sir, that if I had seen it my duty to accede to the church-order of the Independents, I know not but their principles would have led me from them again, to join with the Baptists. How they, who maintaining infant baptism, press Scripture precedent so strongly upon me, answer the Baptists, who in this point press it as strongly upon themselves, is not my concern. I did not stand upon the same ground, and therefore the arguments of the Baptists did not much affect me. I thought the example of our Lord pleaded as much for circumcision as for baptism. I questioned whether I, a poor sinner, had any call to imitate him in those things which it became him as our surety to perform, in order "to fulfil all righteousness." It appeared to me, that John's baptism, and the Christian baptism were different; and though the Baptists assured me that they were the same, I was not convinced. I thought they were plainly distinguished in Acts xix. 2—5. and I was grieved by the attempts of some wise and good men to wrest a sense from that passage, so contrary to its plain and obvious meaning, merely to support a favourite scheme. And as the form of Christian baptism is laid down in express words, Matt. xxviii. 19, I must continue to think it different from the baptism of John, till I can have sufficient proof

that John baptized our Saviour in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I found likewise, that the Baptists, though unanimous against us, and even against those who in every point but one agree with them, were divided among themselves. Some of them, while they practise what they think a duty, do not so peremptorily prescribe it to others, as to make it an indispensable term of communion; but they will receive a person as a church-member, whom they judge to be sound in the faith, and of a good conversation, though they consider him, in strictness of speech, as unbaptized. But others are much hurt by this concession, and bear testimony against it as unscriptural and wrong. Their views are so strict, that if they certainly knew that a person who wished to communicate with them was the most eminent Christian in the land, unless he was likewise baptized in their manner, they could not, they durst not, admit him to the Lord's table, to eat of that bread, and to drink of that cup, which, is by his command and appointment, the privilege and portion of all believers. This difference of judgment between them has been thought so important, that the reasons for and against, and their mutual censures of each other, have been laid before the public, by good men on each side of the question.

Now, my dear friend, upon this state of the case, what could I do? I had reviewed and compared the sentiments of a number of respectable writers and ministers of different names. In essentials, I agreed with them all: and in circumstantialia, I differed no more from any of them than they differed among themselves. They all confessed they were fallible, yet they all decided with an air of infallibility; for they all, in their turns expected me to unite with them, if I had any regard to the authority and honour of the Lord Jesus as head of the church: but the very consideration they proposed restrained me from uniting with any of them. For I cannot think that I should honour the headship and kingly office of Christ, by acknowledging him as the head of a party and subdivision of his people, to the exclusion of the rest. Every party uses fair-sounding words of liberty; but when an explanation is made, it amounts to little more than this—that they will give me liberty to think as they think, and to act as they act; which to me, who claim the same right of thinking for myself, and of acting according to the dictates of my own conscience, is no liberty at all. I therefore came to such conclusions as these—that I would love them all—that I would hold a friendly intercourse with them all, so far as they should providentially come in my way; but that I would stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made me free, and call none of them mas-

ter—in fine, that if others sought to honour him, by laying a great stress on matters of doubtful disputation, my way of honouring him should be by endeavouring to show that his kingdom is not of this world, nor consists in meats and drinks, in pleading for forms and parties; but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and the faith which worketh by love. There was a time when I could have joined with the Dissenters, if the providence of God had opened my way to them; but further experience and observation have so far altered my judgment, that had I my choice to make again, it seems to me, that I could no more officiate as a minister among any people who insist upon other terms of communion than those which our Lord has appointed, faith and holiness, than I could subscribe to the dogmas of the council of Trent. My regard to his honour will not allow me to exclude any whom I believe he has been pleased to receive. Thus much for the first reason of my conformity. Yet, in justice to the Non-conformists, I must add, that if I wished to avail myself of the sanction of great names, I could mention some among them, who, if they were now living, I am persuaded would not blame me for conforming, though they could not, in conscience, do it themselves. Particularly I judge thus (from many of his writings) of the truly great Mr. Howe, whose praise is in all the churches.

I am sincerely your ———

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#### LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

I HAVE given you the chief reason why I am not a Dissenter, and it appears to me a sufficient one, though I could assign no other. I have, however, two or three more to offer you; but I hope to comprise them all within the compass of this letter; for, indeed, I begin to be weary of a subject which is not quite suitable to my taste and inclination. But it seems not unreasonable, and, I hope, may not be unuseful, to show you that the preference I have given to the Church of England is not the effect either of inconsideration or prejudice.

My second reason for not being a Dissenter is, BECAUSE I HIGHLY VALUE THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT AND MY LIBERTY AS A MAN AND AS A CHRISTIAN. Here again I think we are agreed in principle. You rejoice in the name of a Protestant Dissenter, as setting you free from the shackles and impositions

of men; and probably think of me and my brethren in the establishment with a degree of friendly pity; taking it for granted that the engagements we are under hold us in a painful state of subjection and bondage, from which you charitably wish to see us released.

We are obliged to persons of your candid disposition for your sympathy and good wishes; and we repay you in kind. As we cannot think exactly alike, this seems the best method we can take. Harsh censures and angry disputations would be unbecoming our profession, and hurtful to our spirits; but it can do us no harm to pity and pray for each other. Perhaps you are ready to say, "you would surely pity me if you knew all my inward and outward trials; but you need not pity me for being a Dissenter, because I account it my great privilege." I may say the same, with the alteration of one word. If you knew the evils which I feel within, and the snares and difficulties which beset me from without, you would pity me indeed. But that I exercise my ministry in the church of England appears to me, as things stand, to be rather a subject for congratulation than compassion. I cannot become a Dissenter till I am weary of my liberty. If you please, we will compare notes upon this head.

Let me first speak of the restraints we are under. I am bound, by my subscription, to the forms and rubric of the Common Prayer; but my subscription was really *ex animo*. I approve the service, and therefore it is no burden to me to use it. I do not consider it as faultless, nor can I subscribe to any book of human composition in the same absolute manner as I would to the Bible. But by assenting to our church ritual, I give up less of my own private judgment, for the sake of peace, than I should by espousing the rules and practices of any dissenting churches I am acquainted with. Again, having accepted a designation to the cure of souls, my public ministry is thereby confined to parish churches; and I cannot, consistently with what I conceive to be the import of my voluntary engagements, preach at random, and in all places, without reserve. But this is no restraint upon my conscience. While I have the examples of our Lord and his apostles in my view, I cannot doubt the lawfulness of preaching on mountains or plains, in market-places, or on the sea-shore. But things in themselves lawful are not always, or to all persons, expedient. I approve of parochial order. I interfere not with the conduct of others; but believe it is, upon the whole, best for me to confine myself to the duties of my own charge, and to such opportunities of preaching in parochial pulpits as may occasionally offer. Between the one and the other I have sufficient employment. And though the bishop who ordained me, laid me

under no restrictions, I would not have applied to him for ordination, if I had not been previously determined to submit to his authority, and to the rules of the church. I thought, and still think it my duty to preserve a consistency of character; for I was not ordained to be an apostle or evangelist, to spread the Gospel throughout a kingdom; but to take care of the particular flock committed to my charge. But I need not enlarge upon this point, as I think the Dissenters do not in general, by their practice, countenance what we call irregularity, but are almost as seldom seen preaching in the fields or by the way-sides as the most regular of our clergy; though they cannot plead our reasons for not doing it, and are certainly not restrained either by the precepts or precedents of the New Testament.

Nor am I under any disagreeable constraint from my superiors in the church. The archdeacon in his district, and the bishop in his diocese, hold their respective visitations; the former annually, the latter once in three years. At these visitations the clergy (especially in the country) are expected to attend. On these occasions we answer to our names, hear a sermon, or a charge, and usually dine together. There is nothing painful to me in paying these tokens of respect to my acknowledged superiors, and receiving marks of civility from them. At all other times, while we keep within the limits which I have already told you I subscribed and consented to *ex animo*, we scarcely know, at least we do not feel that we have any superiors. So far as I am concerned, I have reason to acknowledge that the administration of our church-government is gentle and liberal. I have, from the first, preached my sentiments with the greatest freedom. I always acted in the parishes which I have served according to my own judgment; and I have done some things which have not the sanction of general custom; but I never met with the smallest check, interference, or displeasure from any of my superiors in the church, to this hour. Such are my restraints, and such is my liberty. I am bound by no regulation but what I myself approve; and within these boundaries I do as I please, no man forbidding or controlling me.

Indeed, I have often thought that I have as good a right to the name of Independent as yourself. Neither you nor I would assume it to the prejudice of our dependence upon our Lord and Saviour; and with respect to the influence of men, perhaps, we have the advantage of you. I think we are more independent of our brethren and more independent of our people.

Though, according to your plan, every particular church is called Independent, as possessing and exercising every kind of church power within itself, and not subject to the control of any

other Christian society ; yet, considering you as a body, or (according to the modern phrase) an *Interest*, there is a kind of union and association among your ministers, which has a greater effect than some people are aware of, and which, I apprehend, may in some instances be rather unfriendly to the liberty you so highly prize. Some of your ministers, from their situation or connexion, have more influence than others. They have opportunities of assisting poorer ministers ; and are, I suppose, in many cases, the judges whether they shall be assisted or not, and how far. They who best know human nature, are best qualified to judge how far the professed independence of your churches may be abated by this influence of connexion ; and whether the weight of a *board* of ministers may not be occasionally felt by those who pity us for being subordinate to a *bench* of bishops. I own I have upon some occasions, been led to compare your ministers to a company of soldiers in their exercise ; where every one must move in a prescribed line, keep the same pace, and make the like motions with the rest, on pain of being treated as refractory. Ministers in the establishment know nothing of these restraints. We are connected in love, but not upon system. We profess the same leading principles and aims, but each one acts singly and individually for himself.

I think we are likewise more independent of our people. The constitution of your churches, which you suppose the only one agreeable to the Scripture, appears to me faulty, in giving a greater power to the people than the Scripture authorizes. There is doubtless, a sense in which ministers are not only the servants of the Lord, but for his sake the servants of the churches ; but it is a service which implies rule, and is entitled to respect. Thus the apostle says, "Obey them that have the rule over you." Their office is that of a steward, who is neither to lord it over the household, nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family. Scriptural regulations are wisely and graciously adapted to our state of infirmity ; but I think the power which the people with you claim, and attempt to exercise, is not so. Many of them, though truly gracious persons, may, notwithstanding, from their situation in life, their want of education, and the narrowness of their views, be very incapable of government ; yet, when a number of such are associated according to your plan, under the honourable title of a church of Christ, they acquire a great importance. Almost every individual conceives himself qualified to judge and to guide the minister ; to sift and scrutinize his expressions, and to tell him how and what he ought to preach. But the poorer part of your flocks are not always the most troublesome. The rich can

contribute most to the minister's support, who is often entirely dependent upon his people for a maintenance; their riches likewise give them some additional weight and influence in the church; and the officers whom you call deacons are usually chosen from among the more wealthy. But it is not always found that the most wealthy church-members are the most eminent either for grace or wisdom. We may be rather sure, that riches, if the possessors are not proportionably humble and spiritual, have a direct tendency to nourish the worms of self-conceit, and self-will. Such persons expect to be consulted, and that their judgment shall be followed. The preaching must be suited to their taste and sentiment: and if any thing is either enforced or censured which bears hard upon their conduct, they think themselves ill-treated. Although a faithful minister, in his better hours, disdains the thought of complying with the caprice of his hearers, or conniving at their faults; yet human nature is weak, and it must be allowed, that in such circumstances he stands in a state of temptation. And if he has grace to maintain his integrity; yet it is painful and difficult to be obliged frequently to displease those on whom we depend, and who, in some other respects, may be our best friends and benefactors. I can truly say, that my heart has been grieved for the opposition, neglect, and unkindness, which some valuable men among you have, to my knowledge, met with, from those who ought to have esteemed them very highly for their work's sake. The effects of this supreme power lodged in the people, and of the unsanctified spirit in which it has been exercised, have been often visible in the divisions, and subdivisions which have crumbled large societies into separate handfuls, if I may so speak. And to this, I am afraid, rather than to the spread of a work of grace, may be ascribed, in many instances, the great increase of the number of your churches of late years. Now, in the establishment we know but little of these difficulties; we are not so much at the mercy of our hearers for our subsistence; and though we probably preach to some who are wiser and better, as well as richer than ourselves, we have no hearers who assume a right to direct us, or whom we should stand in fear of if they did. For my own part, I wish to have a spirit willing to profit by a hint even from a child, and to pay attention to the advice of any person who speaks to me in love, and in a right temper. But humble, loving Christians are more disposed to find fault with themselves, than with their minister, and to receive instruction than to offer it. But should a conformist to the world, or a zealot for a party, expect me to accommodate my preaching to his practice, or to his Shibboleth, I could give him an answer without being afraid of consequences.

I may add, that I apprehend we have more liberty with respect to our pulpits. At least I remember to have heard sermons from some of your pulpits, the strain of which has been so very different from the professed sentiments of the proper pastor of the church, that I have thought to myself, How came this minister to preach in this place? Upon inquiry I found at one time, that the gentleman belonged to the *connexion*; at another, that he was asked to preach at the desire of a principal person in the church or congregation, who, it seems, approved him, though I was, persuaded, the pastor did not.

I esteem it likewise a branch of my Christian liberty, that I can hear whom I please and form what acquaintance I please, among the various denominations of Christians, without being called to an account for it. I hope the Dissenters are likewise growing more into this liberty. However, as I know some among your people who would willingly hear us occasionally, were they not afraid of their ministers, so I know some of your ministers who would be willing to hear us, but do not because they are afraid of their people.

Thus much (though more might be said) by way of comparing our advantages in point of liberty. I am well pleased with my lot; if you are equally pleased with yours, I am glad of it. I write only on the defensive; I neither expect nor wish to alter your views. Enjoy your liberty; only allow me to enjoy, and be thankful for mine.

I have now acquainted you with my two principal reasons for not being a Dissenter. The first concerned my conscience. For, though my regard to the authority of the great Lord and Lawgiver of the Church, did not directly oblige me to unite with the establishment, it discouraged me from uniting with any of the parties who pretended an exclusive right from Him to enforce their own particular church forms. When conscience did not interfere, my second reason, though rather of a prudential kind, was of considerable weight with me. I loved liberty, and therefore gave a preference to the church of England, believing I might, in that situation, exercise my ministry with the most freedom. I have made the experiment, and have no reason to repent of it. These points being cleared, my way was open to attend to another consideration, which had a further influence in determining my mind. This I am about to offer to you as a third reason for my being where I am—THE PROBABILITY OF GREATER USEFULNESS. This probability, as to myself and to others who can conform with a good conscience seemed to lie on the side of the establishment, upon several accounts.

1. Great multitudes in this Christian nation (so called) are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion, inattentive to the worth and welfare of their souls, and lamentably destitute of the proper means of instruction. I hoped for opportunities in the establishment of preaching to many who could not hear the Dissenters. The Children of God, known to himself, are scattered abroad far and wide; and as faith more usually comes by hearing, I admire His condescension and goodness in permitting his ministers to think differently on some external points, that they may, with an upright heart, serve him in the different departments of his vineyard. They who are Dissenters upon principle, would act against their judgments and consciences, were they to conform for the sake of usefulness. I am well content that they should remain as they are; but it has been proved a mercy to thousands, that all who are called and qualified to preach the Gospel, are not like-minded in this respect.

2. The spirit of bigotry and prejudice is too prevalent on all sides. As there are Dissenters who would think it sinful to be seen within the walls of a church; so there are other persons who place a principal part of their religion in an ignorant attachment to our forms, and could not easily be prevailed upon to enter within the doors of a meeting-house. But their prepossession in favour of our churches, gives the ministers who can conscientiously meet them there a great advantage *ad hominem*, by confirming the truths of the Gospel (which, when first declared, are generally disliked and opposed) from the tenour of our Liturgy and Articles, to which they profess some regard. A large part of our auditories, especially in places where the Gospel is considered as a novelty, consists of persons of this description. But the Lord has been pleased, in very many instances, to honour service amongst them with his blessing. By the power of his Spirit, the truth is made manifest to their hearts; they are turned from darkness to light, and from the bondage of sin to serve the living God. Then their former prejudices subside; insomuch that many, who once despised and hated the Dissenters, have been afterwards persuaded to join with them. The Dissenting Interest would probably have been much weaker than it is at present, if it had not been strengthened by the accession of many church-members, and more than a few of your teachers and pastors, who had no inclination to hear your ministers, until they were first awakened under ours. The words of our Lord may in this sense be applied to many of your churches; "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into the fruits of their labours." The aim of my ministry, I trust, is not to promote the interests of a party, but to win souls for Christ. We have, however, the com-

fort to find, that a number are not only called, but edified and established, by the blessing of God on our preaching; and that many of the most judicious and spiritual of our people, are proof against the insinuations which prevail on some to forsake the church of England, in hopes of enjoying a purer and more acceptable worship among the Dissenters. As to those who do leave us, if they are truly benefitted, if they really grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, in humility, meekness, benevolence, and deadness to the world, more among you than they would have done amongst us, I can sincerely rejoice. But I think your brethren have no just reason to be either displeased or sorry, that God has raised up ministers to preach to thousands to whom they would never have had access.

3. I saw, likewise, that the Lord had been pleased, of late years, to return, by the power of his Spirit, to the church of England; which, I believe many Dissenters thought he had so utterly forsaken, that he would return no more. This leads me to a tender point; and I wish to touch upon it with great tenderness. We have none of us any thing to boast of. Our warmest exertions in the service of such a Master are far too cold; and our greatest success falls very short of what we ought to pray for. We preach no other Gospel than you do; we love and respect many of your ministers for their knowledge, piety, and exemplary conversation. But I believe you will allow that the general state of your churches at present, is not so lively and flourishing as it was in the days of the old Non-conformists. I believe the best of your people were long ago sensible of a decline; that they sincerely lamented it, and earnestly prayed for a revival. Their prayers were at length answered, but not in the way they expected. A great and spreading revival of religion took place, but the instruments were not Dissenters. At the time when I was ordained, there was a considerable number of regular parochial ministers who preached the doctrines of the Reformation. The number has been greatly increased since, and is still increasing. I could not but judge, that the Lord's presence with his word in awakening sinners, and in applying it with power to the heart, was more evident and striking on this side than on yours. Not because we are better than you; but because the work with us is rather new, whereas amongst you it is of an older date. The history of the church of God, and of human nature in past ages, teaches us to expect that revivals of religion will seldom stand long at their primitive height, but will gradually subside and degenerate, till things return in a course of time nearly to their former state; though a name, perhaps first imposed as a stigma by the world, and a form, which owed all its value to the Spirit that

once enlivened it, may still remain. I wish I could affirm, that none who were otherwise competent judges of a revival have been prevented by their prepossessions from rejoicing in what God has wrought amongst us. But I fear it has been otherwise, and that a spirit of prejudice and party discovered itself upon the occasion, which proved hurtful to some good men. When I think of the abilities and characters of some Dissenting ministers, I cannot but ascribe the little visible success they meet with, in some measure to their unwillingness to acknowledge a work of God in which they themselves were not employed. Their exceptions were not wholly groundless. A lively zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, in persons whose judgments were not fully ripened by observation and experience, did not secure them from incidental mistakes and blemishes. These were easily seen, and eagerly noticed. A desire of being free from the least suspicion of giving countenance to the unguarded, though well-meant sallies of active spirits, seems to have led some of your ministers into a contrary extreme; and their public discourses, though solid and judicious compositions, lost their animation in delivery, which is, in some degree, necessary to engage attention, and to keep up an auditory. Thus, while preachers much inferior to them, for learning and general knowledge in divinity, have had crowded assemblies, the pleasure with which I have heard some of your most eminent ministers has been often abated, by observing that the number of hearers has been much smaller than the number of pews in the place. I must therefore confess, that one consideration which deterred me from joining the Dissenters, was, a fear, lest the love of peace, and a temper rather compliant, might insensibly betray me into an over-cautious spirit, damp my zeal, or divert it into a wrong channel, and thereby prevent the success at which I aimed. I rather chose to unite with those people whom I thought the most likely to maintain and encourage what little fervour I possessed; and where I saw the most evident tokens of a power from on high accompanying the public ministrations. And as I had my reasons likewise for not being an itinerant, a regular and stated charge in the established church engaged my preference.

My fourth reason (the last I think it necessary to mention) being rather a point of experience, must depend chiefly upon my own testimony, and therefore, I need not enlarge much upon it. Superadded, however, to those which I have already stated, it greatly contributed to give full satisfaction to my mind: I mean, the proofs I had that the Lord, BY THE OPENINGS AND LEADINGS OF HIS PROVIDENCE, pointed out to me the situation in which I was to serve him. The first explicit notice I gave of my desire to

enter the ministry, was to an intimate friend in your denomination, nearly six years before I was ordained. In the course of this interval, I made, and I received, a variety of applications and proposals; but every thing failed, and every door by which I sought admission remained shut against me. I have already observed, that this state of suspense gave me leisure to examine the subject of church-government more closely, and that the result of my disquisitions was the gradual and, at length, the complete removal of the difficulties and exceptions I had at first hastily imbibed against the establishment. At length the Lord's time came; then obstacles, apparently insurmountable, suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared. Then I learnt the reason of former disappointments. My way had been mercifully hedged up with thorns, to prevent me taking a wrong course, and to keep me waiting until the place and service of his own appointment were prepared and ready for me. The coincidence of many circumstances, which I cannot explain to another, gave me a very comfortable sense of the Lord's guidance. I received ordination in the church of England, with a *πληροφορία*, with wind and tide (if I may so speak) in my favour, with the most pleasing disposition of outward events, and the most assured persuasion in my own mind, that I was following the call, and doing the will of God; of which I had at that time little more doubt than if an angel had been sent from heaven to tell me so. Nor have I hesitated upon the point a single hour, from that day to this.

I think you will not be sorry to find I am drawing towards a close. Indeed I should be ashamed to have written so much merely on my own account. I began this ideal correspondence with you about seven years ago. More than one half of it was then written in a few weeks; but I felt a reluctance to proceed, because it seemed to be so much my own affair. But I have frequently thought since, that something upon the subject, written in a moderate and friendly spirit, (which it has been my prayer and endeavour to preserve,) might, by the Lord's blessing, be a mean of promoting candour and benevolence among those who, whatever else they differ in, have one Lord, one faith, one hope. A desire of being instrumental in so good a work, has at length prevailed on me to revise what I had begun, to add what I thought further necessary for completing my design, and to send it abroad. I cannot give you particular reasons why I have not done it sooner, or why I do it now. Our times, plans, and purposes are under a superior guidance and direction, which it is our duty and our privilege always to acknowledge, though we cannot always distinctly discern it. I shall be happy if the event shall prove that I have been led to choose the fittest time, and to offer

a word in season. They who love and preach the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whatever name they bear among men, and whatever body of people they are united to, are engaged in one common cause; they are opposed by the same enemies; their severest conflicts and their sweetest comforts are derived from the same sources; and they will ere long meet in the same kingdom of glory, and join in the same songs of eternal praise, to Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to him who redeemed us to God by his blood. How desirable then, is it, that, while we live here, we should be at peace amongst ourselves, and live in the spirit of that love (the only infallible mark of our being truly the servants of Christ) which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth, and believeth all things!

As what I write to you is to appear in print, I think it proper to add, for my own sake, that my whole intention will be fulfilled by the publication. I do not mean to enter into controversy; and, therefore, if these letters, contrary to my wish, should raise me an opponent, and give occasion to an answer, I shall not think myself bound to reply; unless I could be convicted of such wilful misrepresentation, as would render it my duty to ask pardon of God, and of the public.

I commend you and yours to the blessing of our Lord, and remain,

Your affectionate Friend.

March 1, 1784.

# FOURTEEN LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. —.



## LETTER I.

September 6, 1768.

REVEREND SIR,

THE prospect of corresponding with you, gives me great pleasure, as I know you will kindly dispense with my neglect of forms, and bear with me and assist me, while I simply communicate such thoughts as may occasionally and without premeditation occur, *currente calamo*. Amongst a thousand mercies with which I am indulged, I often distinctly enumerate the use of the pen, and the convenience of the post; but especially that the Lord has given me so many friends amongst those who fear his name, without which, in my present sequestered situation, the pen and the post would be useless to me, (for I know but one subject on which it is much worth my while either to read or to write.) I hope you will not be angry with me for my promptness in adding your name to my list of such friends.

I had a safe and not unpleasant journey home, though the roads were disagreeable enough. But the pleasure of my visit would have made me amends, had the difficulties of the way been greater. You have been often in my thoughts since I saw you, and the topics of our conversation have not been forgotten. The patience with which you heard me differ from you, and the dispassionate desire you expressed to search out truth for its own sake, affected me much. Such a disposition is to me a sure evidence of the finger of God; for your learning, your years, and your rank and character in the university, would have the same effect on you, as the like considerations have on too many, if the grace of God had not taught you that notwithstanding any distinctions and advantages which are admired amongst men, we are all naturally upon a level as to the perception of divine truths; and can receive nothing that is valuable in the sight of God, unless it be given us from heaven.

When we begin to know ourselves, and to feel the uncertainty and darkness which are inseparable from our fallen nature, how

comfortable and encouraging is it to reflect that God has given us his infallible word, and promised us his infallible Spirit to guide us into all necessary truth; and that in the study of the one, and in dependence upon the other, none can miss the way of peace and salvation, who are sincerely desirous to find it. But we are cautioned to keep our eye upon both; and the caution is necessary, for we are too prone to separate what God hath joined together, Isa. viii 20. 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. What strange mistakes have been made by some who have thought themselves able to interpret Scripture by their own abilities as scholars and critics, though they have studied with much diligence. A signal instance was the celebrated Grotius. And many more modern might be named. I remember when I was once talking with the late Dr. T—— upon an important point of doctrine, and several arguments he used made no impression upon me; he told me at last that he had collated every single word in the Hebrew Bible seventeen different times, and that it would be strange indeed if he had not found the point I was speaking of, had it been really there. But unless our dependence upon divine teaching bears some proportion to our diligence, we may take much pains to little purpose. On the other hand, we are directed to expect the teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit only within the limits, and by the medium of the written word. For he has not promised to reveal new truths, but to enable us to understand what we read in the Bible: and if we venture beyond the pale of Scripture, we are upon enchanted ground, and exposed to all the illusions of imagination and enthusiasm. But an attention to the word of God, joined to humble supplications for his Spirit, will lead us to new advances in true knowledge. The exercises of our minds, and the observations we shall make upon the conduct of others, and the dispensations of God's Providence, will all concur to throw light upon the Scripture, and to confirm to us what we there read concerning ourselves, the world; and the true happiness revealed to sinners in and through Jesus Christ. The more sensible we are of the disease, the more we shall admire the great Physician; the more we are convinced that the creature is vanity, the more we shall be stirred up to seek our rest in God. And this will endear the Gospel to us; as in Christ, and in him only, we can hope to find that righteousness and strength of which we are utterly destitute ourselves.

I observe in many newspapers, the attestations of persons who have been relieved in diseases, by the medicines which they have tried, and therefore recommend to others from their experience.

Imnumerable cases might be published to the honour of the great Physician; none more memorable, perhaps, than my own.

I was labouring under a complication of disorders : fired with raging madness, possessed with many devils, (I doubt it not,) bent upon my own destruction ; but he interposed, unsought, undesired. He opened my eyes, and pardoned my sins ; broke my fetters, and taught my once blasphemous lips to praise his name. O, I can, I do, I must commend it as a faithful saying, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; there is forgiveness with him ; he does all things well ; he makes both the dumb to speak and the deaf to hear.

I remain, with due respect,

Dear Sir, your most obedient servant.

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LETTER II.

*November 1, 1768.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

By this time I suppose you have received and perused Mr. B——'s book. In point of fact, I think he has unanswerably proved that the sense of the Articles and the sentiments of the most eminent men in our church, till about bishop Laud's time, are expressly in favour of what is called Calvinism. How far you may be satisfied with his endeavours to establish those points from Scripture, particularly the doctrine of the 17th Article, I know not ; nor am I very anxious about it. The course you are taking to read the Scripture for yourself, in an humble dependence upon the promised teaching of the Holy Spirit, will I doubt not, lead you into all necessary truth. And the best of men are permitted to retain some differences in sentiment upon less essential points. I remember the time when election and predestination were an offence to me ; and though now scripture, reason, and experience, concur to establish me not only in one or two, but in all the particulars mentioned in Mr. B——'s book, yet I believe several persons whom I love and honour will not receive them with the same satisfaction. But the longer I live, the more I am constrained to adopt that system which ascribes all the power and glory to the grace of God, and leaves nothing to the creature but sin, weakness, and shame. Every one must speak for themselves, and for my own part, I cannot ascribe my present hopes to my having cherished and improved an inward something within me, which Mr. Law speaks of ; but, on the contrary, I know I have often resisted the motions and warnings of God's Spirit ; and if he had not saved me with a high hand, and in defiance of myself, I must have been lost. Nay, to this hour I feel an evil principle within me, tempting me to depart from the living God. I have

no inherent stock of goodness upon which I can hope to hold out hereafter, but stand in need of a continual supply, and emphatically understand our Lord's words, "without me you can do nothing." For I find I am not sufficient of myself so much as to think a good thought.

I have had opportunity of reading but a few pages of Dr. Smith's Select Discourses. He is very learned, sensible and ingenious. I could admire him as a philosopher, but I cannot approve him as a divine. A sentence or two in his ninth page seems to me explanatory of his whole system; where, speaking of our Lord Christ, he says, "his main scope was to promote a holy life, as the best and most compendious way to a right belief." If this sentence were exactly inverted, it would speak the very sentiment of my heart. That by our own industry and endeavour, we shall acquire a qualification to enable us to a right faith, seems to me as improbable, as that any cultivation which can be bestowed upon a bramble-bush will enable it to produce figs. I believe human nature is totally depraved; blind as to any spiritual understanding, dead as to any spiritual desires; and till we have received faith, though tempers, inclinations, and circumstances occasion a great variety of appearances and outward characters amongst men, yet the description of the carnal mind, as enmity against God, will equally suit us all. And I believe that when God is about to show mercy to any child of Adam, he begins by enlightening the understanding to receive something of the wisdom, grace, and justice revealed to angels and men in the person of Christ crucified, and thereby communicating that principle of living faith which is the root of every gracious temper, and the source of every action that can be called good in a Scriptural sense: John, iii. 6. Matth. xii. 33—35. Ephes. ii. 1—9. Tit. iii. 3—7. I believe that on the double account of inward depravity and actual transgression, we are (considered as in our natural state) liable to the curse of the law; from which, only faith in Jesus, as the proper atonement for sin, can set us free: John, iii. 18, 36, and viii. 24, and that the moment we truly believe, we are justified from all things, Acts, xiii. 39, and delivered from all condemnation, Rom. viii. 1; in a word, that Christ is the *all in all* in a sinner's salvation; that we have no righteousness in the sight of God but in his name, no power but so far as we are ingrafted in him by faith, as branches deriving sap and influence from the true vine; John, xv. 1. Isa. xlv. 24. 1 Cor. i. 30. Upon these principles I find that I cannot have satisfaction or comfort in the mystical writers, notwithstanding they say many excellent things occasionally, which may be very useful when understood in a Gospel sense.

It would be impertinent to offer an apology for expressing myself with freedom after the liberty you gave me. However, I wish you to believe that I would not, at any time, and especially when writing to you, betray a dogmatical spirit. In every other point I hesitate and demur (and it becomes me to do so) when I differ from persons of learning and years superior to my own. But with respect to the grounds of a sinner's acceptance in the sight of God, and the sufficiency, the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ to do all for, in, and by, those who believe on his name, I have that conviction, that more than human demonstration, that perhaps I may sometimes seem to pass my proper bounds, and to speak in a too positive tone. But I think the views which constrain me to dissent from Mr. Law, Dr. Smith, and many other respectable names, would embolden me to contradict even an angel from heaven, if I should hear him propose any other foundation for hope than the person, obedience, sufferings, and intercession of the Son of God. Upon this subject, even my phlegmatic spirit will sometimes catch a little fire.

Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon  
 By means that speak the value infinite!  
 A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!  
 With blood divine of him I made my foe!  
 Persisted to provoke! though woo'd and aw'd,  
 Blest and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still!  
 Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies!

The dryness of spirit you speak of, though not pleasant, is salutary. Such thirstings and longings as are expressed in the hundred and forty-third Psalm, are certainly from God, and will certainly be answered; for to whom did he ever say, "Seek ye my face in vain?"

I commend you to the keeping of the great Shepherd, and remain,

Dear Sir,

Your obedient and humble servant.

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LETTER III.

*January 11, 1769.*

MY DEAR SIR,

It is true, I am obliged to plead business in excuse for my want of punctuality to some of my correspondents; but I should be ashamed to make such a plea to you. The most pleasing parts of our employment bid fairest for our attention: and I shall ex-

pect to spend few hours of my leisure with more satisfaction to myself, than when I am answering your obliging letters; especially, as you encourage the freedom I have already used, and give me hope that the thoughts I offer are not unsuitable to the tenour of your inquiries into the truths of God. The Lord, on whom we both desire to wait for instruction, can make us mutually helpful to each other; and I trust he will, for it is his own work. I can easily say I am nothing; I wish I could more truly feel it, for he will not disappoint the feeblest instrument that simply depends upon him, and is willing to give him all the glory.

Our preliminaries are now settled. What you say in your last is so satisfactory, that it would be impertinent in me to trouble you any further either about Mr. Law or Mr. Calvin. What ever portion of truth is in either of their writings, was drawn from the fountain which we have in our own hands; and we have the sure promise of Divine assistance to give success to our inquiries. I trust the defect of memory of which you complain, shall be no disadvantage to you; for you are not seeking a polemical system, but an experimental possession of truth; and, with respect to this if you had all your faculties in full vigour, and could recur in a moment to all that you have ever been master of, you would still stand upon a level with the meanest of mankind. In this respect, what Elihu says, Job xxxvi. 22, is emphatically true, There is none teacheth like him. That heavenly light with which he visits the awakened mind, (like the light of the sun,) requires only eyes to see it. And a single sentence of his word, when explained and applied, by his Spirit, to the heart, will have more effect than the perusal of many folios. There is a majesty, authority, and evidence in his teaching, equally suited to all capacities. The wisest renounce their wisdom when he interposes; and the weakest are made wise unto salvation: Jer. ix. 23, 24. Isa. xxxv. 8. I have somewhere read an acknowledgment of the great Selden to this purpose:—"I have taken much pains to know every thing that was esteemed worth knowing amongst men, but of all my disquisitions and readings, nothing now remains with me to comfort me at the close of life, but this passage of St. Paul, 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' To this I cleave, and herein I find rest." You may be well assured, dear Sir, that he who has taught your heart to say, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek," will be undoubtedly found of you; for when did he say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain." Though as you have more to give up in point of those abilities and attainments which are highly esteemed amongst men than many others in the lower sphere of life he may perhaps lead you in such a way as to give you a full conviction,

that these advantages can contribute nothing to spiritual wisdom and the peace which passeth understanding.

If I had the pleasure (as I hope one day to have) of receiving you here, I could show you exemplifications of the same grace in a very different light. Here the poor, and the weak, and the despised of the world, rejoice in the light of his salvation. Some who have hardly bread to eat, are content and thankful as if they possessed the whole earth, and can trace the hand of God in directing their petty concerns, and providing them daily food, as clearly as we can in the revolutions of a kingdom. Some who know no more of what passes without the bounds of the parish, than of what is doing beyond the Ganges, and whose whole reading is confined to the Bible, have such a just understanding of the things of God, and of the nature and difficulties of the Christian life, that I derive more instruction from their conversation, (though none think themselves less qualified to teach,) than from all my books. I doubt not but you would be pleased with their simplicity. We live in much harmony, and are out of the noise of disputes, being, through mercy, of one judgment and of one heart. I speak now of the serious people, whom I consider as my own peculiar charge. As to the bulk of the parish, it is too much like other places.

Indeed, the great points of immediate concernment may be summed up in a few words. To have a real conviction of our sin and unworthiness; to know that Jesus is the all-sufficient Saviour, and that there is no other; to set him before us as our Shepherd, Advocate, and Master; to place our hope upon him alone; to live to him who lived and died for us; to wait in his appointed means for the consolations of his Spirit; to walk in his steps, and copy his character, and to be daily longing for the period of our warfare, that we may see him as he is. All may be reduced to these heads; or the whole is better expressed in the apostle's summaries, Titus, ii. 11, 12, 13, 14, and iii. 3—8. But though the lessons are brief, it is a great thing to attain any good measure of proficiency in them; yea, the more we advance, the more we shall be sensible how far we fall short of their full import.

Next to the word of God, I like those books best which give an account of the lives and experience of his people. Gillie's Gospel History contains a valuable collection of this sort, especially the first volume. Some of the letters and lives in Fox's Acts and Monuments, in the third volume, have been very useful to me. But no book of this kind has been more welcome to me than the Life of Mr. Brainerd, of New-England, republished a few years since at Edinburgh, and I believe sold by Dilly, in

London. If you have not seen it, I will venture to recommend it, (though I am not fond of recommending books;) I think it will please you.

I suppose you have read Augustine's Confessions. In that book I think there is a lively description of the workings of the heart, and of the Lord's methods in drawing him to himself. It has given me satisfaction to meet with experiences very much like my own, in a book written so long ago. But nature and grace have been the same in every age.

I make no apology for the miscellaneous manner of my letters. I sit down to give you my thoughts as they arise, without reserve, and without study. I beg a remembrance in your prayers.

I am, very respectfully,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your most affectionate and obliged servant.

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LETTER IV.

February 11, 1769.

MY DEAR SIR,

THOUGH, by the Lord's mercy, I have not, since the years of my miserable bondage in Africa, been much subject to a depression of spirits, I know how to sympathize with you under your present complaints; but while I am sorry for your trials, I rejoice much more to observe the spirit of submission and dependence with which you are favoured under them. Whatever may be the immediate causes of your troubles, they are all under the direction of a gracious hand, and each, in their place, co-operating to a gracious end. I think the frame of your spirit is a sure evidence that God is *with you* in your trouble; and, I trust, in due time, he will fulfil the other part of his promise, to comfort and deliver you, because he has given you to know his name; Psalm xci. 14, 15. It will be always a pleasure to me when a letter comes with your superscription; but while writing is so painful to you, I shall be willing (since you are pleased to receive mine so favourably) to send you two or three for one, rather than expect a punctual return of answers, till your health and spirits shall enable you to gratify me without inconvenience to yourself.

Your saying that "if I have never been in the like circumstances, it is impossible for me to conceive the uncomfartableness of them," reminds me of one admirable peculiarity of the Gospel, which seems a fit topic for a paragraph in a letter to you at this time. I mean the encouragement it affords us to apply to our great High Priest, from the especial consideration of his having

felt the same sorrows which we also feel. Though he is now exalted above all our conceptions and praises, is supremely happy in himself, and the fountain of happiness to all his redeemed ; yet he is still such an one as can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities : Heb. iv. 15, 16. He has not only a divine knowledge, but an experimental perception of our afflictions : Isa. lxiii. 9. And as Dr. Watts well expresses the thought—

Touch'd with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame ;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For he has felt the same.

You complain of a dejection of spirits, which I apprehend nearly expresses the sense of *αδημονειν*, Mark xiv. 33. which is one out of many of those emphatical words the evangelists use to give some apprehension of that depression, agony, and consternation of spirit which filled the soul of Jesus when he entered upon the great work of atoning for our sins. All that he endured from the hands of wicked men are probably very light, in comparison of what he began to suffer in the garden, when he was exposed to the fierce conflicts of the powers of darkness, and when the arrows of the Almighty drank up his spirits, and it pleased the Father to bruise him ; Zech. xiii. 7. How different the cup he drank himself, from that which he puts into our hands ! His was unmixed wrath and anguish ; but all our afflictions are tempered and sweetened with many mercies. Yet we suffer, at the worst, unspeakably less than we deserve ; but he had done nothing amiss.

Now let our pains be all forgot,  
Our hearts no more repine ;  
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,  
If, Lord, compared with thine.

But what I chiefly intend is, that having suffered for us, he knows how to pity and how to relieve us, by an experimental sense of the sorrow which once filled his own soul, (yea, all his life long he was acquainted with grief,) even as we, (if it be lawful to compare great things with small,) are prompted to pity and to help those who are afflicted in the same way as ourselves. May he be pleased, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to reveal, with increasing guidance and power in your soul, this mystery of redeeming love. Here is the source of consolation, that Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The knowledge of his cross, like the wood which Moses cast into the spring, Exod. xv. 25, sweetens the bitter waters of afflictions,

and sanctifies every dispensation of providence, so as to render it a means of grace. A comfortable hope of our acceptance and reconciliation in him, is, I apprehend, that “preparation of the Gospel of peace,” which, for its continual use and application, the apostle compares to shoes, which, whoever wears, shall walk safely and surely through the thorny and rugged paths of our present pilgrimage, Ephes. vi. 15. Deut. xxxiii. 25. Though there may be many tribulations, yet since there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; since in the path of sufferings we may see his footsteps before us; since it is the established law of the kingdom, Acts xiv. 22; since the time is short, and the hour coming apace when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and his grace engaged to be sufficient for us in the interim; why may we not say with the apostle, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy!” There is no proportionate ground for comparison between the sufferings of the present life and the glory which shall be revealed in us; Rom. viii. 18. So the apostle thought; and no man seems to have been better qualified to decide upon the point; for on the one hand his outward life was full of what the world calls *misery*, 1 Cor. iv. 10—14. 2 Cor. vi. 4—10. and xi. 23—28. And on the other hand, he had been caught up into the third heavens, and had seen and heard more than he could disclose in mortal language.

I shall be glad when you are able to inform me that your health and spirits are better, which I shall pray and wait for. The Lord has an appointed time for answering the prayers of his people. While his hour is not yet come, we can do nothing but look and wait at his mercy-seat. But though he seems to tarry, he will not delay beyond the fittest season. Though he cause grief, he will have compassion. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. In the mean time I commend you to those most gracious and comfortable promises, Isa. xli. 10. and xliii. 2. which, I trust, will be your present support. and the subject of your future praises.

I am, respectfully, dear Sir,

Your obedient and affectionate servant.

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LETTER V.

March 21, 1769.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

IN my last I engaged to write again before long, though I should not have one of yours to answer. And I hope soon after

you receive this, your leisure and spirit will permit you to write, at least a few lines, to inform us of your welfare. My anxiety on your account would be greater, but that I know you are in the hands of him who does all things well, and conducts his most afflictive dispensations, to those who fear him, with wisdom and mercy. As I am not fit to choose for myself, so neither for my friends. The Lord knows what is best for us all; when there is an especial *need-be* for our being in heaviness; how to support us in the furnace; and at what season, and in what manner, deliverance will best comport with his glory and our good: the two great ends which he has in view, and which are inseparably connected together. He knows our frame and whereof we are made; his pity exceeds that of the most tender parent; and though he cause grief he will have compassion. The afflictions which at present are not joyous, but grievous, shall, when we have been duly exercised by them, yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I trust the Lord gives you a measure of patience and submission to his holy will; if so, every thing shall be well; and when he has fully tried you, you shall come forth as gold. The thoughts of what we have deserved at his hands, and what Jesus suffered for our sakes, when applied by his Holy Spirit, have a sovereign efficacy to compose our minds, and enable us to say, Not my will, but thine be done. How unspeakably better is it to be chastened of the Lord now, than to be left to ourselves for a season, and at last condemned with the world.

The path of affliction is sanctified by the promise of God, and by the consideration of our Lord Jesus, who walked in it himself, that we might not think much to tread in his steps. Yea, it has been a beaten path in all ages; for the innumerable multitudes of the redeemed who are now before the throne, entered the kingdom by no other way. Let us not, then, be weary and faint in our minds, but cheerfully consent to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. If, after much tribulation, we are accounted worthy to stand accepted before the Lord in his glory, we shall not then think much of the difficulties we met in our passage. Then sorrow and sighing shall cease for ever, and songs of triumph and everlasting joy shall take place. O happy, transporting moment, when the Lord God himself shall wipe all tears from our eyes.

Till then, may the prospect of this glory which shall be revealed, cheer and comfort our hearts! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. He has delivered us in six troubles, and we may trust him in the seventh. Yea, if he was pleased to deliver us when we thought little of him, much more may we assure ourselves of his help, now that he has taught us to come to his throne of

grace, and given us encouragement to come with boldness, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help at the time of need.

The news-papers (which in this retired place are the chief sources of our intelligence) give us but a dark view of what is passing abroad. A spirit of discord is spreading in the nation, and we have hints and items respecting ecclesiastical matters, which I hope are premature and without sufficient ground. But, whatever storms may arise, there is an infallible and Almighty Pilot, who will be a sun and a shield to those who love him. I endeavour to answer all fears respecting political matters with the sure declarations of the word of God. Such as Psalm xcix. 1, and xxix. 10, 11, Isa. viii. 12—14, and li. 12, 13, John iii. 35, &c. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords: King of the church, and King in the nations; who doth his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Therefore, by faith in him, we may adopt the triumphant language of the ii. xxvii. xlvi. and cxviii. Psalms, for the Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and knoweth how to deliver them that trust in him.

Oh, Sir, what a light does the Gospel of Christ throw upon the world when our eyes are open to receive it! Without it, all would be uncertainty and perplexity; but the knowledge of his person, blood, and righteousness; of the love he bears us, the care he exercises over us, and the blessings he had prepared for us—this knowledge gives peace and stability to the soul, in the midst of all changes and confusions. And were it not for the remaining power of unbelief in our heart, which fights against our faith, and damps the force of divine truth, we should begin our heaven even while we are upon earth. We have need to adopt the apostle's prayer, and to say, "Lord increase our faith."

Believe me to be, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient and affectionate servant.

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#### LETTER VI.

*June 12, 1770.*

VERY DEAR SIR,

I MAKE haste to answer your obliging favour of the 31st; the contents gave me much pleasure. I am glad to find that, though you have your share of trials in different ways, the Lord is pleased to support you under them, and do you good by them. So I trust you shall find it to the end. That valuable promise,

“Thy shoes shall be as iron and brass,” intimates, that we must not expect a path strewed with flowers, or spread with carpets, but rather rough and thorny, otherwise such shoes would be unnecessary. But it is sufficient if strength is given according to our day, and if the Lord is pleased to be with us; though we should be led through fire and water, neither the flame shall kindle upon us nor the floods drown us: his presence and love shall make us more than conquerors, and bring us at length into a wealthy place.

Such a case as Mr. —’s, if it be generally known and understood, would be more effectual than many volumes of arguments to confirm what the Scriptures teach concerning the author, the nature, and effects of that great change which must be wrought in the heart of a sinner before he can see the kingdom of God. His natural and acquired abilities were great; his moral character, as it is called, unblemished; he was beloved and admired by his friends, and perhaps had no enemies. To see such a man made willing in an instant to give up all his supposed advantages, to rank himself with the chief of sinners, and to glory only in those self-denying truths which a little before were foolishness to him; and to see him as suddenly possessed of a solid peace, reconciled to the thoughts of death, and rejoicing in a hope and a happiness of which he had, till then, not the least idea, is indeed wonderful. But though such an instance bears the impression of the immediate finger of God, no less evidently than the miracles wrought in Egypt, yet it cannot be perceived or understood in its full extent, by any person whose mind has not been enlightened by the same divine influence. And I doubt not, but if the Lord had spared his life, he would by this time have been either pitied or scorned in the university as much as he had formerly been admired. I think you may be well assured, Sir, that the pleasure you feel, and the tears you shed, when you peruse the account, are the effect of your having yourself received the same Spirit. I trust that your prayer, that the Lord would be pleased to stretch out the arm of his mercy *in like manner* to you also, shall be fully answered as to the main point; but it is by no means necessary that it should be just *in the like manner* as to the instantaneous and inexpressible clearness of the discovery. The Lord sometimes shows us how he can finish his work in a short time, and therefore some of the objects of his mercy do not receive the light of his salvation till towards their last hours; but perhaps if Mr. — had been appointed for life and usefulness in this world, he would have been taught these things in a more gradual manner. The Lord compares the usual method of his grace to the growth of corn, Mark, iv. 26—29, which is per-

fectured by a slow and almost imperceptible progress. The seed is hidden for a time in the soil, and when it appears, it passes through a succession of changes—the blade, the stalk, the ear, and it is brought forward amidst a variety of weather; the dew, the frost, the wind, the rain, the sun, all concur to advance its maturity, though some of these agents are contrary to each other, and some of them, perhaps, seem to threaten the life of the plant. Yet when the season of harvest returns, the corn is found ready for the sickle. So is the work of grace in the soul; its beginnings are small, its growth, for the most part, slow, and, to our apprehensions, often precarious; but there is this difference in the resemblance—frosts and blights drought or floods, may possibly disappoint the husbandman's hope; but the great Husbandman of the church will not, cannot be disappointed. What *he sows* shall flourish in defiance of all opposition, and if it seems at times to fade, he can and he will revive it. This is his usual method; but he has not bound himself by rules; and therefore to show his manifold wisdom, he exhibits some peculiar cases, like that of our late friend, to quicken our attention, and to convince us that he is very near us, that his word is truth, and that he can do what he pleases. For the most part, his people are exercised with doubts and sharp temptations; for it is necessary they should learn not only what he can do for them, but how little they can do without him. Therefore he teaches them not all at once, but by degrees, as they are able to bear it. I can say as you do, that I am much a stranger to those extraordinary manifestations of God in my soul; however, if the Lord has given us to see the necessity, the worth, the suitableness, and wisdom of that method of salvation which is revealed in the Gospel; if Christ is made precious and desirable to us, and we are willing to account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus the Lord:—though there may be a difference in circumstances, the work is the same. And we have as good a right humbly to appropriate to ourselves the comfort of his promises, as if an angel were sent from heaven, (as to Daniel) to tell us that we are greatly beloved.

I am, respectfully, dear Sir,

Your obedient and affectionate servant.

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## LETTER VII.

*November 27, 1770.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I BELIEVE it is a considerable time since I wrote last, but much longer since I heard from you. I hope your silence has

not been occasioned by illness, or at least that if you have been afflicted, you have found your trials so sweetened, and so sanctified by the divine blessing, that you have been enabled to rejoice in them. My affection prompts me to wish my friends an uninterrupted course of health and peace, but if different dispensations are appointed them, it gives me comfort to think that their trials come from his hand who loves them better than I can do. And my better judgment tells me that the afflictions of those who fear God are, on his part, tokens of his love and favour; and with respect to themselves, necessary means of promoting their growth in faith and grace.

When Moses came to inform Israel that the time was at hand when the Lord would put them in possession of the good land he had promised to their fathers, he found them in a state of great affliction; and had it not been so, they would have been little disposed to receive his message with pleasure; for they had a great natural love to Egypt; they hankered after it even in the wilderness. If, therefore, Moses had come to them, and proposed a removal, while they were in a prosperous and happy situation, they would probably have been very unwilling to have left it. The Lord, therefore, who knew their weakness and their undue attachment to a country which was not to be their rest, was pleased first to embitter Egypt to them, and then the news of a Canaan provided for them was welcome. And thus he deals with his people still. Our affections cleave inordinately to the present life. Notwithstanding the many troubles we meet with, sufficient, as it should seem, to wean us from such a state of vanity and disappointment, we can but seldom feel ourselves, in good earnest, desirous to be gone; how much less should we be so if every thing went smooth with us! It is happy for us if we have suffered enough to make us desire a better country, that is a heavenly; but surely all the painful experiences we have hitherto met with, have not been more than sufficient to bring us into this waiting posture. Yea as long as we live, new trials will be needful to put us in remembrance of what we do indeed already know, but are too prone to lose the practical sense of. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ*; not that the Lord delights in grieving us and putting us to pain; on the contrary, he rejoices in the prosperity of his servants. No, it is not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness. Perhaps you may sometimes have observed a bird, in a hedge or upon the boughs of a tree: if you disturb it, it will move a little further or a little higher, and thus you may make it change its place three or four times; But if it finds, after a few trials, that you continue to follow it and will not suffer it to rest near you, it takes wing at last and

flies quite away. Thus it is with us, when the Lord drives us from one creature-rest, we presently perch upon another; but he will not allow us to fix long upon any. At length, like the bird, we are sensible that we can have no safety, no stable peace below; then our hearts take flight and soar heavenwards, and we are taught, by his grace, to place our treasure and affections out of the reach of changes. So far as this end is accomplished, we have reason to be thankful for the means, and say,

—————Happy rod,  
That brought me nearer to my God.

Blessed be God for that Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light; which reveals a Saviour who is the way, the truth and the life; who is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. The desires we feel towards him, faint and feeble as they are, are the effect of his own operation on our hearts, and what he plants he will water. He does nothing by halves. Far be it from us to think that he should make us sensible of our need of him, teach us to pray for his assistance, make so many express promises for our encouragement, and then disappoint us at last. What then would become of his honour and his truth, since he has already declared, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” To harbour a doubt either of his power or compassion, is to dishonour him. Men often disappoint our expectations; either their purposes change, or their power falls short, or something intervenes which they could not foresee; but to him all things are known, all things are easy, and his purposes are immutable. He came into the world to save sinners, to save all who put their trust in him. This was the joy set before him; for this he bled for this he died. Having redeemed us by his blood, and reclaimed us in our wandering state by his word and Spirit; having made us willing to commit ourselves unto him, he will not leave us to perish by the way, or suffer any power to pluck us out of his hand.

My pen has run at random; one line has followed another without study or reserve. I sat down with a desire to fill the sheet, but knew not what I should say. Thus I usually write (without form or constraint) to those whom I love. If the Lord shall be pleased to make any thing I have offered a word in season to you, I shall be glad.

I am, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

## LETTER VIII.

July 9, 1771.

MY DEAR SIR,

HAVING no letter to answer, I must fill up my paper as I can. It would be a shame to say I have no subject. There is one which is, or should be always *ad unguem*, and which can never be exhausted—the love of Christ; the fountain from whence all our spiritual blessings flow; the ocean to which they tend. The love of God towards sinners is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is treasured up in him; it is manifested in him; it is communicated through him. Permit my pen to enlarge a little upon this thought.

The love of God is treasured up in Christ. He is the head of his church; and all spiritual and eternal blessings are given in him, and for his sake alone: Eph. i. 3, 4. The promise of life is in him; and to him we are directed to look, as he in whom alone the Father is well pleased: Matt. iii. 17. God beheld our lost, miserable condition, and designed us mercy; but mercy must be dispensed in a way agreeable to his holiness, justice and truth. Therefore, in the covenant of grace, sinners are no further considered, than as the persons who are to reap the benefit; but the whole undertaking, both as to the burden and the honour of it, was transacted with, and devolved upon Jesus Christ the Lord, who freely engaged to be their Saviour and Surety.

The manifestation of the love of God to sinners, is in Christ Jesus. His goodness and forbearance is, indeed, displayed in every morsel of food, and in every breath we draw; but his love to our souls is only revealed in Christ. And, O what love was this, to give his own only Son! In this gift, in this way of redemption, he has commended his love to us, set it forth to the highest advantage possible, so that neither men nor angels can fully conceive its glory, Rom. v. 8.; and the apostle there emphatically styles it *την εαυτου αγαπην*, *His own love*: peculiar to himself, and of which we can find no shadow or resemblance amongst creatures.

*Nec viget quidquam simile aut secundum.*

The effects of his love are communicated only through Christ Jesus. He is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. “All fulness is in him.” He has received, and he bestows, every good and perfect gift. He gives grace, and he will give glory. All our springs of life, strength,

peace, and comfort are in him ; and without him we can do nothing.

I trust, my dear Sir, in expressing my own sentiments on this point, I express yours also. That Jesus, who was once a man of sorrows, who now reigns the God of glory in that nature in which he suffered, is your hope and your joy. Yes, the Lord who has given you many seeming advantages, as he did to St. Paul, has enabled you, like him, to sacrifice them at the foot of the cross, and to say, The things which were once gain to me, I count loss for Christ : yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus my Lord, &c. Phil. iii. 5—10. This is to build upon a rock, to build for eternity, to rest upon a plea which will over-rule every charge in life, at death and at judgment. They that put their trust in him shall be like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. And other way of attaining stable peace, or receiving power to withstand and overcome the world, there is none.

Believe me to be, dear Sir,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant.

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LETTER IX.

January 9, 1778.

MY DEAR SIR,

You have put a happy end to our little controversy, by referring me to Dr. Franks' *Nucleus*, a book which I have read over and over with the greatest pleasure. I look upon Dr. Franks to have been a very eminent Christian ; and if you account *him* a Mystic, I shall not differ with you about a term. I do not find that he was an explicit Calvinist ; nor is that necessary to engage my hearty approbation, when I see a man bearing testimony to those great doctrines, the belief of which, I think, are essential to the character of a true Christian ; when his zeal, his humility, his love and faith, give the most admirable proofs that God is with him of a truth.

Your own sentiments, which you are pleased to favour me with, afford me likewise great satisfaction. The Lord, who has given you a heart to seek and follow him, will, I trust, lead you on from strength to strength ; and if there is any thing yet remaining, the knowledge and experience of which would add to your comfort and progress in the divine life, he will show it you in his good time. He is the only effectual teacher ; and he communicates instruction to those who simply seek him, at such seasons and in such degrees as he, in his sovereign wisdom sees best. I

have too great a respect for your character and years, as well as too clear a sense of the little good that is done by controversy, to attempt to dispute with you. I shall be happy and honoured if I should ever drop a sentence that God may be pleased to make useful to you ; and I hope I am equally desirous to learn of you, and profit by you. The Scripture warrants us both not to call any man *master*. Christ alone is the Lord of conscience ; and no *ipse dixit* is to be regarded but his. Men are to be followed so far as we can see they speak by his authority ; the best are defective ; the wisest may be mistaken. Yet truth can be but one. The more uncertainty and division we find in the judgments of our fellow-creatures, the more need have we to rely upon the word and authority of the only infallible Judge. He permits those whom he loves to differ in some things, that there may be room for the exercise of love, meekness, mutual forbearance, and compassion ; but when men presume to take his chair, to intrench upon his work, but think themselves qualified and authorised to enforce their own sentiments, by noisy arguments, and to prescribe themselves as a standard to others, though they may mean well, they seldom do well : they set out, (as they think) in the cause of God ; but it is soon leavened by unsanctified tempers, and becomes their own cause ; and they fight more for victory than for edification. When the Lord enables any to avoid these evils, and they can freely, simply, and in a spirit of love, open their minds to each other, then his blessing may be humbly hoped for.

I hope I love true candour ; but there is a candour, falsely so called, which I pray the Lord to preserve me from. I mean that which springs from an indifference to truth, and supposes that people who differ most widely in sentiment, may all be right in their several ways, because they seem to mean well. But the Gospel is a *standard* by which all men are to be tried, and a *depositum* which must not be given up as a point of indifference because many persons of respectable characters in other things, do not approve it. St. Paul observed no measure with those who would introduce another Gospel. There is a great difference between those who maintain erroneous systems, and those who, though they are mistaken in some things, are faithful to the light they have already received, and are honestly seeking more from the Lord. To the latter I would show all possible candour ; as to the former, candour, or rather Christian charity, requires me to be tender and compassionate to their persons, but to give no place to their principles, no, not for an hour. The question is not, what I should think or hope if left to my own judg-

ment, but what the unerring word of God determines, By this I must abide.

I remain, begging an interest in your prayers,

My dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

## LETTER X.

*February 22, 1776.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE longed to tell you, that the prospect of our correspondence being revived gave me very great pleasure. I attributed its discontinuance sometimes to the gout, with which I knew you were often afflicted; then I began to think, perhaps you were removed to a better world; but when I understood you were still living, I apprehended you saw no utility in the friendly debates we were formerly engaged in, and therefore chose to drop them. It was this suspicion that prevented me writing again; for, had I been sure your silence was not owing to this cause, you would have heard from me again and again, for *with you* I should not have stood upon the terms of letter for letter.

I ought not, however, to have indulged such a suspicion, nor to have imputed your silence to a cause so contrary to the spirit of your letters; for in them you have always showed yourself gentle, candid, and patient, and not disposed to break off the intercourse merely for difference in sentiments. Some difference in our sentiments there has seemed to be all along; but I believe, with you, that we essentially agree, and I cordially join you in the hope and persuasion that the difference, whatever it may be, will not abate my respect and regard for you, nor your kindness to me.

I desire to praise God in your behalf, that he hath graciously supported you under your long affliction and confinement, and now given you a prospect of going abroad again. It is the prayer of my heart, that all your crosses and comforts may be sanctified to you, and that you may suffer no more than a gracious God sees needful to answer his salutary purposes in favour of those who love him, to manifest, exercise, and strengthen your graces, and to give you an increasing sense that his power, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, are engaged to promote your best happiness, and to ripen you for his kingdom and glory.

My leading sentiment with respect to the divine life is, that it is founded in a new and supernatural birth. In this I doubt not we agree. Mankind are miserably divided and subdivided by sects,

parties, and opinions; but in the sight of God there are but two sorts of characters upon earth—the children of his kingdom, and the children of the wicked one. The criterion between them (infallibly known only to himself,) is, that the former are born from above, the other not. If a person be born again, notwithstanding any incidental mistakes or prejudices, from which, perhaps, no human mind in this imperfect state is wholly free, he is a child of God and an heir of glory. On the other hand, though his professed opinions be quite conformed to the Scriptures; though he be joined to the purest church; though he seem to have all gifts and all knowledge, the zeal of a martyr, and the powers of an angel; yet if he be not born of God, with all his splendid apparatus, he is but a tinkling, (or, as I should rather choose to render the word,) a stunning cymbal.

From this new birth, a new life, new perceptions, and new desires, take place in the soul; sin, which was once delighted in, becomes a burden: and God, who before was little thought of, is sought after as our chief good. The need of his mercy is felt and acknowledged, and Jesus is approved and sought as the only way and author of salvation. These things I believe are never truly and experimentally known but by the teaching and operation of the Holy Spirit; and as he is God, and not man, unchangeable in purpose and almighty in power, I believe when he once begins his work, he will in his own time accomplish it. I believe hatred of sin, thirst after God, poverty of spirit, and dependence upon Christ, are sure tokens of salvation; and whoever have them I would esteem my brethren and my sisters, though they should be found among Arminians, Mystics, or Papists. Yet, I believe, some thus far wrought upon, may be, and are, entangled with errors dishonourable to the grace of God, and detrimental to their own peace. There is much remaining darkness upon the mind; many persons are greatly hindered by a reasoning spirit, and numbers are kept down by their attachment to a favourite system, sect, and author; so that perhaps they are long strangers to that steadfast hope and strong consolation which the Gospel-truth, when simply received, is designed to afford us, and which depends upon the sense we have that we are nothing, and that Christ is all in all, and that our best graces and services are, and always will be, in this life, defective and defiled, and that the sole, exclusive ground of our hope and rejoicing is Jesus Christ, as made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

I desire to be more a partaker with you in that sense which the Lord has given you of the deficiency you find in your own graces, dispositions, and tempers, and the want of due conformity to

the mind that was in Christ. If you have cause of humiliation on these accounts, surely I have more. At the same time it is my prayer, that he may comfort you with those views of the freeness and riches of his grace, which enable me to maintain a hope in his mercy, notwithstanding I feel myself polluted and vile. For when my state and acceptance with God is the point in question, I am in a measure helped not to judge of it by what he has done in me, so much as by what he has done for me. I can find no peace but by resting in the blood of Jesus, his obedience to death, his intercession and fulness of grace ; and so claiming salvation, under him, as my head, surety, and advocate, answer all objections which conscience or Satan interpose with the apostle's arguments in Rom. viii. 33, 34. Were I to hesitate in this important matter till I feel nothing contrary to that image to which I hope I thirst after, a growing conformity, I might wait *dum defluat amnis*—I should spend my life in perplexity, and at last should die in terror. But I believe I am already justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus.

That the Lord may be your guide and comforter, is the sincere prayer of,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

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LETTER XI.

July 30, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

As you agree with me in the main points of what I offered in my last, I should think myself to blame to weary you with debates on the single article of perseverance. Though I believe this sentiment to be true, I am persuaded a man may warmly fight for it, and yet himself fall short ; and I trust you will attain the end of your hope, even the salvation of your soul, though you should continue to differ with me in judgment upon this head. I shall only say, The belief of it is essential to my peace. I cannot take upon me to judge of the heart and feelings of others ; but, from the knowledge I have of my own, I am reduced by necessity to take refuge in a hope which, through mercy, I find strongly encouraged in the scripture, that Jesus to whom I have been led to commit myself, has engaged to save me absolutely, and from first to last. I think he has promised not only that he will not depart from me, but that he will put, keep, and maintain his fear in my heart, that I shall not depart from him : and if he does not, I have no security against my turning apostate.

For I am so weak, inconsistent and sinful, so encompassed with snares, and liable to such assaults from the subtilty, vigilance, and power of Satan, that unless I am “kept by the power of God through faith,” I am sure I cannot endure to the end. I believe the Lord will keep me while I walk humbly and obediently before him; but were this all, it would be cold comfort. I am prone to wander, and need a shepherd whose watchful eye, compassionate heart, and boundless mercy, will pity, pardon, and restore my backslidings. For though by his goodness and not my own, I have hitherto been preserved from dishonouring my profession in the sight of men; yet I feel those evils within, which would presently break loose and bear me down from bad to worse, were he not ever present with me to control them. And therefore I conclude, they who comfortably hope to see his face in glory, but depend in whole or in part upon their own watchfulness and endeavours to preserve themselves from falling, must either be much wiser, better, and stronger than I am, or at least cannot have so deep and painful a sense of their own weakness and vileness as daily experience forces upon me. I desire to be found in the use of the Lord’s appointed means for the renewal of my spiritual strength, but I dare not undertake to watch a single hour, nor do I find sufficiency to think a good thought, nor a power in myself of resisting any temptation.

My strength is perfect weakness,  
And all I have is sin.

In short I must sit down in despair, if I did not believe, (the apostle, I think, allows me to be confident,) that he who has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Had I the pleasure of conversing with you, I think I could state the texts you quote, in a light quite consistent with a hundred other texts which appear to me to assert the final perseverance of the saints in the strongest terms: but it would take up too much room in a letter. And indeed, *non est tanti*. Volumes of controversy, as you observe, have been written upon these subjects, and *Te Deum* has been professedly sung on both sides, but no man can receive to his comfort and edification, any Gospel-truth, except it be taught and given him from heaven. I do not think my sentiments would add to your safety, but I believe they would to your comfort; but not if you received them as my sentiments: there is no more life and comfort in the knowledge of the Gospel-truth than in the knowledge of a proposition in Euclid, unless we are taught it by the Lord himself. I therefore dismiss the subject by referring you to Phil. iii. 14, 15.

I must begin my next paragraph with an apology, with entreating your candid construction, and assuring you that nothing but a sense of duty towards the Lord, and friendship for you, would put me upon what (if I had not these motives to plead) might be deemed highly officious and impertinent. I have heard you speak of your living in ———. Your situation in college confines you much from it: and now years and infirmities are growing upon you, it is probable you will not be able to visit it so often as formerly, nor to do what you wish to do when you are there. Will you excuse me asking you how that living is supplied? Perhaps I only give you the opportunity of affording me pleasure by telling me, that you have taken care to provide them with a faithful curate, who has your views of the Gospel, though not mine, and, with a zeal for God and a warm desire of usefulness to souls, is labouring to impress your people with a sense of divine things, to warn them of the evil of sin, and to invite them to seek Jesus and his salvation. I should be ready to take it for granted this is the case, only that I think such a minister would be noticed and talked of in that part of the country, as we hear more or less of the effects of the Gospel when it is preached throughout the kingdom, and nothing of this kind has yet reached my ears from ———. If it should be otherwise, permit me to hint, that, though you are past the ability of labouring much among your people personally, yet if the Lord prolongs your life, you have a probability of being greatly useful in a secondary way, by affording your sanction and appointment to a proper man who would feed and watch over your flock. And I hope the Lord committed that place to your charge in his providence, that the people there might in his time have the word of life preached to them; and if they heard it thankfully and improved it, I am sure it would add much to your comfort. I shall not enlarge, but rather conclude as I began, with entreating you to excuse my freedom. Indeed, I ought not to suspect you will be displeased with me for it, after the proofs you have given me of your candour and kindness. Yet I shall be glad to be assured from yourself, that you take it as I meant it.

I am, dear Sir,  
Your affectionate and obliged servant.

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LETTER XII.

*December 5, 1778.*

MY DEAR SIR,

THE kind and affectionate terms in which you write coming from a person whom I so greatly love and respect, cannot but be

highly pleasing to me. I am glad to find, likewise, by what you say of yourself, that the Lord favours you with patience and resignation to his will, under those infirmities which you find increasing as you advance in years; and that your hope for time and eternity is in Jesus, the Friend of sinners.

But I must confess, that though the former part of your letter gave me great pleasure, the latter part gave me no small pain. It appears, to my grief, that during the intermission of our correspondence, the difference between us in sentiment is considerably increased. You desire me, however, to open my mind to you freely, and the love I bear you constrains me to avail myself of the liberty you allow me; yet I feel a difficulty in the attempt. After the many letters we have exchanged, I hope it is needless to tell you that I am not fond of controversy, that I have no desire to prescribe my judgment in every point of doctrine as a standard to others; yet a regard to the truth, as well as to you, obliges me to offer something upon the present occasion. But I hope the Lord will not permit me to drop a single expression unsuitable to the deference I owe to your character and years.

You state two points as fundamental truths of the Christian religion; the first of which, I apprehend, is so far from deserving the title of a fundamental truth, that it is utterly repugnant to the design and genius of the Gospel, and inconsistent with the tenour of divine revelation both in the Old and New Testament; and, however you may think it supported by a few detached texts, I am persuaded you would never have drawn it yourself from a careful perusal of the Scripture; namely, "That our righteousness is as truly and properly derived into us by a spiritual birth from the second Adam, as our corruption by a natural birth from the first." Our sanctification, indeed, is so, but righteousness and sanctification are by no means synonymous terms in the language of Scripture; otherwise the apostle, when he says, Jesus is appointed to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, would be guilty of a gross tautology. The Scripture declares we are all, by nature, and, till partakers of the faith which is the gift and operation of God, dead. And this in a two-fold sense—dead in the law; for he that believeth not is condemned already, and dead in trespasses and sins. Christ is our life in both these senses. By his atonement he delivers those who believe in him from the curse of the law; by his whole obedience, including all he did and suffered, (for his death was an act of obedience,) he cleanses and justifies them from all guilt and penalty. And as the spring and pattern of their sanctification by the power of his Holy Spirit, he forms them anew, communicates to them and maintains in them a principle of spiritual life, and

teaches them and enables them to love and walk in his footsteps, and to copy his example in their tempers and conduct. But this, their personal obedience, the fruit of that holy principle which he has implanted in them, is too imperfect and defiled to constitute their righteousness; it will not answer the strict demands of that law under which our nature is constituted. So far, indeed, from bearing the examination of that God who is glorious in holiness, they can find innumerable flaws and evils in it themselves. And, therefore, no one who is really enlightened to understand the purity, strictness, and unchangeableness of the law, the holiness, justice, and truth of the God with whom we have to do, can possibly have any abiding peace of conscience, or assurance of salvation, till he is weaned from grounding his acceptance, either in whole or in part, upon what Christ has done in him, and taught to rest it wholly upon what he did for him when he obeyed the law on the behalf of man, and was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Though the scheme of the Quakers, as set forth with some supposed improvements by Mr. Law, is in your view very amiable, to me it appears much otherwise. I cannot think it either honourable to God, or safe for man. I apprehend it was invented to relieve the mind of some who would fain be wise, under the prejudices and vain reasonings which arise against the express and reiterated declarations of God's sovereignty in the great business of salvation with which the Scriptures abound. I am often reminded of Job's question, "Shall a mortal man be more just than God?" Poor mortal worms, who are unable to account for the most obvious appearances around them, are afraid that the Judge of all the earth will not act right, if he should act as he has solemnly assured us he will; and therefore hypotheses are framed, salvos provided, and scriptures are strained to account for his conduct in a way more suited to our limited apprehensions. For I allow, in some respects, and upon a superficial view, Mr. Law's scheme may appear more agreeable to what we call reason and the fitness of things than St. Paul's. But this to me is an argument against it, rather than for it. The Lord tells me in his word, that his thoughts and ways are as far above mine as the heavens are higher than the earth. And if I did not find many things in the Bible proposed rather to my faith than to my reason, I could not receive it as a revelation from God, because it would want the grand characteristic impressions of his majesty, and what the apostle calls the *ἀνεξέρευνητα* and *ἀνεξήχιστα*, the unsearchables and untraceables of his counsels and proceedings. And after all, the proposed relief is only to the imagination; for in defiance of hy-

potheses, these things will remain certain from Scripture, experience, and observation;

First, That a great part of mankind, perhaps the far greatest part of those who have lived hitherto, will be found at the left hand of the Judge in the last day.

Secondly, That a multitude of those who are saved, were, for a course of time as obstinately bent upon sin, and did as obstinately resist the calls of God's Spirit to their hearts, as those who perish.

Thirdly, That the means of grace which the Scripture declares necessary to salvation, Rom. x. 13, 14; have been hitherto confined to a small part of the human race. I know, indeed, in order to evade this, it is supposed, from a misunderstanding of Peter's words, Acts x. 34: that men in all nations may be saved in their several dispensations, without any knowledge of Jesus or his word; and accordingly Mr. — gives us Gentilism, that is idolatry, as one kind of dispensation of the Gospel. Alas! what may not well-meaning men be driven to when they leave the good word of God, the fountain of living waters, to defend the broken, corrupt cisterns of men's inventions! Indeed, I am grieved at these bold assertions; it is but saying that men may be saved without either faith, love, or obedience.

I do not wonder, my dear Sir, that though you are persuaded God will not fail on his part and forsake you first, yet you have sensible fears and apprehensions lest you should forsake him. The knowledge you have of your own weakness, must make your system very uncomfortable, while it leaves your final salvation to depend (as you express it) *entirely upon yourself*. Nay, I must add, that either your heart is better than mine, or at least that you are not equally sensible of its vileness, or your fears would be entirely insupportable; or else, which I rather think is the case, the former part of your letter, wherein you speak so highly of the throne of grace, and confess so plainly that without the grace of Christ you can do nothing, is your experience and the real feeling and working of your heart, while the latter part, wherein you approve the plan which leaves sinners to depend entirely upon themselves, is but an opinion, which has been plausibly obtruded upon you, and which you find at times very unfavourable to your peace. It must, it will be so. The admission of a mixed Gospel, which, indeed, is no Gospel at all, will bring disquiet into the conscience. If you think you are in the same circumstances, as to choice and power, as Adam was, I cannot blame you for fearing lest you should acquit yourself no better than he did. Ah! my dear sir, Jesus came not only that we might have the life which sin had forfeited restored unto us, but that we might have it more

abundantly; the privileges greater, and the tenure more secure; for now our life is not in our own keeping, but is hid with Christ in God. He undertakes to do all for us, in us, and by us, and he claims the praise and honour of the whole, and is determined to save us in such a way as shall stain the pride of all human glory, that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord.

I long to see you disentangled from the scheme you seem to have adopted, because I long to see you happy and comfortable. It is good to have our hope fixed upon a rock, for we know not what storms and floods may come to shake it. I have no doubt but your soul rests upon the right foundation, but you have incautiously admitted wood, hay, and stubble into your edifice, which will not stand the fiery trial of temptation. I would no more venture my soul upon the scheme which you commend, than I would venture my body for a voyage to the East Indies in a London Wherry.

I know you too well to suppose you will be offended with my freedom. However, in a point of such importance, I dare not, in conscience, disguise or suppress my sentiments. May the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, guide us both into the paths of peace and truth.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

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### LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR SIR,

*June 5, 1779.*

THOUGH I love to write to you, I am not willing to take up your time with controversy. We see, or think we see, some points of importance in a different light. And where our sentiments differ, I think I have the advantage of you, or I should, of course, accede to yours. But I am ashamed to insist upon notional differences with a person from whom, as to the spirit and influence of those things wherein we agree, I ought to be glad to learn. The humility, meekness, and spirituality which your letters breathe, sufficiently evince that you are taught of God; and wherein we are otherwise minded, I trust he will, in his due time, reveal to us both what may be for his glory and our comfort to know distinctly. I cannot retract the judgment I passed upon Mr. Law's scheme; but I was then, and still am persuaded, that, notwithstanding your favourable opinion of that author, his scheme is not properly yours. If you fully entered into the spirit of his writings, you would soon be weary of my correspondence. I believe, indeed, your ac-

quaintance with his writings has led you something about, and exposed you to embarrassments which would not have troubled you if, with that humble spirit which the Lord has given you, you had confined your researches more to his holy word, and paid less regard to the dictates and assertions of men; and I believe if we could all be freed from an undue attachment to great names and favourite authors, and apply ourselves more diligently to draw the water of life from the pure fountain of the Scripture, our progress in divine knowledge would be more speedy and more certain.

I am ready to think that much of the difference between us may be in the modes of the expression we use. If you mean no more by what you advance, than that every justified person is also regenerate and sanctified, and that no supposed acknowledgment of the death and atonement of Christ is available without a new birth in the soul and the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit, there remains little to dispute about, for surely I mean no less than this. Yet still it appears to me necessary for our comfort, when we know what is in our hearts, and necessary likewise to give the Redeemer the glory due to his name, that we be sensible that our sanctification is not the cause, but the effect, of our acceptance with God. I conceive that by nature we are all in a state of condemnation; that when we are, by the Holy Spirit, convinced of this, the first saving gift we receive from God is faith, enabling us to put our trust in Jesus for a free pardon, and a gratuitous admission into the family of God's children; that they who receive this precious faith, are thereby, *ipso facto*, interested in all the promises respecting grace and glory. They resign and devote themselves to the Saviour; he receives and accepts them, takes possession of them, and engages to care and provide for them, to mortify the principle of sin in their hearts, to carry on the work he has begun, and to save them to the uttermost. But the precise reason why they are saved, is not because they are changed, (that change, so far as it takes place, is rather the salvation itself,) but simply and solely because he lived and died for them, paid the ransom, and made the atonement on their behalf. This is their plea and hope when they first come to him, John iii. 14, 15, when they have finished their course upon earth, 2 Tim. i. 12. and when they appear in judgment, Rom. viii. 34.

If you mean by a rigid Calvinist, one who is fierce, dogmatical, and censorious, and ready to deal out anathemas against all who differ from him, I hope I am no more such an one than I am a rigid Papist. But as to the doctrines which are now stigmatized by the name of Calvinism, I cannot well avoid the epithet

rigid, while I believe them : for there seems to be no medium between holding them and not holding them ; between ascribing salvation to the will of man, or the power of God ; between grace and works, Rom. xi. 6. ; between being found in the righteousness of Christ, or in my own, Phil. iii. 9. Did the harsh consequences often charged upon the doctrine called Calvinistic really belong to it, I should have much to answer for if I had invented it myself, or taken it upon trust from Calvin ; but as I find it in the Scripture, I cheerfully embrace it, and leave it to the Lord to vindicate his own truth and his own ways, from all the imputations which have been cast upon them.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged.

#### LETTER XIV.

*September 1, 1779.*

DEAR SIR,

METHINKS my late publication comes in good time to terminate our friendly debate. As you approve of the Hymns, which, taken altogether, contain a full declaration of my religious sentiments, it should seem we are nearly of a mind. If we agree in rhyme, our apparent difference in prose must, I think, be merely verbal, and cannot be very important. And as to Mr. Law, if you can read his books to your edification and comfort, (which I own with respect to some important points in his scheme, I cannot,) why should I wish to tear them from you? I have formerly been a great admirer of Mr. Law myself, and still think that he is a first rate genius, and that there are many striking passages in his writings deserving attention and admiration. But I feel myself a transgressor, a sinner ; I feel the need of an atonement of something to be done for me, as well as in me. If I was this moment filled by the mighty power of God with the Spirit of sanctification in a higher degree than Mr. Law ever conceived ; if I was this moment as perfectly holy as the angels before the throne, still I should want security with respect to what is past. Hitherto I have been a sinner, a transgressor of that holy law which says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Therefore I need an atonement in the proper sense of the word ; some consideration of sufficient importance to satisfy me that the holy and just Governor of the world can, consistently with the perfections of his nature, the honour of his truth, and the righteous tenour of his moral government, pardon and receive such a sinner as I am ; and without some persuasion of this sort, I be-

lieve the supposition I have made to be utterly impossible, and the least degree of true holiness utterly unattainable. The essence of that holiness I thirst after, I conceive to be love and devotedness to God: but how can I love him till I have a hope that his anger is turned away from me, or at least till I can see a solid foundation for that hope? Here Mr. Law's scheme fails me, but the Gospel gives me relief. When I think of the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ in my nature, as a public person, and in behalf of sinners, then I see the law, which I could not obey, completely fulfilled by him, and the penalty which I had incurred, sustained by him. I see him in proportion to the degree of faith in him, bearing *my sins* in his own body upon the tree; I see God well pleased in him, and for his sake freely justifying the ungodly. This sight saves me from guilt and fear, removes the obstacles which stood in my way, emboldens my access to the throne of grace, for the influences of his holy Spirit to subdue my sins, and to make me conformable to my Saviour. But my hope is built, not upon what I feel in myself, but upon what he felt for me; not upon what I can ever do for him, but upon what has been done by him upon my account. It appears to me becoming the wisdom of God to take such a method of showing his mercy to sinners as should convince the world, the universe, angels, and men, that his inflexible displeasure against sin, and his regard to the demands of his truth and holiness, must at the same time be equally displayed. This was effected by bruising his own Son, filling him with agonies, and delivering him up to death and the curse of the law, when he appeared as a surety for sinners.

It appears to me, therefore, that though the blessings of justification and sanctification are coincident, and cannot be separated in the same subject, a believing sinner, yet they are in themselves as distinct and different as any two things can well be. The one, like life itself, is instantaneous and perfect at once; and takes place the moment the soul is born of God; the other, like the effects of life, growth, and strength, is imperfect and gradual. The child born to-day, though weak, and very different from what it will be when its faculties open and its stature increases, is as truly, and as much alive as ever it will be; and if an heir to an estate or a kingdom, has the same right now as it will have when it becomes of age, because this right is derived not from its abilities or stature, but from its birth and parents. The weakest believer is born of God, and an heir of glory; the strongest and most advanced can be no more.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your most obedient, &c.



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A  
**Plan**  
OF  
ACADEMICAL PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.  
IN A  
**LETTER TO A FRIEND.**

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Quin et piorum mentibus mysteria,  
Contempra pravis, impie sapientibus  
Occulta, Dominus luce proferet sua,  
Et sacrosancti fœderis scientiam  
Docebit. BUCH. Ps. xxv.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable.  
JAMES, iii. 17.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1784.]

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## A PLAN, &c.

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DEAR SIR,

I AM not the son of a prophet, nor was I bred up among the prophets. I am quite a stranger to what passes within the walls of colleges and academies. I was as one born out of due time, and led, under the secret guidance of the Lord, by very unusual steps, to preach the faith which I once laboured to destroy. Since you know all this, how could you think of applying to me for the plan of an academical institution? Yet I confess the design you mentioned to me, in which some of your friends have thoughts of engaging, is so important in my view, that I am willing to come as near to your wishes as I can. I must not pretend to dictate a plan for the business which is now in contemplation. But if you will allow me to indulge in a sort of reverie, and suppose myself a person of some consequence in Utopia, where I could have the modelling of every thing to my own mind; and that I was about to form an academy there, for the sole purpose of educating young men for the ministry of the Gospel—in this way, I am willing to offer you my thoughts upon the subject with great simplicity and freedom. And, if any of the regulations of my imaginary academy should be judged applicable to your design, you and your friends will be heartily welcome to them.

I should then *suppositis supponendis*, in the first place, lay down two or three important maxims, which I would hope never to lose sight of in the conduct of the affair; expecting that if I should begin without them I must stumble at the very threshold; and that whenever I should neglect them afterwards, all my care, and labour, and expense, would be from that time thrown away.

My first maxim is, That none but He who made the world, can make a minister of the Gospel. If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator; but a true minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.

I adopt, as a second maxim, That the holy Scriptures are, both comprehensively and exclusively, the grand treasury of all that knowledge which is requisite and sufficient to make the minister, the man of God, thoroughly furnished for every branch of his

office. If, indeed, no other studies were of subordinate importance, in order to a right understanding of the Scriptures, and especially to those who are not only to know for themselves, but are appointed to teach others also; then academical instruction would be needless, and I might supply my young men with every thing at once, by putting the Bible into their hands, and directing them to read it continually with attention and prayer. But my meaning is, that though there is such concatenation in knowledge, that every branch of science may, by a judicious application, be rendered subservient to a minister's great design; yet no attainments in philology, philosophy, or in any or all the particulars which constitute the aggregate of what we call *learning*, can, in the least, contribute to form a minister of the Gospel, any further than he is taught of God to refer them to, and to regulate them by, the Scripture as a standard. On the contrary, the more a man is furnished with this kind of apparatus, unless the leading truths of Scripture reign and flourish in his heart, he will be but the more qualified to perplex himself, and to mislead his hearers.

My third maxim is an inference from the two former. That the true Gospel minister who possesses these secondary advantages, though he may know the same things, and acquire his knowledge by the like methods as other scholars do, yet he must know and possess them in a manner peculiar to himself. His criticisms, if he be a critic, will discover something which the greatest skill in grammatical niceties cannot of itself reach. If he be an orator, he will not speak in the artificial self-applauding language of man's wisdom, but in simplicity, and with authority, like one who feels the ground he stands upon, and knows to whom he belongs, and whom he serves. If he mentions a passage of history, it will not be to show his reading, but to illustrate or prove his point; and it will be evident, from his manner of speaking, that though he may have taken the facts from Tacitus or Robertson, his knowledge of the springs of human action, and of the superintendency of a Divine Providence, is derived from the word of God. And so of other instances.

In a word, if a young man was to consult me how he might be wise and learned in the usual sense of the words, I might advise him to repair to Oxford or Cambridge, or to twenty other places which I could name. But if I thought him really desirous of becoming wise to win souls, I would invite him to my New College in Utopia.

From these general observations, I proceed more directly to my subject. You are then to suppose that I have taken my determination and counted the cost, and am now sitting down to contrive my plan. As a little attention to the method may not

be amiss, I shall endeavour to range my thoughts under four principal heads, concerning,

1. The Place.
2. The Tutor.
3. The choice of Pupils.
4. The Course of Education.

I. And first, (as preachers sometimes say,) of the first. If the metropolis of Utopia should be any thing like ours, there are obvious reasons to forbid my fixing upon a spot very near it. I think, not nearer than a moderate day's journey. Nor would I wish it much further distant. Occasional visits to a great city where there are many considerable ministers and Christians, should not be rendered impracticable; as they might furnish my young men with opportunities of forming connexions, and making observations, that might contribute to their usefulness in future life. But *procul ab urbe* will be my maxim. I should not only fear lest they should be contaminated by the vices which too generally prevail where men live in a throng: if they escaped these, I should still have apprehensions, lest the notice that might be taken of them, and the respect shown them by well-meaning friends, should imperceptibly seduce them into a spirit of self-importance, give them a turn for dress and company, and spoil that simplicity and dependence, without which I could have little hope of their success. I would wish it may be their grand aim to please the Lord, and under him, and for his sake, to please their tutor. They have, as yet, no business with other people. Their tutor must be to them, *instar omnium*. Him they must love, reverence, and obey, and accurately watch his looks and every intimation of his will. But to secure this point, or even to have a reasonable prospect of attaining it, methinks it seems necessary to say, *Procul, procul, ab urbe, juvenes!* But the difference between a rural and a town situation is so striking at first view, that I suppose it quite needless to say more upon this head. I therefore proceed,

II. To the choice of my Tutor. Whoever he may be, when I have found him, and fixed him, I will take the liberty to tell him, that he is called to the most honourable and important office that man, in the present state of things, is capable of. The skilful and faithful tutor is not only useful to his pupils, considered as individuals, but he is remotely the instrument of all the blessings and benefits which the Lord is pleased to communicate by their ministry, in the course of their stated and occasional labours to the end of life. On the other hand, the errors and prejudices of an incompetent tutor, adopted and perpetuated by his disciples, may produce a long progression of evil consequences, which may continue to operate and multiply when he and they are dead and for-

gotten. For if the streams which are to spread far and wide throughout a land are poisoned in the very source, who can foresee how far the mischief may be diffused? Unless, therefore, I can procure a proper tutor, I must give up my design. It is better the youth should remain untaught, than that they should be taught to do wrong.

And I seem not easily satisfied on this head. My idea of the person to whom I could cheerfully intrust the care of my academy, is not of an ordinary size. He seems to be one,

———*Qualem nequeo monstrare, ac sentio tantum*———

However, since we are upon Utopian ground, where we may imagine as largely as we please, I will attempt to delineate him. And were I to recommend a tutor to your friends, it should be the man who I thought came the nearest to the character I am about to describe.

For his first essential, indispensable qualification, I require a mind deeply penetrated with a sense of the grace, glory, and efficacy of the Gospel. However learned and able in other respects, he shall not have a single pupil from me, unless I have reason to believe that his heart is attached to the person of the Redeemer as God-man; that, as a sinner, his whole dependence is upon the Redeemer's work of love, his obedience unto death, his intercession and mediatorial fulness. His sentiments must be clear and explicit respecting the depravity of human nature, and the necessity and reality of the agency of the Holy Spirit, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and seal those who, under his influence, are led to Jesus for salvation. With respect to the different schemes and systems of divinity which obtain amongst those who are united in the acknowledgment of the above fundamental truths, I should look for my tutor amongst those who are called Calvinists; but he must not be of a curious metaphysical disputatious turn, a mere system-monger or party zealot. I seek for one who, having been himself taught the deep things of God by the Holy Spirit, in a gradual experimental manner; while he is charmed with the beautiful harmony and coincidence of all the doctrines of grace, is at the same time aware of the mysterious depths of the divine counsels, and the impossibility of their being fully comprehended by our feeble understandings. Such a man will be patient and temperate in explaining the peculiarities of the Gospel to his pupils, and will wisely adapt himself to their several states, attainments, and capacities. After the example of the Great Teacher, he will consider what they can bear, and aim to lead them forward step by step, in such a manner, that the sentiments

He instils into them may be their own, and not taken up merely upon the authority of his *ipse dixit*. He will propose the Scripture to them as *a consistent whole*; and guard them against the extremes into which controversial writers have forced themselves and each other, in support of a favourite hypothesis, so as, under a pretence of honouring some parts of the word of God, to overlook, if not to contradict, what is taught with equal clearness in other parts.

I wish my pupils to be well versed in useful learning, and therefore my tutor must be a learned man. He must not only be able to teach them whatever is needful for them to learn, but should be possessed of such a fund, as that the most forward and most promising among them may feel he has a decided superiority over them in every branch of their studies. Besides an accurate skill in the school classics, he should be well acquainted with books at large, and possessed of a general knowledge of the state of literature and religion, and the memorable events of history in the successive ages of mankind. Particularly, he should be well versed in ecclesiastical learning: for though it be true, that the bulk of it is little worth knowing, for its own sake, yet a man of genius and wisdom will draw from the whole mass a variety of observations suited to assist young minds in forming a right judgment of human nature, of true religion, of its counterfeits, and of the abuses to which the name of religion is capable of being perverted. And he will likewise be able to select for their use, such authors and subjects as deserve their notice, from the surrounding rubbish in which they are almost buried.

My tutor should likewise be competently acquainted with the lighter accomplishments, which are usually understood by the term *Belles Lettres*; and a proper judge of them with respect both to their intrinsic and relative value. Their intrinsic value (to creatures who are posting to eternity) is not great; and a wise man, if he has not been tinctured with them in early life, will seldom think it worth his while to attend much to them afterwards. Yet in such an age as ours, it is some disadvantage to a man in public life, if he is quite a stranger to them. To a tutor they are in a manner necessary. It is further desirable that he should have a lively imagination, under the direction of a sound judgment, and a correct and cultivated taste. Otherwise, how can he assist and form the taste and judgment of his pupils, or direct or criticise their compositions?

Natural philosophy is not only a noble science, but one which offers the most interesting and profitable relaxations from the weight of severer studies. If the tutor be not possessed of this, he will lose a thousand opportunities of pointing out to his pupils the

signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, which the wonder-working God has impressed upon every part of the visible creation. But, at the same time, he should know where to stop, and what bounds to set to their inquiries. It is not necessary that either he or they should be numbered amongst the first astronomers or virtuosi of the age. A life devoted to the service of God and souls, will not afford leisure for this diminutive pre-eminence. A general knowledge will suffice, even in the tutor. And while he lectures upon these subjects, he will caution them against spending too much time and thought upon those branches of philosophy which have but a very remote tendency to qualify them for preaching the Gospel. They are sent into the world, and into the academy, not to collect shells, and fossils, and butterflies, or to surprise each other with feats of electricity, but to win souls for Christ.

Perhaps I have said enough of my tutor's knowledge; and may now consider him with regard to his spirit, his methods of communicating what he knows to his pupils, and his manner of living with them, as a father with his children.

He must be *διδασκτικος*, apt to teach. A man may know much, yet not have a facility of imparting his ideas. It is a talent and a gift of God, and therefore will always be found, in some good degree, in the person who is called of God to the tutor's office.

He will consider himself as a teacher, not only in the lecture-room, but in all places, and at all times, whether sitting in the house, or walking by the way, if any of his pupils are with him. And he will love to have them always about him, so far as their studies and his own necessary avocations will admit.

Two things he will aim to secure from them—reverence and affection. Without maintaining a steady authority, he can do nothing; and unless they love him, every thing will go on heavily. But if the pupils are properly chosen, such a man as I have described will be both loved and feared. His spiritual and exemplary deportment, his wisdom and abilities, will command their respect. His condescension and gentleness, his tenderness for their personal concerns, his assiduity in promoting their comfort, and doing them every friendly office in his power, will engage their love. These happy effects will be further promoted by their frequent mutual intercourse in prayer, by his expository lectures, and by his public ministry, if he be a preacher. Having his eye unto the Lord, and his heart in his work, a blessing from on high shall descend upon him and upon his house.

As human nature is the same in all places, it is probable that the Christians in Utopia may be divided among themselves with

respect to rituals and modes of worship, in some such manner as we see and feel amongst us. Now here, as in every thing else, I would have my tutor a sort of phoenix, a man of a generous, enlarged spirit; a real friend of that liberty wherewith Jesus has made his people free from the shackles and impositions of men; one who uniformly judges and acts upon that grand principle of the New Testament, which is likewise a plain and obvious maxim of common sense; I mean, that the Lord of all, the Head of the church, is the alone Lord and Judge of conscience. I suppose my tutor has already taken his side; and he is either in the establishment, (if there be one in Utopia,) or, of course, a dissenter from it. And really, as to my scheme, I am indifferent which side he has taken; we shall not have a minute's debate about it, provided he acts consistently with the principles which I have assigned him. But as I myself, living in England, am of the established church, that you may not suspect me of partiality, I will suppose, and am ready to take it for granted, that he will be found to be an Utopian Dissenter.

On this supposition my imagination takes a flight, hastens into the midst of things, and anticipates as present what is yet future. Methinks I see the tutor indulging his scholars (as at proper seasons he often will) with an hour of free conversation; and from some questions proposed to him concerning the comparative excellence or authority of different forms of church-government, taking occasion to open his mind to them, something in the following manner:—

“My dear children, you may have observed, that when, in the course of our lectures, I have been led to touch upon this subject, it has not been my custom to speak in a dogmatical style. I have sometimes intimated to you, that though every part of the Levitical worship was of positive divine institution, yet, when the people rested and trusted in their external forms, the Lord speaks as abhorring his own appointments. I have told you, upon the apostle's authority, that, ‘the kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks, in names and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amidst the many divisions and subdivisions which obtain in the visible church, there are, in reality, but two sorts of people, the children of God, and the children of the world. The former sort, though partakers in one life and in one hope, yet living in successive ages, in various countries, under very different modes of government, education, and customs, it seems morally impossible that they should all agree, as by instinct, in one common mode of social worship. It is indeed said, that there is a plan prescribed in the New Testament, to which all ought to conform as nearly as possible. All

parties say this in favour of their own plans; and men, eminent for wisdom and holiness, are to be found among the advocates for each. But is it not strange, that if the Lord has appointed such a standard, the wisest and best of his people should differ so widely in their views of it, and deviate so far from each other when they attempt to reduce it to practice? Let others dispute; but as for you, my children, and me, let us rather adore the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. He who knew the heart of man, the almost invincible power of local prejudices, and what innumerable circumstances in different periods and places would render it impracticable for his people to tread exactly in the same line, has provided accordingly. The rules and lights he has afforded us, respecting the outward administration of his church, are recorded with such a latitude, that his true worshippers may conscientiously hope they are acceptable to him, though the plans which they believe to be consistent with his revealed will are far from corresponding with each other. It is sufficient that the apostolical canons, 'Let all things be done decently and in order,' 'to edification and in charity,' are universally binding; and were these on all sides attended to, smaller differences would be very supportable.

"I have often pointed out to you the wonderful analogy which the Lord has established, in many instances, between his works in the outward creation, and in his kingdom of grace. Perhaps the variety observable in the former may be one instance of this kind. When you see every vegetable arrayed in green, exactly of the same shade, or all tulips variegated in the same manner, as if painted from one common pattern, then, and not before, expect to find true believers agreed in their views and practice respecting the modes of religion.

"Study, therefore, the Scriptures, my children, with humble prayer that the Lord may give you such views of these concerns as may fit you for the stations and services to which his providence may lead you. See with your own eyes, and judge for yourselves. This is your right. One is your Master, even Christ, and you need not, you ought not, to call any man master upon earth. But be content with this. Do not arrogate to yourselves the power of judging for others. Be willing that they should see with their own eyes likewise. The Papists, upon the ground of the assumed infallibility of their church, are, at least, consistent with themselves in condemning all who differ from them. Protestants confess themselves fallible, yet speak the same peremptory language.

"As to myself, if I had thought it preferable, upon the whole, to be a minister in our established church, I might probably have

been one; but, I trust, I am where the Lord would have me be, and I am satisfied. My desire for you is to see you able ministers of the New Testament. As to the part of the vineyard in which you are to labour, wait simply upon the Lord, and he, in his good time, will point it out to you. If Scripture and conscience lead you to prefer the dissenting line, I shall say, it is well, provided you embrace it with a liberal spirit, and have a better warrant for your choice than merely the example of your tutor. Should you determine otherwise, I shall still say, it is well, provided I see you disinterested, humble, and faithful. Your being educated under my roof is a circumstance not likely to facilitate your admission into the establishment; but if the Lord, in his providence, should open to any of you a door on that side, and incline you to enter, I shall not dissuade you from it, as though I thought it sinful. I shall only wish you to attend to that advice which cannot mislead you—‘Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path.’”

Thus far my tutor.—Or, since I am in a supposing humour, if you will give me leave to make one supposition more, that it is possible there may be Methodists and Itinerants in Utopia, as we have in England, he would then perhaps continue his discourse a little longer, as follows:—

“Though the pastoral care of a single congregation is the service which the Lord has allotted me, and I have not seen it my duty to engage in any thing which might lead me long or far from the people to whom I am related, I am no enemy to itinerant preaching. My Lord and Saviour himself, his apostles and first servants, were all itinerants; and I believe that houses and ships, hills and plains, the side of a river or the sea-shore, are all fit places for preaching the Gospel, and sufficiently authorized as such by the highest precedents. I cannot therefore censure, much less condemn, a practice which the Scripture warrants, and to which, I doubt not, the Lord has given abundant testimony in our own times, by making the word thus dispensed effectual to the conversion and consolation of many souls. I believe, indeed, that some persons, not duly acquainted with their own hearts, nor with what is requisite to constitute a preacher, have too hastily supposed themselves called to preach the Gospel, when the event has proved that the Lord had neither called them to his service, nor furnished them for it. And I think, if it should generally be allowed that young men are proper judges in their own cause, and have a right to commence preaching when, or where, or how they please, without the advice or approbation of ministers more experienced than themselves, many inconveniences may and must

follow. I could wish every young man to be so impressed with the force of the apostle's question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' that he should rather need invitation and encouragement to preach, than be disposed to run hastily into the work, as the horse rusheth into the battle. But I must not expect every thing to be managed according to my wish. I have mourned over the miscarriages of some itinerant preachers; but I have been much comforted by the good conduct and success of others. It is neither my business nor my intention to persuade you to this course; but if, when you are properly instructed and qualified for the ministry, I should see any of you disposed to go forth in the itinerant way; should I be satisfied of your principles and motives, and have reason to hope your zeal was tempered with humility; I know not that I durst refuse my consent. For, as I have often told you, the honour of my Lord and Saviour, and the welfare of precious souls, are far dearer to me than the detached interest of any party; and if Christ be faithfully and successfully preached, in whatever way, and by whatever instruments, he is pleased to work, I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

I think what I have said of the tutor, and what he has just now said for himself, may suffice to give you an idea of the person I would choose, and that it is now time to consider,

III. The Choice of Pupils. I would have them all resident with the tutor, and therefore their number at one time can be but small: especially as I should wish him to undertake every branch of their education. He might have an assistant to teach the rudiments of the languages, a service that would otherwise take much of the time which he could better employ; but he must do all the rest himself. I suppose, therefore, that ten, or at the most twelve, pupils will be a sufficient number to be under his care at once. The man I have described would not be mercenary, but the labourer is worthy of his reward. As I shall find him work enough to take up his whole time, his pay ought to be competent and liberal; and, as I have supposed myself rich enough to execute my plan in what manner I please, I hope I shall not starve my tutor, nor put his economical talents on the stretch to contrive how to squeeze and save a pittance out of the sum allotted for their board. I would fix the boarding upon equitable and moderate terms, distinct from his salary, which should be handsome, and always the same, whether he had one pupil with him, or ten or twelve. It would be my part to keep the number up, but if I neglected it, he should be no loser; nor ought he to be dependent upon my caprice or negligence; but he should stand upon an easy, settled footing, so as to be free, not only from want, but

from anxious care, that he might be able to attend his business without distraction.

And now my house is ready, where shall I find young men to fill it? I must look around me, and request my friends to look out for me. When I have found two I will send them, and the rest as they offer. Perhaps it would be one of the chief difficulties attending my scheme, to collect ten or twelve youths worthy of such a tutor.

They must be serious. I mean they must have an awakened experimental sense of the truth and goodness of the Gospel. This is a point not easily ascertained, especially in young persons. There is often a something that resembles it, which, upon trial, does not prove satisfactory. However, my part will be to look to the Lord for guidance, and then judge as well as I can. But I hope no persuasion or recommendation, no desire of pleasing or obliging a friend, would prevail on me to admit one who I did not verily believe was a subject of the grace of God. Who would undertake to teach a parrot algebra? Yet this would be as practicable as to make those able and faithful preachers, whom the Lord has not first made Christian.

They must likewise have capacity. It is not necessary that their abilities should be of the first-rate, (perhaps but few of such are called,) but some tolerable measure of natural abilities, capable of being opened and improved by education, seems almost necessary in the person who aims to be a minister of the Gospel. At least it will be necessary upon my plan; for, as my tutor cannot take many, I must give the preference to such as may both do him credit by their proficiency under his care, and be qualified to profit others when they leave him.

*Ex quovis ligno Mercurius non fit.*

If the heart be changed and sanctified by grace, a person of the weakest natural understanding will acquire under divine teaching, all that is necessary to enable him to fill up his station in private life with propriety, to overcome the world, and to make his own calling and election sure. But a preacher must have gifts as well as grace, to be able to divide the word of truth as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. And, therefore, though the Lord was once pleased by a dumb ass to rebuke the foolishness of a prophet, I am not forward to acknowledge those as ambassadors sent by him, (however well-meaning they may be,) who seem either to have no message to deliver, or no ability to deliver it.

I would likewise be satisfied as much as possible, concerning the views and motives which make them desirous of devoting themselves to the ministry. Some desires of this kind are very fre-

quently found in young converts. When a sense of eternal things is new and lively upon their minds, and they look round upon a world lying in wickedness, they are much affected. The obligations they feel to the Redeemer, a grief that he should be so little known, so little loved, and a compassion for their fellow-sinners, whom they see liable to perish for lack of knowledge, make them often long to be employed, and sometimes constrain them to run before they are sent. But if they are not really designed by the Lord for this service, either their desires towards it gradually subside, and they yield themselves to his appointment in other paths of life; or if they unadvisably venture upon it, they are seldom either comfortable or useful. They soon feel themselves unequal to the work; or, if self-conceit prevents them from feeling it, their hearers are very sensible of it. They often mistake errors for truth; they retail scraps and shreds of sentiments which they pick up from others, and for want of judgment misapply them. Thus hypocrites are encouraged, and those whom the Lord would have comforted, are made sad. They think that preaching with power consists in vociferation and distorted attitudes; and that to utter every thing that comes upon their minds, without end or side, (as we say,) without any regard to text, context, occasion, or connexion, is to preach extempore. Too often Satan gains open advantage over them. They are puffed up with pride, taken in snares, and perhaps fall into such woful miscarriages as at length ruin their characters, and stop their mouths. It is, therefore of great importance to be workers together with the Lord in this business; to choose those whom he chooses, to bring forward those whom he is preparing, and, if possible, none but these. We cannot indeed know the heart, but we may be wary and circumspect in judging by such lights as we can procure; and we ought to be so. Perhaps, after all, we may be mistaken in some instances; but if we have done our best, we have done well, and shall not be blameable for such consequences as we could not possibly foresee or prevent. If a candidate for the academy appears to be of a self-diffident and humble spirit, to have some acquaintance with his own heart, a tolerable capacity, a turn for application, and an unblameable character as to his personal conduct, I shall be disposed to admit him. But I would leave the final decision of his fitness to the tutor; for which purpose it may be proper that he should be under the tutor's eye, for a limited time, as a probationer.

IV. The next point I am to consider is, the course of studies they should pursue; though I am rather inclined to give this up, absolutely and without reserve, to the tutor, who, if he answers

my description, must be the most proper person to institute a plan for himself, and would have no need of my assistance. But if he has humility and his good opinion of me should lead him to desire my advice, he shall have it. I do not mean as to little circumstances, but I would submit to him, in a general and miscellaneous way, such hints as may occur to me upon the subject. And I submit them to you beforehand.

A few things may be previously noticed, which, though they do not properly belong to their academical studies, are well worthy of attention.

A minister is a soldier of Jesus Christ, and, as such, is to expect and endure hardship. It is well to have this in our eye in the education of young men. They are not called to be gentlemen, but soldiers; not to live delicately, but to prepare for hardship. They should therefore be advised and accustomed to prefer a plain frugal manner of life, and to avoid multiplying those wants which luxury and folly would prompt us to multiply almost *ad infinitum*. A propensity to indulgence either in the quantity or quality of food, is a meanness unworthy a man, still more unsuitable to the character of a Christian, and scandalous in a minister. I am no advocate for a monkish austerity, or a scrupulous, superstitious, self-denial, which will almost starve the body to feed the pride of the heart. It is, however, very desirable to possess, in early life, a habit of temperance, a mastery over appetite, and a resolute guard against every thing that has a tendency to blunt the activity of the spirits. And youth is the proper seasons for gaining this mastery, which if the golden opportunity be then lost, is seldom thoroughly acquired afterwards.

A propriety in dress should also be consulted. Neatness is commendable; but a student in divinity should keep at a distance from the air and appearance of a fop. A finical disposition in this article not only occasions a waste of time and expense, but is a token of a trifling turn of mind, and exposes the fine, self-admiring youth, to the contempt or pity of the wise and good.

Further, a habit of rising early should be resolutely formed. It redeems much time, and chiefly of those hours which are most favourable to study or devotion. It likewise cuts off the temptation to sitting up late, a hurtful and preposterous custom, which many students unwarily give into, and which they cannot so easily break, when the bad effects of it upon their health convince them too late of their imprudence.

Let them be guarded against the snares attending a large acquaintance, and unnecessary visiting. The tutor will doubtless, maintain authority and good discipline in his house, and not suf-

fer any of his pupils to be absent from family-worship, nor abroad after a fixed hour, without his express permission, which should not be given but for solid and just reasons. And he cannot be too careful, both by advice and vigilance, to prevent them from forming any female connexions while under his roof, however honourable the views, or deserving the person may be. Love and courtship are by no means favourable to study, nor indeed to devotion, at a time when their present engagements, and the uncertainty of their prospects in future life, render a settlement by marriage improper, if not impracticable.

Much study is weariness to the flesh; and the body and the mind are so nearly connected, that what affects the one will have an influence upon the other. Relaxation and exercise are therefore necessary at proper seasons, for those who wish to preserve cheerfulness and strength for service, and not to become old and disabled, through lowness of spirits, infirmities, and pains, before old age actually overtakes them. Riding is a manly, unexceptionable exercise, where it can be conveniently practised. But walking is, I suppose, equally healthful, and requires neither expense nor preparation. That the students may have an object in view when they go from home, the tutor will probably point out to them some of the Lord's poor, who live at convenient distances, whom they may visit, and comfort with their sympathy, advice, and prayers, as well as administer to the relief of their necessities, according to their ability. Thus, while they are consulting their own health, they may at the same time imitate Him, "who went about doing good." And in such visits they may meet with many hints from poor believers, concerning the Lord's wisdom and faithfulness in his dealings with them, and of the power of true religion, to confirm what they read upon these subjects, and probably some hints which their books will not supply them with. Further, if, when they are abroad together, they will attempt such conversation as warmed the hearts of the disciples when walking to Emmaus; and if, when alone, they adopt the pattern of Isaac, who went out into the field to meditate; then all the time they can thus employ may be set down to the account of their studies, for few of their hours can be more profitably improved.

But what, and how, are they to study? The answer to this question depends upon another, What is the object of their studies? It is to make them not merely scholars, but ministers thoroughly furnished for their office. The particulars I aim at in placing them with my tutor, are such as follow:

1. An orderly, connected, and comprehensive knowledge of the common places and topics of divinity, considered as a whole;

a system of truth, of which the holy Scripture is the sole fountain, treasury, and standard.

2. A competent acquaintance with sacred literature; by which I mean such writings, ancient and modern, as are helpful to explain or elucidate difficulties in Scripture arising from phraseology, from allusion to customs and events not generally known, and from similar causes, and which, therefore, cannot be well understood without such assistance.

3. Such a general knowledge of philosophy, history, and other branches of polite literature, as may increase the stock of their ideas, afford them just conceptions of the state of things around them, furnish them with a fund for variety, enlargement, and illustration; that they may be able to enliven and diversify their discourses, which, without such a fund, will be soon apt to run in a beaten track, and to contain little more than a repetition of the same leading thoughts without originality or spirit.

4. An ability to methodize, combine, distinguish, and distribute the ideas thus collected by study, so as readily to know what is properly adapted to the several subjects to be treated of, and to the several parts of the same subject. When the pupils are thus far accomplished, then I shall hope,

5. That they will in good time be able to preach extempore. I do not mean without forethought or plan, but without a book, and without the excessive labour of committing their discourses to memory. This ability of speaking to an auditory in a pertinent and collected manner, with freedom and decorum, with fidelity and tenderness, looking at them instead of looking at a paper, gives a preacher a considerable advantage, and has a peculiar tendency to command and engage the attention. It likewise saves much time, which might be usefully employed in visiting his people. It is undoubtedly a gift of God, but like many other gifts, to be sought not only by prayer, but in the use of means. The first essays will ordinarily be weak and imperfect; but the facility increases, till at length a habit is formed by diligence and perseverance. I should not think my academy complete, unless my tutor was attentive to form his pupils to the character of public speakers.

General rules admit of exceptions. I have myself known persons, who, with plain sense, true humility, and a spirit devoted to the Lord and dependent upon him, have, with little or no assistance from men, proved solid, exemplary, and useful ministers. Such instances convince me that, however expedient learning may be, it is not indispensably necessary for a minister, especially for one who is to labour in a retired situation, and amongst plain, unlettered hearers. I would not, therefore, preclude my tutor

from all opportunity of being useful to persons of this description, who would be glad of such helps from him as they might receive in their mother-tongue, when the time of life, or particular circumstances, might render the study of languages and science inconvenient. And in general, as the capacities, dispositions, and prospects of a number of pupils would, of course, be different ; I should leave it to his discretion to conduct them to the same grand ends of service, by such difference of method as he should judge most suitable to each ; so as not to discourage or overburden the truly deserving, nor to permit (if it can be prevented) the more studious and successful, to set too high a value upon their superior accomplishments. For, after all, it must be owned, and ought to be remembered, that grace and divine wisdom are of unspeakably greater importance than scholastic attainments without them. We are sure, that though a man had the knowledge of all mysteries, the gift of tongues and miracles, and the powers of an angel, if he has not likewise humility, spirituality, and love, he is in the sight of God but as sounding brass or a noisy cymbal. He may answer the purpose of a church bell, to call a congregation together, but has little prospect of doing them good when they are assembled. But to return to my *professed* students : and,

I. As to the study of Theology. How far it may be expedient to adopt some system or body of divinity as a text or ground whereon to proceed, I am not quite determined ; and which of these learned summaries is the best, I shall not attempt to decide till I have read them all. My tutor will have more of this knowledge ; I shall therefore refer the choice, if it be necessary to choose one, to him. Calvin, Turretin, Witsius, and Ridgeley, are those with which I have formerly been most acquainted. But, indeed, of these, at present, I can remember little more than that I have read them, or the greatest part of them. I recollect just enough to say, that though I approve and admire them all, I have at the same time my particular objections to them all, as to this use of them. The Bible is my body of divinity ; and were I a tutor myself, I believe I should prefer the Epistles of St. Paul, as a summary, to any human systems I have seen, especially his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, the Hebrews, and Timothy. There are few uninspired writings, however excellent in the main, but bear some marks of the infirmities, attachments, and prepossessions, which, in a greater or less degree, are inseparable from the present state of human nature. I would have my pupils draw their knowledge as immediately from the fountain head as possible. I care not how extensive and various their reading of good authors may be under their tutor's eye ; the more so the better. He

will improve the differences they will find among learned and spiritual men, into an argument to engage them to study the Scripture more closely, and to bring every debated sentiment to be tried, and finally determined, by that unerring standard. He will teach them to collect the detached portions of truths wherever they meet with them; to borrow from all, but to give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of none. For I know no author who is worthy the honour of being followed absolutely and without reserve.

I am told (for I know nothing of academies but from hearsay) that it is customary for pupils to write after the tutor, who reads his lecture. If I should adopt this custom, I would not confine myself to it. Such written lectures, if well executed, must be good patterns to form the students to closeness in method and style. But I should likewise wish the tutor to give them unpremeditated lectures. Great masters of music (it is said) frequently feel an impetus in extempore playing, which enables them to execute off hand such strains as they wish to repeat, but cannot; their taste assuring them that they are superior in kind to what they can ordinarily attain when they study and compose by rule. Thus a tutor who thoroughly understands his subject, and speaks from the fulness of his heart, will now and then, at least, feel a happy moment, when he will seem to possess new powers. His thoughts and expressions at such a time will have a peculiar precision and force, and will possibly illuminate and affect his hearers more than his regular and written lectures. When he has done speaking, let the pupils retire and commit to writing what they can recollect of such discourses, keeping to his method, but using their own expressions. These exercises would engage their attention, employ their invention, and ingenuity, accustom them to consider the subjects in different lights, and contribute to make the knowledge they derive from him more their own, than by being always confined to transcribe, line by line, what was read to them.

I would not have the pupils put upon the needless and hurtful attempt of proving first principles. May not a man read lectures upon optics without previously proving the existence of the sun? My tutor will not coldly lay before his students the arguments *pro* and *con.* and then leave them to decide as evidence to them appears, whether there be a God, or whether the Scriptures be of divine inspiration, or not. So, likewise, with respect to the different sentiments on the primary points of Scripture, as whether the Saviour be man or angel, or God manifest in the flesh; or concerning the different acceptations of the words *depravity*, *guilt*, *faith*, *grace*, *atonement*, and the like; he will speak with a be-

coming confidence and certainty on which side the truth lies. He will, indeed, furnish them with solid confutations of error, from Scripture and experience, but he will take care to let them know that these things are already settled, and proposed to them, not as candidates for their good opinion, but as truths which demand and deserve their attention. My tutor will not dogmatize, and expect them to adopt his opinions without any better reason than because they are his. He will endeavour to throw every light he is master of upon the subject; but, at the same time, he will speak as a teacher, not as an inquirer; as one who speaks that which he has known, and testifies that which he has seen. He will not attempt to fill their heads with a detail of all the cavils which pride and sophistry have started against the truths of God; nor so far flatter his pupils, as to suppose them competent judges when they have weighed and compared the several argumentations. But he will rather warn them of their natural bias to the erroneous side, and guard them against the arts of those who, with fair words and fine speeches, beguiled the unprincipled and unwary. A tutor is a guide, and, if worthy of his office, must be able to say, without hesitation, 'This is the way, walk ye in in it.' Should he be seduced, by the specious sounds of candour and freedom of inquiry, to take the opposite method, and think it his duty to puzzle his scholars with all the waking dreams, objections, and evasions by which men, reputed wise, have opposed the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints; I should fear they would be more likely to turn out sceptics than ministers of the Gospel.

Nor should he, with my consent, lay down a scheme of what is commonly called natural religion, as a *substratum* whereon to build a religion of divine revelation. It is needful that he should give his pupils a just idea of the religion of fallen nature; but he will remind them, that the few valuable sentiments occasionally found in the writings of the Heathen philosophers and moralists were not their own. They are all represented as having travelled for their knowledge, and all in the same route, into Phœnecia or Egypt, into the neighbourhood of the only people who, at that time, were favoured with the oracles of God; and may therefore be justly supposed to have derived the detached particles of truth they acquired from that people, either by immediate converse with them, or from their inspired books, especially from the time they were translated into the Greek language. He will point out to them the strong probability that Epictetus and the later philosophers were equally, or more indebted, to the Christians and the New Testament. With respect to the sceptical moralists and reasoners of modern times, the

proof will be still clearer and stronger, that their best notions are borrowed from the religion they attempt to depreciate. My tutor, in order to satisfy them how far the powers of unassisted fallen nature can proceed in the investigation of religious and moral truths, will set before them the progress which has actually been made in this way by the negroes in Africa, or the American Indians. With such a picture of natural religion in their view, I should hope they would be led most cordially to praise God for the inestimable gift of his Holy Word; without the help of which, the boasted light of nature is darkness that may be felt.

In my academy, I would have no formal disputations upon points of divinity. If it be necessary to sharpen or exercise their wits by disputing, to which, under proper regulations, I should not object, there are topics in abundance at hand. Let them dispute, if they please, for or against the motion of the earth. Let them determine whether Cæsar or Pompey was the better man; or, in what respects Cato, who chose to die rather than venture to look Cæsar in the face, discovered more fortitude or true greatness of mind, than the slave who elopes from his master for fear of the lash. Let them contend whether learning has, upon the whole, been productive of most good, or of most mischief, to mankind. My tutor can supply them with a thousand questions of this kind. But to set a young man to put his ingenuity to the stretch, either to maintain a gross error, or to oppose a known and important truth, is, in my view, not only dangerous, but little less than a species of profaneness. What must the holy angels, who, with humble admiration, contemplate the wisdom and glory of God displayed in the Gospel; what must they think of the arrogance of sinful worms, who presume so far to trifle with the doctrines and mysteries he has revealed, as to degrade them into subjects for school exercise, and logical prize-fighting? Can it be possible to maintain a spirit of reverence and dependence amidst the noise of such malapert discussions? And if the youth to whom the wrong side of the question is committed, should, by superior address, nonplus and silence his antagonist, my heart would be in pain for him, lest he should, from that moment, be prejudiced against the truth which he had insulted with success, and think it really indefensible, because the other was not able to defend it.

Having been so long on the first article, I must endeavour to be more brief on those which follow.

II. By sacred literature, I chiefly mean philology, criticism, and antiquities, so far as they are employed in the illustration of Scripture. In these studies, if there be a proper application in the pupils, little more will be needful on the tutor's part, than to put

suitable books into their hands, to superintend their progress, and to obviate difficulties they may meet with. I would wish them not only to read the Scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but to be tolerable masters of the construction in both languages. This attainment is certainly not necessary to a minister; but they who apply themselves to the study of divinity in early life will have time enough to acquire it, and the acquisition will be well worth their labour. If not necessary, it will be found very expedient and useful, and when the difficulties of the first entrance and rudiments are surmounted, will be very pleasant. The tutor will then enliven their study, and facilitate their advance, by reading a chapter with them in each Testament daily or frequently intermingling critical or expository strictures as he goes along. And he will, probably, furnish those students who have a taste, with Dr. Lowth's *Prælectiones de Poësi Hebræa*, which will enable them to judge of the style and idiom of the Hebrew Bible, and particularly of the style and beauties of the Hebrew poetry. Blackwall's sacred classics may be added for the Greek.

Since the learned have of late years condescended to lay open the way to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, by publishing lexicons, grammars, and other helps in the English tongue, the knowledge of the Latin is less needful to a Bible student than formerly. But as there are many valuable books in Latin, and not yet translated, I must wish our pupils so far acquainted with the Latin language as to be able to read good authors in it. But as they are not to preach in Latin, an accurate skill is hardly worth their attempting, unless they have had a classical school education before they come to the academy. The mind is incapable of too many acquisitions: life is short, and more important business awaits them, in subserviency to which every thing else must be conducted.

Books on criticism and on Scripture antiquities are at hand in plenty. It will be impossible to read them all. The selection belongs not to me, but to the tutor. The *Synopsis Criticorum*, Godwin and Jennings, will perhaps be of the number he will choose. A good ecclesiastical history seems to be still a desideratum. A mass of materials, so far as it goes, is already prepared in the Magdeburg Centuriators, which affords a striking monument of the compiler's patience; but it would likewise require some patience in the reader who should undertake to go through it. Mosheim is, perhaps, the best book we have upon the subject, if the reader knows so much of himself and of the work of grace, as to prevent him from being misled by him, when treating on subjects which he does not appear to have rightly understood. But as to facts, I believe he is in general worthy of

credit. Bingham's *Antiquities* may deserve inspection, if it be only to show how soon and how generally the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel was corrupted by those who professed it. Dupin and Dr. Cave's *Historia Literaria Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*, are still more valuable; but the characters of the writers, and their strong prepossessions in favour of antiquity, should be known and allowed for.

III. Much time cannot be allowed in our academy for the pursuit of polite literature. But an entrance may be made, and a relish for it acquired, under the direction and restraint of the tutor, which may provide the students with a profitable amusement for leisure hours in future life; for in this knowledge they may advance from year to year. A perusal of such books as Rollin on the *Belles Lettres*, Bossuet's *Universal History*, Derham and Ray on the *Creation*, and a few of our best poets may suffice while they are students. Other books will occasionally come in their way; for the tutor would have a well chosen library, for the accommodation of his pupils; but he will guard them against spending too much time in this line of reading. For, though it has its subordinate advantages, it may, if too much indulged, divert them from the main point. And they should be taught to refer every thing they read to the principles of Scripture, to the knowledge of the heart of man, and the works, the ways, the wisdom, and providence of God; otherwise reading will tend to make them wise in their own conceit. I make short work with this article, and hasten to consider,

IV. What may be helpful, (by divine blessing,) to enable the pupils to communicate the fruits of their knowledge to advantage in the public ministry, that they may appear workmen that need not be ashamed. For this, as I have formerly intimated, their chief and immediate dependence must be on the Lord. He alone can give them a mouth and wisdom for his service; and without the unction from on high, the study of divinity, and every thing relative to it, will be but like learning the art of navigation on shore, which is very different from the knowledge necessary to the mariner who is actually called to traverse the ocean. But dependence upon the Lord should be no discouragement to the use of means.

I would have my students good logicians. The logic of the schools is in a great measure, a cramp, forced, and formal affair, and may possibly have made almost as many pedants and sophists as good reasoners. But Dr. Watts has furnished us with a system of logic in a more intelligible and amiable form, and divested it of the solemn impertinences with which it was encumbered. As the rules of grammar are themselves drawn from the language they are designed to regulate, so good logic is no more than

the result of observations upon the powers of the human mind ; and thus we see that many people of plain sense are passable logicians, though they never saw a book upon the subject, and, perhaps, do not understand the meaning of the term. But they may be much assisted in the habits of thinking, judging, and reasoning, and disposing their thoughts in an advantageous method, by rules judiciously formed and arranged. In this view I judge Dr. Watts' logic, with his subsequent treatise on the improvement of the mind to be very valuable. And, together with the more scientific parts of the subject, he will provide my pupils with a great variety of hints for their conduct, and for distinguishing the principles and conduct of others. These books should be frequently read, and closely studied, and will afford the tutor an extensive scope for their instruction. Unless a man can conceive and define his subject clearly, distinguish and enumerate the several parts, and know how to cast them into a convenient order and dependence, he cannot be a masterly preacher. And though a good understanding may supersede the necessity of logical rules, it will likewise derive advantage from them.

I have not so much to say in favour of another branch of artificial assistance ; though much stress has been sometimes laid upon it. We must not, however, quite omit it ; for an academic will be expected to know that the learned have thought proper to give Greek names to certain forms and figures of speech, in the use of which the common people, without being aware of their skill in rhetoric, are little less expert than the learned themselves. When he can repeat these hard names, with their etymologies and significations, rhetoric can do but little more for him. The rules it professes to teach are, in general, needless to those who have genius, and useless to those who have none. If a youth has not a turn for eloquence, stuffing his head with the names of tropes and figures will not give it him. To know the names of the tools in an artificer's shop, is one thing ; but to have skill to use them as a workman, is something very different. Here the tutor will use his discretion, for if any of his pupils are not likely to be orators, he will take care that, if he can prevent it, they shall not be pedants, nor value themselves on retailing a list of technical terms, of which they know neither the use nor the application. At the best, too much attention to artificial rules will make but an artificial orator, and rather qualify the student to set off himself than his subject. The grand characteristic of the Gospel orator is simplicity. Many years have passed since I read De Fenelon's Treatise on Pulpit Eloquence ; but I hope my tutor will put it into the hands of his pupils. It remains to inquire,

V. How the pupils are to be assisted and directed, that they may be able to preach extempore: an ability which I suppose to be ordinarily attainable by all who are called of God to preach the Gospel, if they will diligently apply themselves to attain it, in the use of proper means. I do not expect they will succeed in this way, to my wish, without prayer, study, effort, and practice. For, as I have already hinted, I mean something more by it than speaking at random.

A well known observation of Lord Bacon is much to my present purpose. It is to this effect: That reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, and speaking a ready man. The proved extempore preacher must have a fund of knowledge collected from various reading; and it would not be improper to read some books, with the immediate design of comparing his style and manner with approved models. It might be wished that the best divines were always the best writers; but the style of many of them is quaint, involved, and obscure. Some books that are well written have little else to recommend them, yet may be useful for this purpose; and the periodical writings of Addison and Johnson abound with judicious observations on men and manners, besides being specimens of easy and elegant composition. Among writers in divinity, I would recommend Dr. Watts and Dr. Witherspoon as good models. By perusing such authors with attention, I hope the pupils will acquire a taste for good writing, and be judges of a good style. Perspicuity, closeness, energy, and ease, are the chief properties of such a style. On the contrary, a style that is either obscure, redundant, heavy, or affected, cannot be a good one. But I cannot advise them to copy the late Mr. Hervey. His dress, though it fits him, and he does not look amiss in it, is rather too gaudy and ornamented for a divine. He had a fine imagination, an elegant taste, and shows much precision and judgment in his choice of words: but though his luxuriant manner of writing has many of the excellencies both of good poetry and good prose, it is, in reality, neither the one nor the other. An injudicious imitation of him has spoiled some persons for writers, who, if they could have been content with a plain and natural mode of expression, might have succeeded tolerably well.

The pupil likewise must write as well as read; and he should write frequently. Let him fill one common-place book after another, with extracts from good authors. This method, while it tends to fix the passages, or their import, in his mind, will also lead him to make such observations respecting the order, and construction, and force of words, as will not so readily occur to his notice by reading only. Then let him try his own hand, and

accustom himself to write his thoughts; sometimes in notes and observations on the books he reads; sometimes in the form of essays or sermons. He will do well likewise to cultivate a correspondence with a few select friends; for epistolary writing seems nearest to that easiness of manner which a public speaker should aim at.

I would not have his first attempts to speak publicly be in the preaching way, or even upon spiritual subjects. It might probably abate the reverence due to divine truth, to employ it in efforts of ingenuity. Suppose the tutor should read to them a passage of history, and require them to repeat the relation to him the next day in their own manner. He would then remark to them if they had omitted any essential part, or used improper expressions. Or they might be put upon making speeches or declamations on such occasions or incidents as he should propose. By degrees, such of them as are judged to be truly spiritual and humble, might begin to speak upon texts of Scripture, in the presence of the tutor and pupils; and I should hope this might, in due time, become a part of the morning or evening devotions in the family. But let them be especially cautioned not to trifle with holy things, nor profane the great subjects of Scripture, by making them mere exhibitions and trials of skill.

Thus, by combining much reading and writing with their attempts to speak, and all under the direction of a judicious tutor, I shall have a cheerful hope, that the pupils will gradually attain a readiness and propriety of speech; and when actually sent out to preach, will approve themselves scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, qualified to bring forth from the treasury of their knowledge and experience, things new and old, for the edification of their hearers.

And now I may draw towards a close. There are some branches of science, or what is so called, on which I lay but little stress. I have no great opinion of metaphysical studies. For pneumatology and ethics, I would confine my pupils to the Bible. The researches of wise men in this way, which have not been governed by the word of God, have produced little but uncertainty, futility, or falsehood. My tutor will, I hope, think it sufficient to show the pupils how successfully these wise and learned reasoners reciprocally refute each others hypothesis. And if he informs them more in detail of the extravagances which have been started concerning the nature and foundation of moral virtue; or of the dreams of philosophers, some of whom would exclude *matter*, and others would exclude *mind*, out of the universe; he will inform them likewise that he does not thereby mean properly to add to their stock of knowledge, (for we should in reality have been

full as wise if these subtilities had never been heard of,) but only to guard them against being led into the mazes of error and folly, by depending too much on the reveries of philosophers.

After the delineation of my plan, it will be needless to inform you that I do not propose my academy to be a spiritual hot bed, in which the pupils shall be raised, and ripened into teachers, almost immediately upon their admission. I have allowed for a few excepted cases; but, in general, it is my design that their education shall be comprehensive and exact. I would have them learn before they undertake to teach; and their sufficiency to be evidenced by a better testimonial than their own good opinion of themselves. "A scribe well instructed," "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," "an able minister of the New Testament," are Scriptural expressions, intimating what ought to be the qualifications of those who undertake the office of a preacher or pastor. The apostle expressly forbids a novice to be employed in these services. And though in the present day this caution is very much disregarded by persons who undoubtedly mean well, yet, I believe, the neglect of Scriptural rules (which are not arbitrary, but founded in a perfect knowledge of human nature) will always, produce great inconveniences. I shall think a young man of tolerable abilities makes a very good improvement of his time, if the tutor finds him fit for actual service after three or four years' close attention to his studies.

But what have I done?—In compliance with your request, I have been led to give such an undisguised view of my sentiments on this interesting subject, that though I feel myself a cordial friend to all sides and parties who hold the head, and agree in the grand principles of our common faith, I fear lest some of every party will be displeased with me. I rely on your friendship, and your knowledge of me, to bear witness for me, that I would not willingly offend or grieve a single person: and you can likewise testify, that I did not set myself to work; that I was much surprised when you proposed it to me; and that you have reason to believe my regard for you, and for the design you informed me of, were the only motives of my venturing upon the task you assigned me.

I have by no means exhausted the subject, though I hope I have not omitted any thing that very materially relates to it. If I was really in Utopia, and to carry my plan into execution, other regulations would probably occur which have at present escaped me.

What I have written I submit to the candour of you and your friends; adding my prayers, that the Great Head of the Church, the Fountain of grace, and Author of salvation, may direct your deliberations, and bless you with wisdom, unanimity, and success, in whatever you may attempt for the honour of his name and the good of souls.

I am, dear Sir,

Your sincere Friend and Servant,

OMICRON.

May 14, 1782.

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A  
**Monument**  
TO THE  
PRAISE OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS,  
AND  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
**DEAR ELIZA CUNNINGHAM.**

PUBLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF A CHARITABLE INSTITUTION.

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Jesus amor meus est, si rideat, omnia rident.  
O Death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. xv. 55.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1785.]

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## PREFACE.



WHEN the following narrative was drawn up, the writer was aware, that his feeling rendered him incompetent to judge how much of a relation, every part of which was interesting to himself, might be fit to offer to the public. Many little circumstances which the indulgence of a friend could bear with, might, to strangers, appear trivial and impertinent. He therefore wrote only for his friends; and printed no more copies than he thought would be sufficient to distribute within the circle of his personal acquaintance. But as the paper has been much inquired after, and many of his friends have expressed their wish, that it might be more extensively circulated, he has at length yielded to their judgment.

It is to be lamented, that in this enlightened age, so signalized by the prevalence of a spirit of investigation, religion should, by many, be thought the only subject unworthy of a serious inquiry; and that while in every branch of science they studiously endeavour to trace every fact to its proper and adequate cause, and are cautious of admitting any theory which cannot stand the test of *experiment*, they treat the use of the term *experimental*, when applied to religion with contempt. Yet there are many things connected with this subject, in which, whether we are willing or unwilling, we are, and must be, nearly interested. Death, for instance, is inevitable. And if there be an *hereafter*, (and it is impossible to prove that there is not,) the consequences of death must be important. Many persons die, as they live, thoughtless and careless what consequences may await them. Others whose characters and conduct do not appear to have been worse than those of the former, cannot die so. They have dark and painful forebodings, and leave this world with reluctance and terror. And there are others, who, though conscious that they are sinners, and sure that they are about to enter upon an unchangeable and endless state of existence, possess peace, composure, and joy. These declare that they owe this happy state of mind to their dependence upon Jesus the Saviour, on whose blood and mediation they have built their hopes. And who can

possibly disprove their words? Such an instance is now in the reader's hands. The fact is indubitable. A child, under the age of fifteen, did thus rejoice in the midst of pains and agonies, to the admiration of all who beheld her. She was willing to leave all her friends whom she dearly loved, and by whom she was tenderly beloved; for she knew whom she believed, and that when she should be absent from the body, she would be present with the Lord. With this assurance, she triumphed in the prospect of glory, and smiled upon the approach of death.

It may be presumed, that whoever seriously considers this case, will not be able to satisfy himself, by ascribing such remarkable effects, in so young a subject, to the power of habit, example, or system. If he does not account for them upon the principles of the Gospel, he will be unable to assign any proportionable cause. And it is to be feared, that if he is not affected by a testimony so simple and so striking, neither would he be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

‡ *Horton, Nov. 17, 1785.*

A  
MONUMENT  
TO THE  
PRAISE OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS,  
AND TO THE MEMORY OF  
DEAR ELIZA CUNINGHAM.\*



As I write not for the eye of the public, but chiefly to put a testimony of the Lord's goodness into the hands of my dear friends who have kindly afforded us their sympathy and prayers on the late occasion, I do not mean either to restrain the emotions of my heart, or to apologize for them. I shall write simply and freely, as I might speak to a person, to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust myself, and who, I know will bear with all my weaknesses.

In May, 1782, my sister Cuningham was at Edinburgh, chiefly on the account of her eldest daughter, then in the fourteenth year of her age, who was very ill of a consumption. She had already buried an only son, at the age of twelve; and while all a mother's care and feeling were engaged by the rapid decline of a second amiable child, she was unexpectedly and suddenly bereaved of an affectionate and excellent husband. Her trials were great, but the Lord had prepared her for them. She was a believer. Her faith was strong; her graces active; her conduct exemplary. She walked with God, and he supported her. And though she was a tender and sympathizing friend, she had a happy firmness of temper; so that her character as a Christian, and the propriety of her behaviour in every branch of relative life, appeared with peculiar advantage in the season of affliction. She returned to Anstruther, a widow, with her sick child, who languished till October, and then died.

Though my sister had many valuable and pleasing connexions in Scotland, yet her strongest tie being broken, she readily accepted my invitation to come and live with us. She was not only dear to me as Mrs. Newton's sister, but we had lived long in

\* The last surviving child of Mr. James Cuningham, of Pittarhie, Fifeshire.

habits of intimate friendship. I knew her worth, and she was partial to me. She had yet one child remaining, her dear ELIZA. We already had a dear orphan niece, whom we had, about seven years before, adopted for our own daughter. My active, fond imagination, anticipated the time of her arrival, and drew a pleasing picture of the addition the company of such a sister, such a friend, would make to the happiness of our family. The children likewise—there was no great disparity between them either in years or stature. From what I had heard of Eliza, I was prepared to love her before I saw her; though she came afterwards into my hands like a heap of untold gold, which, when counted over, proves to be a larger sum than was expected. My fancy paired and united these children; I hoped that the friendship between us and my sister would be perpetuated in them. I seemed to see them like twin sisters, of one heart and mind, habited nearly alike, always together, always with us. Such was my plan—but the Lord's plan was very different, and therefore mine failed. It is happy for us poor short-sighted creatures, unable as we are to foresee the consequences of our own wishes, that if we know and trust him, he often is pleased to put a merciful negative upon our purposes; and condescends to choose better for us than we can for ourselves. What might have been the issue of my plan, could it have taken place, I know not; but I can now praise and adore him for the gracious issue of his. I praise his name that I can cheerfully comply with his word, which says, "Be still, and know that I am God." I not only can bow (as it becomes a creature and a sinner to do) to his sovereignty; but I admire his wisdom and goodness, and can say, from my heart, "He has done all things well."

My sister had settled her affairs previous to her removal, and nothing remained but to take leave of her friends, of whom she had many, not only in Anstruther, but in different parts of the county. In February, 1783, I received a letter from her, which before I opened it, I expected was to inform me that she was upon the road in her way to London. But the information was, that in a little journey she had made to bid a friend farewell, she had caught a violent cold, which brought on a fever and a cough, with other symptoms, which, though she described as gently as possible, that we might not be alarmed, obliged me to give up instantly the pleasing hope of seeing her. Succeeding letters confirmed my apprehensions; her malady increased, and she was soon confined to her bed. Eliza was at school at Musselburgh. Till then she had enjoyed a perfect state of health; but while her dear mother was rapidly declining, she likewise caught a great cold, and her life likewise was soon thought to be in danger. On

this occasion, that fortitude and resolution which so strongly marked my sister's character, was remarkably displayed. She knew that her own race was almost finished; she earnestly desired that Eliza might live or die with us. And the physicians advised a speedy removal into the south. Accordingly, to save time, and to save Eliza from the impressions which the sight of a dying parent might probably make upon her spirits, and possibly apprehensive that the interview might make too great an impression upon her own; she sent this her only beloved child from Edinburgh directly to London, without letting her come home to take a last leave of her. She contented herself with committing and bequeathing her child to our care and love, in a letter, which I believe was the last she was able to write.

Thus powerfully recommended by the pathetic charge of a dying mother, the dearest friend we had upon earth, and by that plea for compassion which her illness might have strongly urged even upon strangers, we received our dear Eliza as a trust, and as a treasure, on the fifteenth of March. My sister lived long enough to have the comfort of knowing, not only that she was safely arrived, but was perfectly pleased with her new situation. She was now freed from all earthly cares. She suffered much in the remaining part of her illness, but she knew in whom she believed; she possessed a peace past understanding, and a hope full of glory. She entered into the joy of her Lord on the tenth of May, 1783, respected and regretted by all who knew her.

I soon perceived that the Lord had sent me a treasure indeed. Eliza's person was agreeable. There was an ease and elegance in her whole address, and a gracefulness in her movements, till long illness and great weakness bowed her down. Her disposition was lively, her genius quick and inventive, and if she had enjoyed health, she probably would have excelled in every thing she attempted that required ingenuity. Her understanding, particularly her judgment, and her sense of propriety, was far above her years. There was something in her appearance which usually procured her favour at first sight. She was honoured by the notice of several persons of distinction, which, though I thankfully attribute in part to their kindness to me, I believe was a good deal owing to something rather uncommon in her. But her principal endearing qualities, which could be only fully known to us who lived with her, were the sweetness of her temper, and a heart formed for the exercise of affection, gratitude, and friendship. Whether, when at school, she might have heard sorrowful tales from children, who, having lost their parents, met with a great difference, in point of tenderness, when they came under the direction of uncles and aunts, and might think that all

uncles and aunts were alike, I know not ; but I have understood since, from herself, that she did not come to us with any highly raised expectations of the treatment she was to meet with. But as she found, (the Lord in mercy to her and to us having opened our hearts to receive her,) that it was hardly possibly for her own parents to have treated her more tenderly, and that it was from that time the business and the pleasure of our lives, to study how to oblige her, and how to alleviate the afflictions which we were unable to remove ; so we likewise found, that the seeds of our kindness could hardly be sown in a more promising and fruitful soil. I know not that either her aunt or I ever saw a cloud upon her countenance during the time she was with us. It is true, we did not, we could not, unnecessarily cross her ; but if we thought it expedient to over-rule any proposal she made, she acquiesced with a sweet smile : and we were certain that we should never hear of that proposal again. Her delicacy, however, was quicker than our observation ; and she would sometimes say, when we could not perceive the least reason for it, “ I am afraid I answered you peevishly ; indeed I did not intend it ; if I did, I ask your pardon. I should be very ungrateful, if I thought any pleasure equal to that of endeavouring to please you.” It is no wonder that we dearly loved such a child.

Wonderful is the frame of the human heart. The Lord claims and deserves it all ; yet there is still room for all the charities of relative life, and scope for their full play ; and they are capable of yielding the sincerest pleasures this world can afford, if held in subordination to what is supremely due to him. The marriage relation, when cemented by a divine blessing, is truly a union of hearts, and the love resulting from it will admit of no competition in the same kind. Children have the next claim ; and whether there be one, or two, or many, each one seems to be the object of the whole of the parent’s love. Perhaps my friends who have children, may think that I, who never had any, can only talk by guess upon this subject. I presume not to dispute the point with them. But when it pleased the Lord to put my dear Betsey under my care, I seemed to acquire a new set of feelings, if not exactly those of a parent, yet, as I conceive, not altogether unlike them. And I long thought it was not possible for me to love any child as I did her. But when Eliza came, she, without being her rival, quickly participated with her in the same affection. I found I had room for them both, without prejudice to either. I loved the one very dearly, and the other no less than before ; if it were possible, still more, when I saw that she entered into my views, received and behaved to her cousin with great affection, and ascribed many little indulgencies and attentions which were

shown her, to their proper ground, the consideration of her ill state of health, and not to any preference that could operate to her disadvantage. For the Lord was pleased to answer my prayers in this respect so graciously, that I could not perceive that any jealousy or suspicion took place between them, on either side, from first to last.

The hectic fever, cough, and sweats, which Eliza brought with her from Scotland, were subdued in the course of the summer, and there appeared no reason to apprehend that she would be taken off very suddenly. But still there was a worm preying upon the root of this pretty gourd. She had seldom any severe pain, till within the last fortnight of her life, and usually slept well; but when awake she was always ill. I believe she knew not a single hour of perfect ease; and they who intimately knew her state, could not but wonder to see her so placid, cheerful, and attentive, when in company, as she generally was. Many a time, when the tears have silently stolen down her cheeks, if she saw that her aunt or I observed her, she would wipe them away, come to us, with a smile and a kiss, and say, "Do not be uneasy, I am not very ill, I can bear it, I shall be better presently," or to that effect.

Her case was thought beyond the reach of medicine, and, for a time, no medicine was used. She had air and exercise, as the weather and circumstances would permit. For the rest, she amused herself as well as she could with her guitar or harpsichord, with her needle, and with reading. She had a part likewise, when able, in such visits as we paid or received; and our visits were generally regulated by a regard to what she could bear. Her aunt, especially, seldom went abroad but at such times, and to such places, as we thought agreeable and convenient to her. For we could perceive that she loved home best, and best of all when we were at home with her.

In April, 1784, we put her under the care of my dear friend Dr. Benamor. To the blessing of the Lord on his skill and endeavours, I ascribe the pleasure of having her continued with us so long; nor can I sufficiently express my gratitude for his assiduous, unwearied attention, nor for his great tenderness. She is now gone, and can no more repeat what she has often spoken, of the great comfort it was to her to have so affectionate and sympathizing a physician; but while I live, I hope it will always be my pleasure to acknowledge our great obligations to him, on her account. I should be ungrateful, likewise, were I to omit mentioning the kindness of Dr. Allen of Dulwich, who attended her daily during her last stay at Southampton. He was so obliging, likewise, as to visit her, and to meet Dr. Benamor upon her case, after

her return to London. Their joint prescription was carefully followed. But what can the most efficacious medicines, or the best physicians, avail to prolong life, when the hour approaches in which the prayer of the great Intercessor must be accomplished, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." This was the proper cause of my dear Eliza's death. The Lord sent this child to me to be brought up for him; he owned my poor endeavours; and when her education was completed, and she was ripened for heaven, he took her home to himself. He has richly paid me my wages, in the employment itself, and in the happy issue.

Dr. Benamor advising a trial of the salt water, we passed the month of August, 1784, with her, partly at Mr. Walter Taylor's at Southampton, and partly at Charles Etty's, Esq. of Priestlands, near Lymington. While she was with these kind and generous friends, she had every accommodation and assistance that could be thought of, or wished for. And the bathing was evidently useful, so far as to give some additional strength to her very weak and relaxed frame, which assisted her in going more comfortably through the last winter. We were, therefore, encouraged and advised to repeat our visit to Southampton this autumn. But the success was not the same. Her feet and legs had already begun to swell, and the evening before she set out she took cold, which brought on a return of the fever and cough; and though Dr. Allen was successful in removing these symptoms in about a fortnight, and she bathed a few times, she could not persevere. However, the advantages of situation, air, and exercise, being much greater than she could have in London, and as we were with friends whom she, as well as we, dearly loved, she continued at Southampton six weeks; but she was unable to proceed to Mr. Etty's, who was very desirous of repeating his former kindness. The Lord strengthened her to perform her journey home without inconvenience. She returned the sixteenth of September; then she entered our door for the last time, for she went out no more, till she was carried out to be put in the hearse.

I have thus put together, in one view, a brief account of what relates to her illness, till within the last three weeks of her pilgrimage. I now come to what is much more important and interesting. Her excellent parents had conscientiously endeavoured to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the principles of religion had been instilled into her from her infancy. Their labours were thus far attended with success, that no child could be more obedient or obliging, or more remote from evil habits or evil tempers; but I could not perceive, when she came to us, that she had any heart affecting sense of divine things.

But being under my roof, she of course, when her health would permit, attended on my ministry, and was usually present when I prayed and expounded the Scripture, morning and evening, in the family. Friends and ministers were likewise frequently with us, whose character and conversation were well suited to engage her notice, and to help her to form a right idea of the Christian principles and temper. Knowing that she was of a thinking turn, I left her to make her own reflections upon what she saw and heard, committing her to the Lord, from whom I had received her, and entreating him to be her effectual teacher. When I did attempt to talk with her upon the concerns of her soul, she could give me no answer but with tears. But I soon had great encouragement to hope that the Lord had both enlightened her understanding, and had drawn the desires of her heart to himself. Great was her delight in the ordinances; exemplary her attention to preaching. To be debarred from going to hear at our stated times, was a trial which, though she patiently bore, seemed to affect her more than any other; and she did not greatly care what she endured in the rest of the week, provided she was well enough to attend the public worship. The judicious observations she occasionally made upon what had passed in conversation, upon incidents, books, and sermons, indicated a sound Scriptural judgment, and a spiritual taste. And my hope was confirmed by her whole deportment, which was becoming the Gospel of Christ. So that had she died suddenly, on any day within a year and a half past, I should have had no doubt that she had passed from death unto life. But I could seldom prevail with her to speak of herself; if she did, it was with the greatest diffidence and caution.

Soon after her return from Southampton she became acquainted with acute pain, to which she had till then been much a stranger. Her gentle spirit, which had borne up under a long and languishing illness was not so capable of supporting pain. It did not occasion any improper temper or language, but it wore her away apace. Friday, the thirtieth of September, she was down stairs for the last time, and then she was brought down, and carried up, in arms.

It now became very desirable to hear from herself a more explicit account of the hope that was in her; especially as upon some symptoms of an approaching mortification, she appeared to be a little alarmed, and, of course, not thoroughly reconciled to the thoughts of death. Her aunt waited for the first convenient opportunity of intimating to her the probability that the time of her departure was at hand. The next morning (Saturday, the first of October) presented one. She found herself remarkably better; her pains were almost gone, her spirits revived; the fa-

yourable change was visible in her countenance. Her aunt began to break the subject to her, by saying, "My dear, were you not extremely ill last night?" She said, "Indeed I was." "Had you not been relieved, I think you could not have continued long." "I believe I could not." "My dear, I have been anxiously concerned for your life." "But I hope, my dear aunt, you are not so now." She then opened her mind, and spoke freely. I cannot repeat the whole; the substance was to this effect: "My views of things have been for some time very different from what they were when I came to you. I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth." Her aunt said, "I believe you have long made a conscience of secret prayer." She answered, "Yes, I have long and earnestly sought the Lord with reference to the change which is now approaching. I have not yet that full assurance which is so desirable; but I have a hope, I trust a good hope; and I believe the Lord will give me whatever he sees necessary for me before he takes me from hence. I have prayed to him to fit me for himself; and then, whether sooner or later, it signifies but little." Here was a comfortable point gained. We were satisfied that she had given up all expectation of living, and could speak of her departure without being distressed.

It will not be expected that a child at her age should speak systematically. Nor had she learnt her religion from a system or form of words, however sound. The Lord himself was her teacher. But, from what little she had at different times said to me, I was well satisfied that she had received a true conviction of the evil of sin, and of her own state by nature as a sinner. When she spoke of the Lord, she meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, who gathers such lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. She believed him to be God and man in one person, and that hope, of which she shall never be ashamed, was founded on his atonement, grace, and power. As I do not intend to put words into her mouth, which she never spoke, I mention this lest any person should be disappointed at not finding a certain phraseology, which they may have been accustomed to.

Her apparent revival was of but short duration. In the evening of the same day she began to complain of a sore throat, which became worse, and before Sunday noon, threatened an absolute suffocation. When Dr. Benamor, who the day before had almost entertained hopes of her recovery, found her so suddenly and greatly altered, he could not, at the moment, prevent some signs of his concern from appearing in his countenance. She quickly perceived it, and desired he would plainly tell her his sentiments. When he had recovered himself, he said "you are not so well as

when I saw you on Saturday." She answered, that she trusted all would be well soon. He replied, that whether she lived or died, it would be well, and to the glory of God. He told me that he had much pleasing conversation with her that morning; some particulars of which he had committed to writing, but he lost the paper. From that time she may be said to have been dying, as we expected her departure from one hour to another.

On Monday, the third, she was almost free from any complaint in her throat; but there was again an appearance of mortification in her legs, which was again repelled by the means which Dr. Benamore prescribed. I recollect but little of the incidents of this day. In general she was in great pain, sometimes in agonies, unable to remain many minutes in the same position. But her mind was peaceful; she possessed a spirit of recollection and prayer; and her chief attention to earthly things seemed confined to the concern she saw in those who were around her. That she might not increase their feelings for her, she strove to conceal the sense of her own sufferings. It pleased the Lord wonderfully to support my dear Mrs. Newton, and she had a tolerable night's rest, though I did not expect the child would live till morning. On Tuesday, the fourth, about nine in the morning, we all thought her dying, and waited near two hours by her bed side for her last breath. She was much convulsed, and in great agonies. I said, "My dear, you are going to heaven, and I hope, by the grace of God, we, in due time, shall follow you." She could not speak, but let us know that she attended to what I said by a gentle nod of her head, and a sweet smile. I repeated to her many passages of Scripture, and verses of hymns, to each of which she made the same kind of answer. Though silent, her looks were more expressive than words. Towards eleven o'clock, a great quantity of coagulated phlegm, which she had not strength to bring up, made her rattle violently in the throat, which we considered a sign that death was at hand; and as she seemed unwilling to take something that was offered to her, we were loath to disturb her in her last moments, (as we supposed,) by pressing her. I think she must have died in a quarter of an hour, had not Dr. Benamore just then come into the room. He felt her pulse, and observed, that she was not near death by her pulse, and desired something might be given her. She was perfectly sensible, though still unable to speak, but expressed her unwillingness to take any thing by very strong efforts. However, she yielded to entreaty, and a tea-spoonful or two of some liquor soon cleared the passage, and she revived. Her pain, however, was extreme, and her disappointment great. I never saw her so near impatience as upon this occasion. As soon as she could speak, she cried, "Oh cruel, cruel, to re-

call me when I was so happy and so near gone ! I wish you had not come, I long to go home." But in a few minutes she grew composed, assented to what the doctor said of her duty to wait the Lord's time ; and from that hour, though her desires to depart and to be with her Saviour, were stronger and stronger, she cheerfully took whatever was offered her, and frequently asked for something of her own accord.

How often, if we were to have our choice, should we counteract our own prayers ! I had entreated the Lord to prolong her life, till she could leave an indisputable testimony behind her, for our comfort ; yet, when I saw her agony, and heard her say, " Oh, how cruel to stop me ! " I was, for a moment, almost of her mind, and could hardly help wishing that the doctor had delayed his visit a little longer. But if she had died then, we should have been deprived of what we saw and heard the two following days, the remembrance of which is now much more precious to me than silver or gold.

When the doctor came on Wednesday, she entreated him to tell her how long he thought she might live. He said, " are you in earnest, my dear ? " She answered, " Indeed I am. " At that time there was great appearances that a mortification was actually begun. He therefore told her he thought it possible she might hold out till eight in the evening, but did not expect she could survive midnight at furthest. On hearing him say so, low as she was, her eyes seemed to sparkle with their former vivacity, and fixing them on him with an air of ineffable satisfaction, she said, " Oh that is good news indeed. " And she repeated it as such to a person who came soon after into the room, and said, with lively emotions of joy, " The doctor tells me I shall stay but a few hours more. " In the afternoon she noticed and counted the clock, I believe, every time it struck ; and when it struck seven, she said, " Another hour, and then. " But it pleased the Lord to spare her to us another day.

She suffered much in the course of Wednesday night, but was quite resigned and patient. Our kind servants, who, from their love to her and to us, watched her night and day with a solicitude and tenderness which wealth is too poor to purchase, were the only witnesses of the affectionate and grateful manner in which she repeatedly thanked them for their services and attention to her. Though such an acknowledgment was no more than their due, yet coming from herself, and at such a time, they highly valued it. She added her earnest prayers, that the Lord would reward them. To her prayers my heart says, Amen. May they be comforted of the Lord in their dying hours as she was, and meet with equal kindness from those about them !

I was surprised on Thursday morning to find her not only alive, but, in some respects, better. The tokens of mortification again disappeared. This was her last day, and it was a memorable day to us. When Dr. Benamor asked how she was, she answered, "Truly happy; and if this be dying, it is a pleasant thing to die;" [the very expression which a dear friend of mine used upon her death bed a few years ago.] She said to me about ten o'clock, "My dear uncle, I would not change conditions with any person upon earth. Oh, how gracious is the Lord to me! Oh, what a change is before me:" She was several times asked, if she could wish to live, provided the Lord should restore her to perfect health? Her answer was, "Not for all the world," and sometimes not for a thousand worlds.\* "Do not weep for me, my dear aunt; but rather rejoice and praise on my account. I shall now have the advantage of dear Miss Patty Barham," (for whom she had a very tender affection, and who has been long in a languishing state,) "for I shall go before her." We asked her if she would choose a text for her own funeral sermon? She readily mentioned, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "That," said she, "has been my experience; my afflictions have been many, but not too many; nor has the greatest of them been too great; I praise him for them all." But, after a pause, she said, "Stay, I think there is another text which may do better; let it be, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." That is my experience now." She likewise chose a hymn to be sung after the sermon. *Olney Hymns, Book ii. Hymn 72.*

But I must check myself, and set down but a small part of the gracious words which the Lord enabled her to speak in the course of the day, though she was frequently interrupted by pains and agonies. She had something to say, either in the way of admonition or consolation, as she thought most suitable, to every one whom she saw. To her most constant attendant she said, "Be sure you continue to call upon the Lord; and if you think he does not hear you now, he will at last, as he has heard me." She spoke a great deal to an intimate friend, who was with her every day, which I hope she will long remember as the testimony of her dying Eliza. Amongst other things, she said, "See how comfortable the Lord can make a dying bed! Do you think that you shall have such an assurance when you come to die?" Being answered, "I hope so, my dear," she replied, "But do you earnestly, and with all your heart, pray to the Lord for it? If you seek him, you shall surely find him." She then prayed af-

\* The last time she was asked this question, she said, (as I have been since informed,) "I desire to have no choice."

fectionately and fervently for her friend, afterwards for her cousin, and then for another of our family who was present. Her prayer was not long, but her every word was weighty, and her manner very affecting; the purport was, that they might all be taught and comforted by the Lord. About five in the afternoon she desired me to pray with her once more. Surely I then prayed from my heart. When I had finished, she said, Amen. I said, "My dear child, have I expressed your meaning?" She answered, "Oh yes!" and then added, "I am ready to say, Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming? But I hope he will enable me to wait his hour with patience." These were the last words I heard her speak.

Mrs. Newton's heart was much, perhaps too much, attached to this dear child; which is not to be wondered at, considering what a child she was, and how long and how much she had suffered. But the Lord graciously supported her in this trying season. Indeed there was much more cause for joy than for grief; yet the pain of separation will be felt. Eliza well knew her feelings; and a concern for her was, I believe, the last anxiety that remained with her. She said to those about her, "Try to persuade my aunt to leave the room; I think I shall soon go to sleep, I shall not remain with you till morning." Her aunt, however was the last person who heard her speak, and was sitting by her bed when she went away. A little past six, hearing that a relation, who dearly loved her, and was beloved by her, and who had come daily from Westminster to see her, was below stairs, she said, "Raise me up, that I may speak to him once more." Her aunt said, "My dear, you are nearly exhausted, I think you had better not attempt it." She smiled, and said, "It is very well, I will not." She was then within half an hour of her translation to glory; but the love of her dear Lord had so filled her with benevolence, that she was ready to exert herself to her last breath, in hopes of saying something that might be useful to others after she was gone.

Towards seven o'clock, I was walking in the garden, and earnestly engaged in prayer for her, when a servant came to me, and said, 'she has gone.' O Lord, how great is thy power! how great is thy goodness! A few days before, had it been practicable and lawful, what would I not have given to procure her recovery! yet seldom in my life have I known a more heart-felt joy, than when these words, *She is gone*, sounded in my ears. I ran up stairs, and our whole little family were soon around her bed. Though her aunt and another person were sitting with their eyes fixed upon her, she was gone, perhaps a few minutes before she was missed. She lay upon her left side, with her cheek gently

reclining upon her hand, as if in a sweet sleep. And I thought there was a smile on her countenance. Never, surely, did death appear in a more beautiful, inviting form! We fell upon our knees, and I returned, (I think I may say) my most unfeigned thanks to our God and Saviour, for his abundant goodness to her, crowned in this last instance, by giving her so gentle a dismissal. Yes, I am satisfied. I am comforted. And if one of the many involuntary tears I have shed could have recalled her to life, to health, to an assemblage of all that this world could contribute to her happiness, I would have laboured hard to suppress it. Now my largest desires for her are accomplished. The days of her mourning are ended. She is landed on that peaceful shore, where the storms of trouble never blow. She is, for ever, out of the reach of sorrow, sin, temptation, and snares. Now she is before the throne: She sees Him, whom not having seen, she loved; she drinks of the rivers of pleasure, which are at his right hand, and shall thirst no more.

She was born at St. Margaret's Rochester, February 6, 1771.

Her parents settled at Anstruther, in Fife, in 1773.

She returned to us, — March 15, 1783.

She breathed her spirit into her Redeemer's hands a little before seven in the evening, on October 6, 1785, aged fourteen years and eight months.

I shall be glad if this little narrative may prove an encouragement to my friends who have children. May we not conceive the Lord saying to us, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and bring it up for me, and I will pay thee thy wages?" How solemn the trust! how important and difficult the discharge of it! but how rich the reward, if our endeavours are crowned with success! And we have every thing to hope from his power and goodness, if, in dependence upon his blessing, we can fully and diligently aim at fulfilling his will. Happy they, who will say at the last day, "Behold here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

The children of my friends will likewise see my narrative. May it convince them that it is practicable and good to seek the Lord betimes! My dear Eliza's state of languor prevented her from associating with young people of her own age, so frequently and freely as she otherwise might have done. But these papers will come into the hands of some such, whom she knew, and whom she loved. To them I particularly commend and dedicate this relation. Oh! my dear young friends, had you seen with what dignity of spirit she filled up the last scene of her life, you must have been affected by it! Let not the liveliness of your spirits, and the gayety of the prospect around you, prevent you

from considering, that to you likewise days will certainly come, (unless you are suddenly snatched out of life) when you will say and feel that the world, and all in it, can afford you no pleasure.

But there is a Saviour, and a mighty One, always near, always gracious to those who seek him. May you, like her, be enabled to choose him, as the Guide of your youth, and the Lord of your hearts. Then, like her, you will find support and comfort under affliction, wisdom to direct your conduct, a good hope in death, and by death a happy translation to everlasting life.

I have only to add my prayer, that a blessing from on high may descend upon the persons and families of all my friends, and upon all into whose hands this paper may providentially come.

JOHN NEWTON.

*Charles' Square, Hoxton, Oct. 13, 1785.*

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THE

SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY :

**A Sermon,**

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1779.

THE DAY OF HIS FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE IN THAT CHURCH,

BY

JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

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Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 1 THESS. ii. 8.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1780.]

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TO THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE PARISHES OF  
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH,  
THIS SERMON IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED AND PRESENTED,  
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL,  
JOHN NEWTON.

THE SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.



EPHESIANS, iv. 15.

—*Speaking the truth in love.*—

THE words in the original have a more comprehensive sense than in our version. *Ἀληθευοντες εν αγαπη.* They extend no less to conduct than to speech; and comprise, in one short sentence, that combination of integrity and benevolence which constitute the character of a true Christian. But as our morning service has been already much prolonged, I mean not to enlarge at present upon this important subject. I propose my text rather as a kind of motto, to introduce a brief account of the feelings, desires, and purposes of my heart, on this my first appearance before you. The inhabitants of these parishes, to whom I more immediately address myself, have a right to be informed, now the providence of God has placed me in this city, and in this church, of the views with which I have undertaken the important trust lately committed to me, and of the manner and spirit in which it is my desire to discharge it. If these inquiries be upon any of your minds, accept my answer in the words I have read; I came, and by the grace of God, I hope to abide amongst you, “speaking the truth in love.”

I should be utterly unworthy your attention, I should deserve your contempt and detestation, if, under the solemn character of a minister of Jesus Christ, and with a professed regard for his service and the good of souls, I should presume to speak any thing amongst you, but what I verily believe in my conscience to be the truth. The apostles were ambassadors for Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20. and we, however inferior in other respects, are so far concerned in this part of their character, as to be equally bound to conform to the instructions of our Lord and Master. The Bible is the grand repository of the truths which it will be the business and the pleasure of my life to set before you. It is the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken, Rev. xxii. 18, 19. with impunity. Every attempt to disguise or soften any branch of this truth, in order to accommodate it to the prevailing taste around us, either to avoid the displeasure, or to court the favour, of our fellow mortals, must be an affront to the majesty of God, and an act of treachery to men. My conscience bears me witness, that I mean to speak the

truth among you. The principal branches of "the truth as it is in Jesus," according to St. Paul's expression, are summarily contained in the Articles, which I have just now read and given my solemn assent to in your hearing. These I acknowledge and adopt as a standard of sound doctrine, not merely because they are the Articles of our church, but because, upon mature and repeated examination, I am persuaded they are agreeable to the Scripture. I am to enlarge on the declarations of the Scripture and of the Articles concerning the depravity of fallen man, the evil of sin, the method of salvation by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I am to bear testimony to the dignity and excellency of the Redeemer's person and characters, the suitability of his offices, the efficacy of his blood, and obedience to death on the behalf of sinners, and his glory as Head of the Church, and Lord of heaven and earth. I am to set before you the characters, obligations, and privileges of those who believe in his name; and to prove that the doctrines of the grace of God are doctrines according to godliness, which, though they may be abused by men of corrupt minds, have in themselves, when rightly understood, a direct and powerful tendency to enforce universal obedience to the commands of God, and to promote the peace and welfare of civil society. I am likewise to warn all who hear me, of the sin and danger of rejecting the great salvation revealed by the Gospel. These will be the subject of my ministry; and, if what I shall offer upon these heads be agreeable not only to the articles which I have subscribed, but to the Scriptures, which we all profess to believe, it must of course be admitted that I shall speak the truth.

But the cause of truth itself may be discredited by improper management; and, therefore, the Scripture, which furnishes us with subject matter for our ministry, and teaches us what we are to say, is equally explicit as to the temper and spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had the knowledge of all mysteries, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness, unless I was to speak "in love." The Gospel is a declaration of the astonishing love of God to mankind; it exhibits the perfect exemplar of love in the character of Him who, when upon earth in the form of a servant, "went about doing good," Acts x. 38. and exerted the most unbounded benevolence to all around him. The servant of the Lord, of that meek and merciful Saviour, who wept over his avowed enemies, and prayed for his actual murderers while nailing him to the cross, learns at his Saviour's feet to bear a cordial love to all mankind. Man, considered as the creature of God, is the noblest and most important of his works in the visible creation, formed by

him who originally made him for himself, with such a vastness of desire, such a capacity for happiness, as nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy; formed to exist in an eternal, unchangeable state. And even fallen man, though depraved and perverted, guilty, and, in his present state, obnoxious to eternal misery, is yet capable of being restored to the favour of God, and renewed into his image, of serving him here, and being happy with him for ever. Whoever, therefore, has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known by his own experience the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, yea, he is constrained to love his fellow-creatures. He loves them at first sight; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the Gospel and a care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, Rom. xii. 1. and even while he warns them by his terrors, 2 Cor. v. 11. Surely I durst not address you from this place, if I could not, with sincerity at least, if not with equal warmth, adopt the apostle's words, and say, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart unto you not the Gospel of God only, but our own souls also, (were it possible,) because ye were dear unto us," 1 Thess. ii. 8.

This love which my heart bears, I offer as a plea for that earnestness and importunity which I must use. I came not to amuse you with subjects of opinion or uncertainty, or even with truths of a cold, speculative, uninteresting nature, which you might receive without benefit, or reject without detriment; but to speak the *truths of God*, truths of the utmost importance to the welfare of your souls in time and eternity. If I love you, therefore, I cannot be content with delivering my message; my spirit must and will be deeply engaged for its success. I cannot be content with the emoluments annexed to my office—I seek not yours, but you; 2 Cor. xii. 14. that you may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; Eph. iii. 19. that you may be delivered from the power of this evil world, Gal. i. 4. and that I and you may at length stand accepted before the throne of God; in a word, that by a blessing from on high, accompanying my poor labours, I may both save myself, and them that hear me: 1 Tim. iv. 16. These are the aims and ends which I hope always to have in view; and, therefore, love will prompt me to be faithful and earnest.

Too often the due reception of the truth is greatly impeded by the cares, the businesses, or the amusements of the world. We find many of our hearers, alas! too happy, or too much engrossed, to afford us that attention we have a right to claim, consider-

ing the weight of our message, and the authority under which we speak. But God, in mercy to the souls of men, frequently suits the appointments of his providence, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace. He prepares for them, what they do not desire for themselves, seasons for leisure, retirement, and reflection. This is one gracious design of the various afflictions of human life. When he visits with sickness or pain, crosses and disappointments—when our cisterns are broken, and our gourds wither—when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, Ezek. xxiv. 16. or we meet with a thorn or sting where our fond hearts were expecting only pleasure—then, perhaps, the truths which were heard with too much indifference in the hour of prosperity, may be more regarded. My love will prompt me to be always near you, waiting for such seasons, and ready upon the first intimation (for I mean not to intrude myself) to offer my sympathy, my prayers, my best advice. Though I shall have but little time for visits of mere ceremony, to visit you as a minister, and to assist you to the utmost of my power in making a right improvement of the providences of God, is a service which I shall always owe you from a principle of duty, and which I hope always to be glad to render from a principle of love.

If the grace of God, without which I can do nothing, should thus enable me to speak the truth in love, may I not hope for your favourable attention? Would it not imply an unjust reflection upon your candour, to suppose that any of you will be angry with one who only wishes to speak the truth in love? Certainly I can as yet have no particular reason to expect an unkind return from any individual among you, because I am a stranger to you all. But the Scripture teaches what experience and observation abundantly confirm, that the doctrines of divine truth are so mysterious in themselves, and so opposite and mortifying to the opinion mortals are prone to entertain of their own wisdom and goodness, that persons of very amiable characters in common life, are too often amongst the warmest opposers of the ministers who dare faithfully and plainly persevere in speaking the truth. Should I have this trial to meet with from any of you, still I hope to speak the truth in love, and to remember that I am a follower of Him who only returned kindness for hard usage. I hope to consider, that if any oppose, it is because they know not what they do; and to bear in mind, that I myself was once a scorner and despiser of the Gospel which I now preach; that I stand here as a pattern of the long-suffering of God; and that having obtained mercy myself, I have encouragement, from my own case, to hope

that the strongest prejudices may be softened by the power of his grace.

Let me close with one observation. The transactions of this day, and the consequences of it will not be soon forgotten. They will be registered in the annals of eternity. "As surely as we are now met together, so surely we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. Then I must give an account of my ministry, and you of the manner in which you received it. If I speak the truth—it is at the peril of my hearers to treat it with contempt, or even with neglect. But I would hope better things, even that the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will prepare our hearts to receive with meekness that ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls, James, i. 21.

I only add my earnest request for a frequent and fervent remembrance in your prayers, that the Father of mercies, the God of all wisdom, may so influence my spirit, that no part of my conduct may be unsuitable to what I have at this time professed—that speaking the truth in love, and commending it by a conversation becoming the Gospel, Phil. i. 27. my labours and my life may be acceptable and serviceable among you. I trust that I, on my part, shall not cease to pray, that his blessing may rest upon you, upon your persons, your families, and upon all your concerns, and more especially for the welfare and comfort of your souls—that he may guide you by his counsel through this life, Psalm lxxiii. 24. and afterwards receive you to his glory!



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THE  
GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS:  
**A Sermon,**  
PREACHED IN THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH:  
ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1781;  
THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

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The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but  
prophecy.---Amos, iii. 8.

Humana sed mens nescia modum ponere  
Rebus, secundis intumet successibus.  
Quo plura hominibus contulit bonitas Dei,  
Occæcat animos altior securitas,  
Vanoque fastu turgidos superbia  
Stimulat inanis.           BUCHAN. Jephth.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1781.]

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TO THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE PARISHES OF  
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH,  
THIS SERMON IS RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED  
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL,  
JOHN NEWTON.

## THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS



JEREMIAH, v. 29.

*Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord : shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?*

THREE times (Jer. v. 9. ix. 9.) the Lord God repeats, by his prophet, this alarming question. Their ingratitude and obstinacy were so notorious, their sins so enormous, and aggravated, the sentence denounced against them, however severe, was so undeniably just, that, partial as they were to themselves, God is pleased to appeal to their own consciences, and to make them judges in their own cause ; inviting, or rather challenging them, to offer any plea why his forbearance and patience, which they had so long despised, should be still afforded them.

But the form of the question will not permit us to confine the application to Israel or Judah. The words are not, *On this nation* particularly, but “ *On such a nation as this.*” The Lord, the Governor of the earth, has provided, in the history of one nation, a lesson of instruction and warning to every nation under the sun ; and the nearer the state and spirit of any people resemble the state and character of Judah, when Jeremiah prophesied among them, the more reason they have to tremble under the apprehension of the same or similar judgments.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, divided the Red Sea before them, led them in the wilderness by a cloud and pillar of fire, fed them with manna, and gave them water from the rock. He planted them in a good land ; and, though they often sinned, and were often punished, they were distinguished by many tokens of his presence, and effects of his goodness, above any other nation. In the time of Solomon, they possessed the height of human prosperity ; but they soon rebelled, and involved themselves in increasing troubles. And though the efforts and examples of Hezekiah and Josiah produced a temporary reformation, and procured a temporary respite, they went on, upon the whole, from bad to worse, till the measure of their iniquity being filled up, and the season of God’s long-suffering at an end, he directed the march of Nebuchadnezzar against them, who, because he was the appointed instrument of divine vengeance, could not fail of success. The temple and city of Jerusalem were burnt, the land desolated, the greater part of the in-

habitants destroyed, and the survivors led captives into a far distant land.

We likewise are a highly favoured people, and have long enjoyed privileges which excite the admiration and envy of surrounding nations; and we are a sinful ungrateful people; so that when we compare the blessings and mercies we have received from the Lord, with our conduct towards him, it is to be feared we are no less concerned with the question in my text than Israel was of old. This is the point I propose to illustrate, as suitable to the design for which we are at this time professedly assembled.

Though the occasion will require me to take some notice of our public affairs, I mean not to amuse you with what is usually called a political discourse. The Bible is my system of politics. There I read that the Lord reigns; Psal. xvii. 1. that he doth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; Dan. iv. 35. that no wisdom, understanding, counsel, or power, can prevail, without his blessing; Prov. xxi. 30. that as righteousness exalteth a nation, so sin is a reproach, and will even totally be the ruin of any people, Prov. xiv. 34. From these and other maxims of a like report, I am learning to be still, and to know that he is God. My part, as a minister of the Gospel of peace, is not to inflame, but, if possible, to sooth and sweeten the spirits of my hearers; to withdraw their attention from the instrumental and apparent causes of the calamities we feel or fear, and to fix it upon sin, as the original and proper cause of every other evil. As a peaceful and loyal subject, I profess and inculcate obedience to the laws of my country, to which I conceive myself bound by the authority of God's command, and by gratitude for the civil and religious liberty I possess. For the rest, political disquisitions, except immediately connected with Scriptural principles, appear to me improper for a pulpit at all times, and more especially unseasonable and indecent on a day of public humiliation. I hope we are now met, not to accuse others, but to confess our own sins; not to justify ourselves, but to plead for mercy.

May it please God, therefore, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to impress the consciences of all present, and to make us attentive to our own immediate concerns, while I endeavour,

I. Briefly to delineate the state of the nation; or to show you what a nation this is.

II. To consider in what manner the righteous Judge and Governor of the earth might justly avenge himself of such a nation as this.

III. To inquire, Whether there be any hope that such a nation as this can yet escape the impending ruin with which it is threaten-

ed? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected?

I. In order to estimate the state of the nation, we must attend to two views, which, when contrasted, illustrate each other, and, in their combination, constitute our national character, and discriminate it not only from that of every nation around us, but from all the kingdoms recorded in the history of past ages. I mean our national privileges and our national sins.

With regard to the first head, the peculiar privileges which, by the favour of Divine Providence, we have enjoyed as a people, I must be brief. A full detail of them would require a volume. Though the island of Great Britain exhibits but a small spot upon a map of the globe, it makes a splendid appearance in the history of mankind, and has for a long space of time, been signally under the protection of God, and the seat of peace, liberty, and truth. When Christendom had groaned for ages under the night of papal superstition, the first light of reformation dawned amongst us by the preaching and writings of Wickliffe. From that time we have possessed the knowledge of the Gospel, and God has had a succession of witnesses in our land; they have been, at different periods, exposed to suffering, and many of them were called to seal their testimony with their blood; but they could neither be intimidated nor extirpated. In Luther's time, when the pillars of Popery were more publicly and generally shaken, we were amongst the first who were animated and enabled to shake off the yoke of Rome; and God has often since remarkably interposed to preserve us from being brought into that bondage the second time. The spirit of persecution, under various forms, has again and again attempted to resume its power, but has been as often restrained and defeated. Civil commotions likewise stand upon record in our annals; and our forefathers have felt miseries of which we can form but a very imperfect idea. But they suffered and struggled for us. The event of every contest and revolution contributed gradually to establish that happy basis of government which we call the British Constitution; and, together with these advances in favour of liberty, an increase of commerce, wealth, and dominion, has been afforded us. From that distinguished era, the Revolution, and more especially since the accession of the present royal family, we have enjoyed such an uninterrupted series of peace and prosperity, as cannot be paralleled in the history of any nation we have heard of, not excepting even that of Israel. I call our peace *uninterrupted*; for the efforts of rebellion in the reigns of our two last kings were so speedily crushed, and were productive of so few calamities, except to the unhappy aggressors, that they are chiefly to be noticed as instan-

ces of the goodness of the Lord, who, notwithstanding we were then a sinful people, was pleased to fight our battles, and put our enemies to shame. I call it *uninterrupted*; for though we have been engaged as principals in several foreign wars, and the storm fell with dreadful weight upon other countries, we at home knew but little of the war but from the public prints, which usually, after the first or second year, were filled with accounts of the successes and victories which the Lord of hosts (alas! by how few was he acknowledged) gave to our fleets and armies. When the last war terminated, we were at the height of national honour and power. Our arms were victorious, and our flags triumphant, wherever our operations had been directed, in the most distant and opposite parts of the globe. What an accession of empire and riches did we then acquire, while we were sitting, (if I may so speak) under our vines and fig-trees, undisturbed; and while a considerable part of Germany, rather involved, than properly interested in our disputes, was almost desolated by fire and sword! And, notwithstanding our increasing provocations, every succeeding year has afforded signal proofs that, though the Lord is displeased with us, he has not yet forsaken us. If, in some instances, he has justly disappointed our expectations, he has, in others, appeared no less remarkably in our favour; defeating the designs of our enemies, protecting our commerce, and affording us, in general, more plentiful harvests at home, since the war has rendered supplies from abroad more precarious and difficult. Add to our internal peace, wealth, and plenty, the inviolable immunity both of persons and property, in which we are preserved by the spirit and administration of our laws, and that unrestrained liberty which people of all sentiments and denominations possess and exercise, of worshipping God in the way they think most agreeable to his will. Must not a due consideration of these things constrain us to say, "He hath not dealt so with any nation?"

What could the Lord have done more for his vineyard? Isa. v. 4. How could he have laid a people under stronger obligations to his service? What returns might he not expect from such a nation as this? But, alas! we have requited him evil for good! Such a nation as this is very imperfectly described by an enumeration of privileges. I have a more painful task now to attend to; I should enumerate (were it possible) our national sins. It is but a sketch I can offer upon this immense and awful subject. But enough is obvious, and at hand, to make us tremble, if we regard the Scripture, and do, in our hearts, believe there is a God that governs the earth, Psa. lviii. 11. I wish you to keep in mind, as I proceed, the slight view I have given of the favours God has bestowed upon us. The recollection of his mercies is necessary to give

a proper sense of the colouring and aggravation of our sins. It is often pleaded that, sinful as we are, we are not more depraved in morals and practice than the inhabitants of France or Italy, or the other nations of Europe. I much question the truth of this plea. I am afraid that, in some instances at least, we are more corrupt and profligate than any nation now existing. But, admitting that France or Italy equal, or even exceed us, in open and positive wickedness; if they fall short of us in advantages for knowing the will of God; if they are not equally enriched by the bounties of his providence; if he has not so signally appeared on their behalf as he has on ours, their sins, however enormous or numerous, are not attended with equal aggravations; we must fix upon a nation (if such could be found) that is upon a par with us in the blessings of Gospel light, of civil and religious liberty, before we can properly form a comparison, or have any just reason for supposing that our sins are not greater than theirs.

The magnitude of our national debt is a frequent topic of conversation. We have, indeed, but an indistinct idea of a number not very far short of two hundred millions; yet we can form some conception of it. But our national debt of sin is beyond all the rules and powers of arithmetical computation. The holiness, authority, and goodness of God (which are infinite) afford the only proper measures by which to judge of the horrid evil of the sins committed against him.

The sin of a nation is properly the aggregate or sum total of all the sins committed by every individual residing in that nation. But those may be emphatically called *national sins*, which, by their notoriety, frequency, or circumstances, contribute to mark the character of one nation as distinct from another. It is to be hoped that some species of sins amongst us are not yet become national. They are rather exotics, not perfectly familiarized to the soil, or prevalent in every part of the land. I shall confine myself to a few of the particulars which are more directly characteristic of this nation, and at this time.

1. The maxims and usages generally prevalent among a people, if contrary to the rule of God's word, are national sins. If customary, they are national; if inconsistent with the precepts of Scripture, they must be sinful. A wo is denounced against those who call evil good, and good evil, Isa. v. 20: but this dreadful abuse of language, sentiment, and conduct, can only be avoided by making the inspired writings the standard of our judgment. In a land, that bears the name of Christian, adultery is deemed gallantry; murder, in some cases, is a point of honour; avarice is prudence; profuseness wears the mask of generosity; and dissi-

pation is considered an innocent amusement. On the other hand, meekness is accounted meanness of spirit, and grace is braided with the opprobrious names of melancholy and enthusiasm. Habituated, from our infancy, to the effects of these prepossessions, and more or less under their influence, very few of us are duly sensible how utterly repugnant the spirit and temper of the world around us is to the genius and spirit of the Christianity we profess. It would, I think, appear in a much more striking light to an intelligent and unbiassed observer, who, upon hearing that Great Britain was favoured with the knowledge of the true religion, should visit us from some very remote country, with a view of sharing in our advantage. If I could make the tour of the kingdom with such a stranger, and show him what is transacting in the busy and in the gay world, in city, court, and country: if I could describe to him the persons he would see at our theatres and public places, at Newmarket at contested elections, and explain the motives and aims which bring them together; if I could introduce him into the families of the great, the reputed wise, and the wealthy; from these data, together with the ignorance and licentiousness of the populace, which must unavoidably engage his notice wherever he went, I apprehend he would not be long at a loss to form a tolerable judgment of our national character. And if, after this survey, he were attentively to read the New Testament, I think he must allow that, admitting it was a revelation from God, our national character was neither more nor less than the union and combination of our national sins. He could not but perceive that infidelity, pride, sensuality, greediness of gain, strangely coupled with thoughtless profusion, contempt of God, and a daring opposition to his will, constitute the leading features of our portrait as a nation.

2. If there be sins which, though not expressly enjoined, are authorized, and, to people who regard man more than God, rendered in a manner necessary by the sanction of legislature, these, and especially in a free country, may be deemed national sins. Here I feel myself embarrassed. As a private member of society, full of respect and reverence for the authority to which, by the providence and will of God, I owe a willing and thankful subjection, I could wish to be entirely silent. But I likewise bear another character. As a minister of the Gospel, I stand here before a higher Master. In his service I am commanded to be bold and faithful; and I dare not, in conscience, especially at such a time, and on such an occasion as this, wholly suppress my sentiments. But I wish to speak with all the tenderness and delicacy the subject will admit.

In this land of liberty, the measures of government and of parliament, are canvassed with great freedom; often, indeed, with a very offensive intemperance and indecency. It is, however, one important privilege of our happy constitution, that British subjects have a right of presenting respectful petitions, either to the throne or to the senate, when such measures are in contemplation as are apprehended may prove detrimental to the interests of the nation or of individuals: a right which, upon the ground of real or pretended grievances, has been abundantly exercised of late years. But it is long since the honour of God and the interests of true religion have been the objects of an address or petition from any corporate body in the kingdom. This indifference of all parties to the cause of God, when all are so attentive and feeling in cases where they think their own temporal concerns affected, warrants one to consider the acts of the legislature, while no alteration is desired by those on whom they are binding, as the acts of the whole nation. Even the edicts of an arbitrary prince, whose will supplies the place of law, might involve a nation in guilt, if he enjoined what was contrary to the commands of God, and they, through fear, obeyed him. Much more then may laws, made by the representatives of a free people, be considered as acts of the community, if they excite no constitutional endeavour for relief.

I am far from supposing that any of our laws now in force were formed with an intention of promoting sin. But some of them, through the prevailing depravation of morals amongst us, do it eventually. For instance, the Test and Corporation Acts, which require every person who has a post under government, or a commission in the navy or army, to qualify himself for his office by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, would occasion no sin, if men were generally influenced by the fear of God, or even by a principle of integrity. They would then rather decline places of honour or profit than accept them upon such terms, if they were conscious that their sentiments or conduct were repugnant to the design of that institution. But as the case stands at present, while gain is preferred to godliness, and the love of distinction or lucre is stronger than the dictates of conscience, we frequently see professed infidels and notorious libertines approach the Lord's table as a matter of course, and prostituting the most solemn ordinance of Christianity to their ambition or interest. The great number and variety of appointments, civil and military, which cannot be legally possessed without this qualification, render the enormity almost as common as it is heinous. If the Lord be a God of knowledge, he cannot be deceived. If he be a God of truth and holiness, he will not be mocked. I am afraid we

have been long guilty of a contemptuous profanation of the body and blood of Christ.

The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury, which, perhaps, may eminently be styled our national sin. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may, and do, strictly observe them; but, it is to be feared, the greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed without hesitation, and without any design of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy body or a fool. Yet they must be tendered, and must be taken, as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of church-wardens and constables, who are yearly sworn, is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years, they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that while some, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and while some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit, the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. To this source we may ascribe much of that profligacy and contempt of religion which we are now called to mourn over. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit through the land.

Where the laws have expressly interposed to enforce the commands of God, if they are suffered by general consent to lie dormant, and are not carried into execution, the enormities which flow from such connivance come under the denomination of national sins. The profanation of the Lord's day, drunkenness, profane swearing, are contrary, not only to the precepts of Scripture, but to the laws of the land; and yet could hardly be more prevalent if there were no statutes in force against them. As these evils are not apparently detrimental to the revenue or to commerce, they are seldom taken notice of, except when connected with some act of trespass or injury to individuals. Very few

magistrates are concerned to enforce the observation of these laws ; and if private persons sometimes attempt it by information, they meet but little success, they obtain but little thanks. The arts of pleading, the minutiae and niceties of forms, are employed to entangle and discourage them, and to screen offenders. Their endeavours are usually treated as officious and impertinent, and they are stigmatized with the invidious name of *informers*. In their own cause they are allowed to be active ; but a man must have a good share of resolution, or rather of divine grace, who can withstand the reproach and scorn he will bring upon himself if he dare to be active in the cause of God.

My subject, alas ! is almost boundless. But our time prescribes limits to my discourse. I must, however, hint my apprehension, that acts of oppression and violence, in some parts, at least, of our widely extended settlements, have contributed to enhance and aggravate our national sin. If the welfare and the lives of thousands have been sacrificed to the interest of the few ; if the ravages of cruelty and avarice, though notorious and undeniable, have met with no public censure or punishment, may we not expect that God himself will avenge the oppressed, and plead their cause, not only against their actual oppressors, but against the community that refused to hear their cries and redress their wrongs ?

I am pained, likewise, to observe how little the calamities of war and the shedding of blood are laid to heart. War, when most necessary and unavoidable, is a dreadful evil ; one of the most severe scourges with which the great God visits a sinful world. But, because we, through his mercy, know no more of it at home than by what we hear of the sufferings of others ; to their sufferings, if we account them enemies, the hearts of many are as unfeeling as a stone. They contemplate with composure and apparent satisfaction, not only the horrors of a field of battle, but the devastations, flames, rapes, and murders, which too often mark the progress of conquest, or the retreat of disappointed rage. May the Lord God keep such miseries far from us ! May we never have to say, “ As we have heard, so we have seen ! ” But there is a temper and spirit too prevalent amongst us, which calls for humiliation : a thirst of revenge, an eagerness for war, as affording opportunity for pillage and plunder, and an indifference to the distresses of our fellow-creatures, more answerable to the idea we form of the savages in America, than to that of a civilized and Christian people.

If we consider the nation with a more particular respect to the profession of religion amongst us, the prospect is equally dark. Though the articles and liturgy, which are still retained as a pub-

lic standard, express the doctrines and spirit of the Reformation, the truths upon which they are founded are sunk into disrepute. They are heard from few pulpits ; they are to be met with in few books of modern divinity. The ministers who have courage to preach agreeably to their required subscriptions, are discountenanced and slighted, if not openly opposed. In a word, the Gospel of Christ, the truth as it is in Jesus, is little known amongst us, and where it is published, it is rejected by a great majority of every rank. Yet, by the mercy of God, it has been considerably revived and spread amongst us of late years, and I hope is still spreading. There is a remnant amongst us who sigh and mourn for the abominations of the times, and have an humble and awful sense of the judgments of God declared against sin. They see black clouds gathering apace around us, and their hearts tremble at the apprehension of what he may justly inflict upon such a nation as this. But even among the people of different denominations who profess the truth, there is much to be lamented. Alas ! what sinful conformity to the world ! what coldness and indifference where we ought to be warm, and what unchristian heat and fierceness in enforcing and exploding lesser differences in sentiments or modes of worship ! May we not fear lest, for the abatement of Christian love, the violence of party-spirit, and the abuse of religious liberty, the Lord should visit his professing people with a rod, even though he were still to exercise patience towards the nation at large ?

Let us, then, having premised this brief but awful delineation of our present state, proceed to consider,

II. What we have just reason to expect, if the Lord should speak to us in his displeasure, and avenge himself of such a nation as this. Two obvious topics offer themselves to assist our inquiries :

1. What we learn from Scripture, and from general history, of God's usual methods in the government of the world. He avenged himself on the old world by a deluge ; on Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven. Where are now the mighty empires which once extended over a great part of the earth ? The Assyrian Persian, Macedonian, and Roman governments, arose and perished in succession. What were Cyrus, Alexander, and other conquerors, whose victories decided the fate of nations, but instruments of divine vengeance ? The sins of the people against whom they went, and a secret commission from the Lord of hosts, directed their march, and ensured their success. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness, but the award of that final tribunal will be personal, to each

one according to his works. Communities, as such, in their collective capacity, are visited and judged in the present life. And, in this respect the Scripture considers nations as individuals; each having an infancy, growth, maturity, and declension. Every succeeding generation accumulates the stock of national sin, and there is a measure of iniquity which determines the period of kingdoms. Till this measure is filled up, the patience of God waits for them, but then patience gives way to vengeance.

Such has been his uniform procedure, from the earliest times of which either sacred or profane history affords us any information; and undoubtedly a day will come when the prosperity of this nation will cease. May it be at a yet very distant period! But there are alarming symptoms of decay already visible upon us. When God is exceedingly displeased with a people, it is not necessary in order to their punishment, that he should bury them alive by an earthquake, or destroy them by lightning. If he only leave them to themselves, withdraw his blessing from their counsels, and his restraint from their passions, their ruin follows of course, according to the necessary order and connexion of causes and effects. The destruction of Jerusalem affords a striking proof and illustration of this remark. Our Saviour foretold that the calamities of that siege would be greater and more aggravated than had ever been known from the creation; and infidels must confess that the relation of Josephus, who was an eyewitness of that catastrophe, exhibits such scenes of distress as cannot be paralleled in any other history. Yet the Roman armies, which were led on by an invisible hand to accomplish the prediction, were not headed by a Nero, or a Caligula, whose savage disposition and thirst of blood, might have prompted them to unrelenting slaughter; but by Titus, who, for his singular moderation and clemency, obtained the title of *Delicia humani generis*, the friend and delight of mankind. He desired not their destruction, he entreated them to have pity on themselves, but in vain; they were judicially infatuated, and devoted to ruin. If God gives up a people to the way of their own hearts, they will, they must, perish. When a general corruption of morals takes place; when private interest extinguishes all sense of public virtue; when a profligate and venal spirit has infested every rank and order of the state; when presumptuous security and dissipation increase in proportion as danger approaches; when, after repeated disappointments, contempt of God, and vain confidence in imagined resources of their own, grow bolder and stronger, then there is reason to fear that the sentence is already gone forth, and that the execution of it is at hand.

2. The progress of our public affairs for some years past, too evidently confirms these general principles, brings the application home to ourselves, and loudly warns us what we are yet to expect, if we persist in hardening ourselves against the Lord. How rapid the change we have seen! From what small beginnings to what extensive consequences! The cloud which now overspreads the heavens with blackness, was not long since no larger than a man's hand. I suppose none who were actively concerned in our public commotions, during their early stage, had the least apprehension that things would have proceeded to such calamitous and diffusive extremities. But sin abounded, and the Lord was displeased. Thus we may easily account for every mistake and miscarriage; for the first rise, and the long continuance of the war. The connexion between us and the Americans was too nearly founded in relation, too closely cemented by mutual interest, to be so suddenly broken, if their sins and ours had not concurred in operation to bring distress both upon them and us. After a great expense of treasure and blood, instead of the reunion we hoped for, we have been successively involved in war with France, Spain, and Holland. And it is possible that every power in Europe either is, or soon will be, openly or secretly against us. Nor can I omit, upon this occasion, the unprecedented violence of the late dreadful hurricanes in the West-Indies. Though infidels and petty reasoners will, doubtless, labour to persuade themselves that they proceed merely from natural causes, Christians, I trust, will acknowledge the voice of God speaking, and speaking to us out of the whirlwind. It is true, he spoke by them to our enemies likewise, for they likewise are sinners. May both they and we be humbled before him, and learn, that as sin instigates and arms us to destroy each other, so when he is pleased to take the work into his own hands, he can strike such a blow as shall for the time suspend our feeble hostilities, and, by involving us in a common calamity, make us, notwithstanding our enmity, the objects of mutual commiseration. "The Lord's hand is lifted up," Isa. xxvi. 11. This part of an ancient prophecy is fulfilled in our view; the next clause "They will not see," is, alas! fulfilled likewise by the amazing insensibility and infatuation which still prevails among us. It follows, "but they shall see." What still greater evils may overtake us, before this clause also is accomplished to the glory of God and our due humiliation, who can say? Alas! who that loves his country, but must tremble at the prospects of the judgments yet impending over us, if he should still proceed to plead his own cause till he is fully

avenged on "such a nation as this!" To relieve my thoughts, I gladly hasten to inquire,

III. Whether there be any hope that "such a nation as this" may yet escape deserved ruin? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected? I confess I have little hopes of it but upon one or the other of the following suppositions:

1. If the Lord be graciously pleased to succeed the professed design of this day's service, and to put forth that power which accompanied his message by Jonah to Ninevah, so that a general spirit of repentance and humiliation may spread throughout the land—if he bow the hearts of both rulers and people, to confess and forsake those sins which have awakened his displeasure—if the laws which concern his honour, will, and worship, be speedily and impartially enforced; and profaneness and immorality discountenanced and suppressed—if, instead of trusting in fleets and armies, we acknowledge the Lord of hosts, and look up to him for a blessing—if men, "fearing God and hating covetousness," Exod. xviii. 21. are raised up to assist in our councils, and to stand forth in their country's cause; men, who will rely on his guidance and protection, and disdain the little arts and intrigues on which alone short-sighted politicians depend for the success of their measures;—should I live to see such a happy internal change, I should hope that, notwithstanding our great provocations, the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, would be yet entreated for us; that he would turn from the fierceness of his anger, maintain our tranquillity at home, and by his wisdom, and his influence over the hearts of men, put an honourable and satisfactory end to the unhappy war in which we are engaged.

2. However the bulk of the nation may determine, if the remnant who know his name, and have tasted of his love, should be deeply impressed with a concern for his glory, and, forsaking their little animosities and party interests, should unite in application to the throne of grace, and be found in those duties and practices which their profession of the Gospel, and the state of things around them require, there is yet hope. For the prayers of God's people have a powerful efficacy. The holy and benevolent importunity of Abraham would have prevailed in favour even of Sodom, if ten righteous persons had been found in it, Gen. xviii. When Sennacherib invaded Judea, had overrun the greatest part of the country, and thought Jerusalem would be an easy conquest, Hezekiah, though he took such precautions as prudence suggested, did not defeat him by arms, but by prayer, Isa. xxxvii. In the prayers of true believers is our best visible

resource. These are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. United prayer, humiliation of heart, a mourning for sin in secret, and a faithful testimony against it in public, will more essentially contribute to the safety and welfare of the nation, than all our military preparations without them. We boast of our navy, and it has often proved by the blessing of God, our bulwark; but how easily can he who walketh upon the wings of the wind, dash the best appointed fleet to pieces against the rocks, or sink it like lead in the mighty waters! We boast of our troops; but he can easily cut them off with sickness, give them up to a spirit of discord, or impress them with a sudden terror, so that the stoutest hearts shall tremble, and the mighty warriors turn pale and drop their weapons! A thousand unforeseen events and contingencies are always at his disposal, to blast and disappoint the best concerted enterprises; for that the race is not necessarily sure to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17. Eccles. ix. 11. is not only asserted in the Scripture, but confirmed by the experience and observation of all ages. But his people are precious in his sight, and their prayers he will hear. Unknown and unnoticed as they are in the world, he highly values them. He has redeemed them by his blood; he inhabits them by his Spirit; he has prepared heaven for them; and the earth itself is continued for their sakes, and shall be destroyed when they are all removed from it. They are the light, the salt, Matt. v. 13, 14. the strength, and the safety of the nations among which they are dispersed. Except the Lord of hosts had left a small remnant (Isa. i. 9.) of these among us, we should long ago have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah. To his attention to their prayers and concerns, I doubt not, the preservation of this city, at the time of the late horrible riots, may be ascribed. I wish I could now recall to your minds the emotions which some of you then felt, when your countenances bore a strong impression of your inward anxiety. Those terrors came upon you unexpectedly; and, though they are forgotten by too many, scenes equally distressing may present themselves before you are aware. O may he in mercy animate this remnant, now to stand in the breach as one man, and to wrestle for a sinful land! Then we may at least arise to the hope of the Ninevites, "Who can tell but the Lord may turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 9.

Let me now close with an address,

1. To such of you in this assembly as fear the Lord. A part of you are a poor and afflicted people, and by your obscure situation in life, are precluded from a very distinct knowledge of the

causes, the present effects, and possible consequences of the war. You live in a happy ignorance of what passes in the world, and take no part in the disputes which, in many places, ensnare and embitter the spirits even of professors of the Gospel. Your principles inspire you with sentiments of duty to government, with the love of peace, and with a just sense of the value of your privileges, civil and religious. But though you are poor, and can serve your country in no other way, you may serve it effectually by your prayers. You have access to the throne of grace. Intercede, therefore, for a land that lieth in wickedness; be concerned for the honour of his name, for the blindness and misery around you. It may be the Lord will be entreated of you, and for your sakes; and for the sake of such as you, command the destroying angel to stay his hand.

Those of you who have better opportunity of knowing the state of our public affairs, have likewise a more extensive sphere of service. You will, I hope, improve your influence in your families and connexions, and, by your advice and example, endeavour to awaken all with whom you converse, to join in promoting the design of this day's service. I call upon all "who have ears to hear, and eyes to see," the voice and the hand of the Lord, the rich and the poor, the young and the aged, to be faithful, circumspect, and zealous in your several stations.

Should wrath be decreed, and there be no remedy, at least you shall prevail for yourselves. You shall know that the Lord whom you serve is a strong hold in the day of trouble, and is mindful of them who put their trust in him. You can hardly be too much alarmed for the nation; but for yourselves you have no just cause of fear. We are commissioned to say to the righteous, "It shall be well with him," Isa. iii. 10. The Saviour to whom you have fled for refuge has all power in heaven and earth. He will keep you as the apple of his eye, and hide you under the shadow of his wings. He can screen you from evil, though thousands and ten thousands should suffer and fall around you. Or if he appoints you a share in suffering, he will be with you to support and comfort you, and to sanctify all your troubles. His word to you is, "when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled." Matth. xxiv. 6. Fear not them who, at the most, can but kill the body. The light of his countenance is sufficient to cheer you in the darkest hour, and your best interest, your everlasting inheritance, is safe beyond the reach of enemies, in a kingdom (how unlike the kingdoms of the earth!) which cannot be shaken, Heb. xii. 28. Your life is hid with Christ in God; and "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear,

then shall ye also appear with him in glory?" Col. iii. 34. Thither neither sin nor sorrow shall be able to follow you. Then your sun shall go down no more, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. In patience, therefore, possess your souls. Be not moved by appearances, but remember all your concerns are in the hands of Him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Let those who know him not, tremble when he ariseth to judgment and to shake terribly the earth; but do you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, make him your fear and your dread, and he shall be to you for a sanctuary; Isa. viii. 13, 14. and in a little time he will come to receive you to himself, and to wipe all tears from your eyes.

2. But what can I say to the rest of the congregation? Though we are all met in the same place, and outwardly engaged in the same service, so that, to the eye of man, we may appear as one people, animated with one and the same desires, the eye of the Searcher of hearts sees and notices a real and important distinction amongst us. He draws, with infallible certainty, the line of separation. He knows who are truly on his side, whose hearts are tender, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. who are afraid of his judgments, and are mourning for their own sins, and the sins of the nation; and he knows and sees that too many here have neither his fear nor his love abiding in them. You may comply with an outward form, and abstain from a meal; but you neither abstain from sin, nor desire to do so. To-day, you look serious, and by your presence seem to assent to the confessions which have been made, and the prayers which have been offered in your hearing. To-morrow, I fear, will show that all your semblance of seriousness was but hypocrisy; and that though you drew nigh to God with your lips, your hearts were far from him, Mark, vii. 6. But be not deceived; God will not be mocked. You have contributed largely to swell the measure of our national sin: herein you have been hearty and persevering. Do not think that the lip-service of a single day will make any alteration either in your state or in your guilt. Rather that pretended humiliation, by which you act towards God as if you thought he was altogether such a one as yourselves, Psalm l. 21. is an aggravation of your wickedness, and no better than affronting him to his face. Yet I am glad of an opportunity of speaking to you. Oh! that I could prevail on you to seek him in earnest, while he is to be found. You cannot serve, or love, or trust him, unless you be born again. But Jesus is exalted to produce this change in the heart of a sinner, by the power of his

Holy Spirit, and to give faith, repentance, and remission of sins. Could I convince you of this, the rest would be easy. Then, feeling your wants and misery, you would ask mercy of him, and asking, you would surely receive; for he has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John, vi. 37. O Lord, do thou convince them by their own power! Open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, and turn the stony heart into flesh.

Till this be done, you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. What will you do in a day of public calamity, should you live to see it, if you should be despoiled of your earthly comforts, and have no share in the consolation of the Gospel? But should the Lord answer prayer, and prolong our national prosperity, still you must be ruined, unless saved by grace. For what will you do in the hour of death? This is inevitable, and may, for aught you know, be very near. If I could assure you of peace and wealth for the term of a long life, still, without the peace of God, and an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, you must be miserable at the last, and lie down in sorrow.

But, O that we may rather, with one consent, search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord from whom we have so greatly revolted. To us, indeed, belong shame and confusion of face; but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.



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A

**Sermon,**

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL'S, DEPTFORD.

ON SUNDAY, MAY 7, 1786.

ON THE

LAMENTED OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

**RICHARD CONYERS, LL. D.**

LATE RECTOR OF THAT PARISH.



Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

MATT. xxiv. 46

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1786.]

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TO THE  
CHURCH WARDENS AND PARISHIONERS  
OF  
SAINT PAUL'S, DEPTFORD,

THIS SERMON IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THE

AUTHOR.

ON THE DEATH OF DR. CONYERS.



THESSALONIANS, ii. 8.

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

AN active, undaunted zeal in the service of God, and a peculiar tenderness of affection towards his people, were happily and eminently combined in the character of St. Paul. The latter appears in none of his writings to greater advantage than in this epistle, and particularly in this chapter. He had been made very useful to the Thessalonians, and was greatly beloved by them. Many of them had received the Gospel which he preached, not in word only, but in power; and were effectually turned, by grace, from dead idols, to serve the living and the true God, 1 Thess. i. 5, 9. They likewise were very dear to him; and, being now at a distance from them, he writes to confirm their faith and hope, to animate and direct their conduct. And he takes many occasions of reminding them of the peculiar regard he has borne them from the first, and how near they still were to his heart; that his love for them, which had sweetened all his labours and sufferings when he was among them, made him still solicitous for their welfare, and enabled him to rejoice on their account, while he was suffering bonds and imprisonment at Rome.

The verse I have read is one passage, out of many in the New Testament, where our translation does not fully come up to the spirit and beauty of the original. Not that it is unfaithful or faulty; it is chiefly owing to the difference of the languages. I believe we have no single word in the English tongue to express the energy of the Greek term which he uses in the beginning of the verse; and therefore our translators have employed two, *ἠμετρομενοι*, "Being affectionately desirous of you." It denotes a desire connected with the finest and most tender feelings of the heart; not like the degrading, selfish desire of the miser for gold; but such an emotion, (according to his own beautiful illustration in the preceding verse,) as that with which the nurse, the mother while a nurse, contemplates her own child. Being thus disposed towards you, *Ἐυδοκῶμεν*, "we were wil

ling;" but the Greek is more emphatical—"We esteemed it our pleasure, our joy, the very height of our wishes, to impart unto you the Gospel of God," to put you into our own place, to communicate to you, by the Gospel, all that comfort, and strength, and joyful hope, which we have received from it ourselves. Yea, further, to have imparted to you "our own souls also; that is to devote our whole strength, time, and study, to this very end, to spend and be spent for you, and to be ready to seal our testimony with our blood, if this were needful to your establishment, "because ye were dear unto us, (*Αγαπητοι.*) exceedingly dear unto us." The same word is used, (for the language of mortals will not afford a stronger,) Matt. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son."

When I thought of preaching to you this day, and of mingling my tears with yours, the occasion suggested the choice I have made of a text; and the countenances of many of you convince me that I have not made an improper choice. Another congregation might have been led, from what I have already said, to sympathize with the Thessalonians, in what they must have felt when they were deprived of such a minister and friend; but your minds are engaged by a sense of your own loss. You have reason. You acknowledge and feel, that if I wished (as I certainly did) to select a text which might, while you heard it, strongly impress your minds with the idea of my dear friend, your late pastor, and recall to your remembrance his principles, actions, motives, and aims; how he spoke and how he lived among you, I could hardly have found a passage in the whole Scripture more directly suited to my purpose. I believe no minister in the present, age, nor, perhaps, in any past age since the apostles' days, could have a better warrant than Dr. Conyers to adopt these words of St. Paul, as expressive of his own spirit and character. He had a very tender affection for you. It was his earnest desire, and his great delight, to impart unto you the Gospel of God, because you were dear to him; and it may be said of him, with peculiar propriety, that in this service of love, he imparted to you his own soul, or life, also. You have not forgotten, surely you never can forget, the very solemn and affecting manner in which his ministry among you closed. Whether, while he was reading the apostle's farewell discourse to the elders of the church of Ephesus, Acts xx. 18—35. which occurred in the second lesson for the day, he had a presage that you should see his face no more, we know not. Had he been certain of it, he could not have taken your consciences more earnestly to witness, that he was clear of your blood, and that he had not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. However the

event proved that you then saw and heard him for the last time. His strength and life were prolonged to finish his discourse, and to pronounce over you his parting blessing, which he had scarcely finished, before he was called home to his Master's joy. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing," Luke, xii. 43.

In considering the ground of the apostle's love to the Thessalonians, and the proofs which he gave of it, the subject will frequently lead me to bear a testimony to the grace of God, vouchsafed to your late minister, of whom we may truly say, he was a "follower of St. Paul, as Paul also was of Christ," 1 Cor. xi. 1.

I. The first ground, the original cause of the apostle's love to the brethren, was the love of Christ. His unwearied endeavours, in the midst of the hardships and dangers which awaited him in every place, to promote the happiness of mankind, made him appear to many who were unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, as though he were beside himself. The apology he offered was "the love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 14. Till he knew the Lord, he acted very differently. While he was under the power of prejudice and ignorance, he verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore breathed out threatening and slaughter against his people, Acts, ix. 1. xxvi. 9. But Jesus, whom he persecuted, appeared to him in his way to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, vouchsafed him pardon, and commissioned him to preach the faith which he had laboured to destroy, Gal. i. 23. From that time he esteemed himself a chief sinner, and because much had been forgiven him, he loved much. He devoted his whole future life to proclaim the glory and grace of his Saviour, and to propose himself as a pattern of his long-suffering and mercy to all around him, that they likewise might believe and be saved, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. He was conscious of his Saviour's just right to reign in every heart. And they who, by receiving the Gospel which he preached, entered into his views, and loved the Lord whom he loved, instantly became dear to him for his Lord's sake, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free. It is probable, that all who are convinced and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, having a clearer knowledge of the nature, number, and aggravation of their own sins than they can possibly have of those of any other person, account themselves among the chief of sinners, though many of them may have been preserved from gross enormities. I never heard that your minister was influenced, like Saul of Tarsus, by a bitter, persecuting spirit; and, I believe, his behaviour was moral and exemplary from his youth. When he

entered upon his ministry, at his beloved Helmsley, in Yorkshire, he found the place ignorant and dissolute to a proverb. At this early period of life he feared God, and he hated wickedness. With much zeal and diligence he attempted the reformation of his parish, which was of great extent, and divided into several hamlets. He preached frequently in them all. He encouraged his parishioners to come to his house. He distributed them into little companies, that he might instruct them with more convenience: he met them in rotation, by appointment. In this manner, long before he fully understood that Gospel of God which of late years he so successfully imparted to you, I have been assured that he often preached or exhorted, publicly or more privately, twenty times in a week. These labours were not in vain: a great, visible, and almost universal reformation took place. About the time I am speaking of, a clergyman in his neighbourhood made very honourable mention of Mr. Conyers, in a letter to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, (which I have seen in print,) as, perhaps, the most exemplary, indefatigable, and successful parochial minister in the kingdom; yet, in the midst of applause and apparent success, he was far from being satisfied with himself. He did what he could; he did more than most others; but he felt there was something still wanting, though, for a time he knew not what; but he was desirous to know. He studied the Scriptures, and he prayed to the Father of lights. They who thus seek shall surely find. Important consequences often follow from a sudden, involuntary turn of thought. One day an expression of St. Paul's, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," Ephes. iii. 8. engaged his attention. He had often read the passage, but never noticed the word "unsearchable" before. The Gospel, in his view of it, had appeared plain, and within his comprehension; but the apostle spoke of it as containing something that was "unsearchable." A conclusion, therefore, forced itself upon him, that the idea he had hitherto affixed to the word *Gospel*, could not be the same with that of the apostle. From this beginning, he was soon led to perceive that his whole scheme was essentially defective; that his people, however outwardly reformed, were not converted. He now felt himself a sinner, and felt his need of faith in a Saviour in a manner he had never done before. Thus he was brought, with the apostle, to account his former gain but loss. The unsearchable riches of Christ opened to his mind, he received power to believe, his perplexities were removed, and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He presently told his people, with that amiable simplicity which so strongly marked his character, that, though he had endeavoured to show them

the way of salvation, he had misled them ; that what both he and they had been building, was not upon the right foundation. He, from that time, preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified, as the only ground of hope for sinners, and the only source from whence they could derive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, 1 Cor. ii. 2. i. 30. The Lord so blessed his word, that the greater part of the people who were most attached to him soon adopted his views, and many more were successively added to them. This change in his sentiments and manner of preaching, though it added efficacy to his moral instructions, and endeared him to his people at home, lost him much of that high estimation in which he had been held abroad. But he knew the Gospel of God too well to be ashamed of it ; whatever disgrace he suffered in such a cause he could bear with patience. He loved his people, and was beloved by them ; and their advance in comfort and holiness made him ample compensation for the unkindness of those who knew not what they did. And thus, when the providence of God removed him hither, the constraining love of Christ, which had long been the great principle of his conduct, disposed him to love you before he saw you ; and he came among you with an earnest desire to impart unto you the Gospel of God, and his own soul also, because, from the moment that he accepted the charge over you, he was affectionately desirous of you.

The regard of the apostle to the Thessalonians was, undoubtedly, heightened in proportion as the Lord was pleased to give him seals to his ministry among them. And the like cause had the like effect here. The mutual affection that subsists between a faithful minister and those to whom the Lord makes him useful, is of a peculiar kind, and not easily described. I trust he looked upon many of you with joy, as his "crown and glory in the day of Christ ;" 1 Thess. ii. 19. and you, I doubt not, looked on him with respect and gratitude, as the instrument of God in saving your souls, in calling you "out of darkness into marvellous light." What were some of you doing, and whither were you going, when God sent you, by him, the word of salvation ? And what a happy change have you since experienced ? You were then "dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world ; but now you, who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Ephes. ii. 1, 12, 13. Now, being freed from the slavery of sin, "you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life : " Rom. vi. 22. You have now access to God, communion with him, an interest in his promises, and a good hope, through grace, that, though your minister be taken from you, he who, by him,

“begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. i. 6. Let this thought moderate your grief. You will see the face of your minister no more here; but you will meet him again, ere long, before the throne of God and the Lamb. Then all tears will be for ever wiped away.

Again: During the apostle’s continuance with the Thessalonians, he and they had enjoyed precious seasons of worship together, and of mutual communion with God, in the ordinances of his appointment. “Wherever two or three are met in the Lord’s name,” Matth. xviii. 20. he is mindful of his promise, and does “manifest himself unto them, as he does not unto the world;” John, xiv. 22. and these tastes of his loving kindness wonderfully soften, spiritualize, and enlarge their affections, and knit them closer and closer together in love. And though that power and unction from on high, which makes the ordinances of the Gospel truly delightful, and an hour so employed preferable to a “thousand” Psalm lxxiv. 10. of the world’s hours, does not altogether depend upon the gifts, or even upon the grace of the minister; yet it is, doubtless, a singular and high privilege to be under the care of a wise and tender shepherd, of one who, in the school of experience, has acquired the “tongue of the learned,” Isa. l. 4. who knows how to adapt himself to the occasions of the people, to give every one their proper portion, to obviate their doubts, relieve their fears, point out their dangers, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Be thankful that you were long favoured with such an able minister of the New Testament. As a public preacher, he may, perhaps, have left some equals behind him. But he had at Deptford, as formerly at Helmsley, stated seasons, when he expounded the Scriptures to a smaller auditory in his house, or within his own premises. He supposed that, on these occasions, few persons were present but those who either possessed the peace of the Gospel, or were sincerely seeking it. The simplicity and meekness of wisdom with which, as a father among his children, he exhorted, comforted, and instructed these his more select hearers, seemed peculiar to himself. In this branch of his ministerial office I always thought him unequalled and inimitable. How often have many of you had reason to say, at such seasons, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?” Luke, xxiv. 32. And the great attention with which he was heard, and the proofs he saw that his labours were not in vain, rendered him still more affectionately desirous towards you.

For, lastly, as one great reason why the apostle loved the Thessalonians was, that they were not only hearers, but doers of the word, and he could speak of them with pleasure, and propose

them to others as “examples” (1 Thess. 1. 7.) of the efficacy and tendency of the Gospel which he preached ; so, I trust, yea, I know, that some of you were exceedingly dear to your late minister on this account also. He could say of you, and to you, “now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord,” 1 Thess. iii. 8. He had no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth, 3 John 4. and demonstrate, by their conduct, that the Gospel which they professed was a doctrine according to godliness. Those of you who gave him this pleasure, may, now he is gone, praise God for the grace which enabled you to administer to the comfort of one who so tenderly watched over your souls. He was proportionably affected with pungent grief when any whom he loved acted unsuitably to their profession, though they perhaps seldom knew what their unfaithfulness cost him. In his preaching, he bore a strenuous and faithful testimony against every evil; not only against gross sins, but against every deviation, whether in temper or practice, from the spirit and rule of the Gospel. But there was something in his natural disposition which made it difficult for him to expostulate plainly and strongly in private. In private, he could not easily reprove. But he could mourn; he could wear out the day without pleasure, and the night without rest, in bemoaning those who had neither compassion for him nor themselves. I can affirm this of him, from instances which have come to my own knowledge. Perhaps some person present may think, Surely the preacher has heard of me, and means to point me out to the notice of the congregation. No, it is your own conscience points you out; I know you not. But is it so, indeed, that you broke your minister’s rest, and added to his troubles by your miscarriages? You do well to weep: may God give you repentance not to “be repented of,” 2 Cor. vii. 10. Will not his lamented and sudden death recall to your remembrance how earnestly he warned you, and pleaded with you, while he was living, and rouse you from that dangerous security into which you have been seduced by the deceitfulness of sin?

II. I have, in a great measure, anticipated what I purposed to mention under a second head—the proofs which he gave that the affection he professed for his people was cordial and sincere. But the subject is not exhausted. St. Paul evidenced his love to the Thessalonians, by imparting to them the Gospel of God, and by his unwearied zeal and diligence in their service, in defiance of the difficulties and obstacles which always attended his labours. By the strong expression, that he was ready “to impart unto them his own soul also,” he intimates both the energy of his address, and his fixed determination to venture every consequence in their service.

In another place, the apostle, speaking of the doctrine which he preached says, "according to my Gospel," Rom. ii. 16. It was not a point of speculation with him; he possessed it. He had experienced the power of it; it was the spring of his conduct, the source of his comfort; and was, therefore, properly *his own*. Here he styles it the Gospel of God, perhaps to distinguish it from a pretended Gospel, such as the Galatians received from false teachers, which he calls "another Gospel," Gal. i. 6, 7. and which was, indeed, not the Gospel. The true Gospel is of God. It is "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," 1 Tim. i. 11. From whence we infer its certainty, authority, and importance. It is worthy of all acceptance; it is able to make us "wise unto salvation," 2 Tim. iii. 15. if cordially embraced; and to neglect it, is to refuse life, to choose death, to resolve to be miserable, and to affront the wisdom and goodness of God. When Paul preached this Gospel at Thessalonica, it awakened the spirit of envy, opposition, and clamour, in many who believed not; but they who received it, experienced it to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls.

This Gospel your late minister preached among you; and, I trust effectually imparted to many of you, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He owed all his success, and you derive all the light and comfort you obtained under his instruction, to the doctrine which he delivered. It cannot, with reason, be expected, that God will afford the seal of his blessing to any scheme of doctrine but his own truth. A preacher may be of good character in civil life, and diligent in his office; and he may have some success in suppressing outward wickedness, though he does not preach the Gospel of God; but he will not reach the heart of his people, wean them from their secret sins, and win them to the love and practice of universal holiness, unless he preaches St. Paul's Gospel. I hope this congregation has been better taught than to receive every thing indiscriminately for truth, because it is spoken from a pulpit. You have the Scriptures in your hands, and by this standard, you are warranted, yea, commanded, to "try the spirits," 1 John iv. 1. because many false prophets and pretended preachers are abroad in the world. However, I will take the liberty to remind you of some plain and sure marks by which you will be able to distinguish a faithful minister of the true Gospel.

He will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth, and the life. He will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy, and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which Christ made for sin, by his bloody death upon

the cross. He will give you no encouragement to think you can do any thing well pleasing to God till you yourselves are first made acceptable in the Beloved; nor until his love is the motive of your obedience, and your dependence is fixed upon the promised communications of strength and grace from his fulness.

By a manifestation of the truth, he will commend himself to your "consciences in the sight of God," 2 Cor. iv. 2. He will not amuse you with the discussion of some curious point, in which you have little immediate interest, or some cold, general, common-place subject. Many sermons, ingenious in their kind, may be compared to a letter put into the post office without a direction. It is addressed to nobody, it is owned by nobody, and if a hundred people were to read it, not one of them would think himself concerned in the contents. But the word of the Gospel, when faithfully dispensed, searches the heart, and tries the reins, Heb. iv. 12. You will wonder that the preacher, who, perhaps, is a stranger to you, can so exactly suit himself to your case. He will sometimes bring to your remembrance what you have done or said, or even what you have only thought, and which possibly you had forgotten. So that if you are going on in your sins, or are veiled under a cloak of hypocrisy, you will be ready to start, and think he is about to expose you publicly. Or if you are a mourner in Zion, distressed with fear and temptation, beset with trouble, and know not which way to turn; that tongue of the learned, which he has acquired in the school of experience, will frequently lead him, while speaking from his own feelings, to meet you with a word in season, so exactly suited to your case, that if you had told him the state of your mind, and every particular of your situation beforehand, he could not have described them better. Such is the correspondence between the word of God and the heart of man; and such a similarity of the workings of the human heart in similar circumstances, that the preacher who is enlightened by the Scripture and by the Holy Spirit, while he does little more than relate the exercises of his own mind, appears to many of his hearers to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, better than they could have expressed them to him. Thus it is that "the secrets of the heart are made manifest" (1 Cor. xiv. 25.) by the preaching of the Gospel. All other preaching compared with this is lifeless, distant, and unaffecting, little more than declamation; but the words of a "scribe," Matt. xiii. 52. well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, come home to our own business and bosoms, and constrain many to say with the woman of Samaria, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did," John iv. 29.

A true servant of God in the Gospel may likewise be known, at least in the place where he resides, or stately labours, by a certain mixed kind of character, which he will receive from public report. The general tenour of his conduct will be such, that the feeble attempts of slander to vilify him will be gradually suppressed, and they who would speak evil of him be put to shame and to silence by his "good conversation in Christ," 1 Pet. iii. 18. But, though his behaviour be unimpeachable and exemplary, his principles will be misunderstood and misrepresented; and by different persons, (sometimes by the same persons, very different) and inconsistent things will be laid to his charge. He will often be deemed rigid, precise, and uncharitable, enjoining a strictness in life and manners to the extreme; so that, to adopt his views, and to follow his rules, a person must bid farewell to comfort, and almost renounce society; while in the same day, and almost in the same breath, he will be represented as preaching doctrines which, if generally received, would be unfavourable to good morals, and promote licentiousness. For the natural heart has a dislike, equally to the grace and to the holiness of the Gospel. Salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus is thought too easy, and affording too much encouragement to the unworthy; and the simple, grateful obedience which characterizes those who seek salvation in this way, and in no other, is thought too strict and scrupulous, a carrying of things a great deal too far. They who are of the world, who speak to the world, and whom the world is willing to hear, give no offence, and therefore no clamour is excited against them; but a faithful minister will not be exposed to the "wo" (Luke vi. 26.) denounced against those of whom all men speak favourably. His infirmities and mistakes (for he is not perfect) will be eagerly noticed and exaggerated; and if no just fault can be found, he must, at least, expect to be spoken of as an enthusiast, or branded by some name to which ignorance and prejudice have affixed a contumelious sense.

Such a one was your late minister. Like the apostle, he laboured to impart to his hearers the Gospel of God: like him, he was unmoved by the opposition of those who knew not what they did, and ready to "endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they might be saved," 2 Tim. ii. 10. He loved you, and was willing to impart to you his own soul also. His spirit was willing; he did much, and wished he could have done more.

It was, indeed, a surprise to many who were not intimately acquainted with him, that he did no more. And it may be thought by some persons, that as, by his countenance, he seemed to enjoy

a tolerable share of health, his public services were hardly answerable to the zeal of a man who was ready to pour out his very life for the good of souls. He preached but once a week in his parish church; and no arguments, persuasions, or entreaties, could prevail on him to enter any pulpit but his own. Even when he has been expressly nominated by his diocesan to preach in another church, he has declined the service, and disappointed crowded auditories who wished to hear him. The benefits of his singular abilities were, therefore, confined to his own congregations. And it was with the greatest difficulty, and but seldom, that his most intimate friends could engage him to lead in family worship, where he has been occasionally present. I have frequently mentioned to him my concern that the sphere of his usefulness should be so much limited; and he lamented it himself, but his hindrance was constitutional and invincible. He had a continual hurry and flutter upon his spirits; the effects of which were unaccountable to those who knew not the cause. Taken in different views, he might be considered as very happy or very uncomfortable at the same instant. In the most important sense, he was a happy man. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoyed much of the light of his countenance, and had no perplexing doubts respecting either his acceptance in the Beloved, or his perseverance in grace. Yet, through the agitation of his spirits, he spent his days, and almost every hour, in trepidation and alarm. The slightest incidents were sufficient to fill him with fears, which, though he knew to be groundless, he could not overcome. But upon no occasions did he suffer more from these painful feelings than when he had public preaching in prospect. When he met his people at home, he usually found pleasure and liberty, unless he observed some new faces. But the sight of a stranger, especially if he knew or suspected him to be a minister, would sometimes distress him greatly, and almost disable him from speaking. It may seem very extraordinary, that a man of the first abilities as a preacher, highly respected and honoured with eminent usefulness, should be intimidated by the presence of those who were much his inferiors. But such was his burden, which neither reflection nor resolution could remove. What he often suffered before he ascended this pulpit, and when he looked round upon a large congregation, and knew not how many such persons as he was afraid of, might be among them, gave him a right to say in a singular sense, that in imparting the Gospel of God to you, he imparted his own soul also. Perhaps there have been martyrs who approached the rack or the stake with less distressing sensations than he has frequently felt when about to enter upon his otherwise delightful work. Yet because you were the people of his

immediate charge, and dear to him, he seldom declined your service on the forenoon of the Lord's day if he was well. But this, I believe, was the reason, that at other times, instead of preaching in the church, he confined himself to a place where few, comparatively could attend him. I do not know, that while he lived at Deptford, he ever preached publicly in this neighbourhood, excepting once, when he accepted an appointment to preach at the archdeacon's visitation at Dartford. But he kept his intention a secret in his own breast; and did not mention it to his nearest friends, lest a multitude should be drawn to hear him. And he told me himself, that from the hour he stood engaged, which was several weeks before the time, he could scarcely think of any thing else; and that when the day arrived, his spirits were so greatly agitated, that for some minutes after he was in the pulpit he was deprived of his eye-sight. But the Lord, whom he served, supported him; and he was upon the whole, carried comfortably through the service.

If we speak of death as the moment of separation between soul and body, he was not afraid of it; for he knew in whom he believed, and that to depart and be with his Lord, was *πολλω μαλλον κρισισον*. Phil. i. 23. unspeakably preferable to any thing that could be enjoyed in the present life. But though not afraid of *death*, he was often afraid of *dying*. His apprehensions of the possible forerunners and concomitants of a dying hour, frequently made a painful impression upon his spirits. Upon this account, they who loved him have reason to be reconciled to the suddenness of his removal. His was an honourable dismissal indeed! The messenger that called him home found him actually and actively employed in his Master's service, with his "loins girded up, and his lamp burning," Luke xii. 35. It was, likewise, a gracious condescension to his infirmity, and saved him from an experience of any of those conflicts which he could seldom think of without anxiety and a degree of anguish.

Upon the whole, I may say of Dr. Conyers, without just fear of contradiction, "he was a burning and a shining light," John v. 35. Many of you rejoiced in his light; and now the man who cared for your souls, who was the minister of God to you for good, is taken from you, your sorrow is proportionable. Yet, if you truly entered into his views, you are not destitute. The Saviour whom he preached, and in whom you have believed, is still with you. The stream, at which you have often drank and found refreshment, is dried up; but the fountain of living water, from whence it was derived, is always full and always flowing. Whoever dies, Jesus lives; the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he is at no loss for means to communicate his blessings to those who wait upon him;

yea, under his management, even losses prove gains, and apparent hindrances work to the help and furtherance of faith. Be thankful that you were so long favoured with such a minister; and rejoice that, though you can see him no more in this world, you shall meet him again in the world of light. In the mean time, (need I say,) respect and honour his memory; and the most effectual manner by which you can show your regard to him, will be by walking as he walked, and maintaining a "conversation" (Phil. i. 27.) becoming the Gospel, which he so affectionately and faithfully imparted to you.

But there are, I fear, amongst you those who accounted the joyful sound of the Gospel, which he proclaimed a burden; have been wearied by his earnest endeavours to pluck you as brands from the burning, and have often wished to be freed from his importunity. Now you have your wishes. Your faithful monitor is removed. He will alarm your consciences, he will offend your pride no more. But if, after slighting his labours of love while he lived, you remain likewise unaffected by his death, you are much more to be pitied than those who lament his removal. Alas! when numbers, in different and distant places, who never saw you, are concerned for you, will you not yet be concerned for yourselves? Tremble, lest you should have cause to say, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!" Jer. viii. 20 You have had your opportunity, a day of grace, in which the things pertaining to your peace have been set before you. The Lord forbid that the following words should be applicable to you: "But now they are hidden from your eyes!" Luke, xix. 42. The Saviour whom you have too long slighted, is now once more preached to you. He is still upon the throne of grace, able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. But, hereafter, he will appear on a throne of judgment, "taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his Gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8.



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THE BEST WISDOM :

**A Sermon,**

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1787;

THE DAY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE POOR.



As every man hath received, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.—1 PET. iv. 10.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1787.]

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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The importunity of friends is not pleaded as an excuse for this publication, but simply, the importance of the subject.

Nor is this discourse offered as an exact copy of what was preached : but it is as nearly so as recollection could make it. They who heard the one, if they read the other, will, probably, recognize the same leading sentiments in both ; and, perhaps, a page or two would contain all that has been either added or omitted.

*Coleman-street Buildings, Jan. 1, 1788.*

## THE BEST WISDOM.



PROVERBS, xi. 30.

*--He that winneth souls is wise.*

ONLY he who redeemed the soul by his blood, is able effectually to win it to himself. The work is his, and they who know him will render the praise to him alone. But in this respect, as in many others, there is an analogy between the natural and the moral world. In both, he displays his power, and executes his purposes, by an instituted course of means and instruments. In both, he often so conceals his operations under the veil of second causes, that to a common and inattentive eye, he seems to do nothing, when, in reality, he does all. The manna with which he fed Israel in the wilderness, though more immediately and visibly, was not more certainly the effect and proof of his providence and goodness, than the bread by which we live. It is he who giveth the earth virtue to produce corn, Psalm civ. 14. ; the discretion of the husbandman who prepareth the ground and soweth the seed is from him, Isa. xxviii. 24—29. ; and the influence of the sun and the rain, so necessary to ripen the grain, and to clothe the fields with plenty in the season of harvest, is the influence of him who worketh all in all, Matt. v. 45. In this process, the blessing which secures the desired event, is wholly from the Lord, though the labour of man and the use of means are indispensable, because his appointment has made them so.

Thus, in the great concern of winning souls, though God (whose thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) may sometimes, as in the instance of the apostle Paul, Acts, ix. 6. affect and win the heart by an immediate and instantaneous exertion of his power ; yet this is not his ordinary method. Though fallen, we are still rational creatures, and he is pleased to treat us as such. He proposes considerations and motives in his holy word, which, though ineffectual, considered merely as means, and without the concurrence of his agency, yet have, in their own nature, a moral tendency and suitability to awaken our attention, to convince us of our sin and misery, and to recall us to our original state of dependence upon his goodness, and obedience to his will. For the proof of this, I may appeal to the consciences of many persons. The force of truth has compelled them to tremble like Felix, and, perhaps, like Herod, to do many things ; and though their depravity has

been too obstinate to yield to conviction, they have understood and felt enough to leave them without excuse.

The Lord God usually employs those whom he has already won and subdued by his grace, as instruments of winning others; and there are none of his people, however weak their capacities, or however low their situations in life, but may hope for a share in this honour, if they are faithful to the light he has given them, and live according to the rule of his word. But he has instituted the office of the Gospel-ministry, with a more especial view to this important service.

The proposition in the text is simple and plain; and the principal division of my subject is suggested by the appearance of our present assembly. I never had an opportunity before of preaching to so many of my brethren in the ministry, and perhaps I never may again. And, at my time of life, it becomes me, whenever I stand in the pulpit, to consider seriously, that it is at least possible it may be the last time, and that you to whom I am now about to speak, may see my face no more. Were I even sure of this, how could I more properly close my public services, than by aiming, with my latest breath, to impress upon you, my friends and brethren, this weighty aphorism, "He who winneth souls is wise." May it be written upon my own heart while I live! may it be written upon all our hearts! Let the scholar, the philosopher, the politician, settle their several claims to wisdom among themselves; but may this wisdom be ours. The man that winneth souls is truly and emphatically wise.

I shall, in the first place, point out the principal acknowledged characteristics of wisdom, and show that they are all exemplified in the spirit and conduct of the minister who is duly qualified for the service of winning souls. I do not say that all faithful ministers are influenced by this wisdom in the same degree; but unless it has an habitual and prevailing influence on the plans and practice of a public teacher, we need not wonder if he be neither faithful nor useful. My chief design is to elucidate and confirm this first point; but towards the close of my discourse, I shall, secondly address myself to private Christians, and remind you of your common interest with us in this concern, and the advantages and opportunities you have of showing yourselves wise, by contributing your endeavours to promote the great design of winning souls.

#### I. The minister who winneth souls is wise.

1. Wisdom is discovered in the choice of a fit and valuable end. If a man has great talents and abilities, we do not account him wise, unless he employs them properly; a life whiled away in low and trivial pursuits, implies a want of wisdom. But he who aims at winning souls, proposes an end which well deserves his ap-

plication; and will, so far as he succeeds, richly compensate him for all he can do or suffer in so good a cause. The grand object of his life, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the recovery of souls. We often use the word *win*, in a sense which the Hebrew term suggests; as, to win a battle or a fortress. The soul, in its fallen state, separated and alienated from God, is, by his righteous permission, under the power of Satan, who rules in it as a strong one armed in his own house or castle, Luke xi. 21. Eph. ii. 2. Were the effects of this bondage confined to the present life, an attempt to free the soul from that misery, mischief, and madness, with which the world is filled, would be honourable and important. But God, who formed the soul originally for himself, has given it such a vast capacity, that nothing short of himself can satisfy its desires; and it is likewise, by its constitution immortal. The capacity of being exquisitely happy or miserable, and that for ever, renders the soul so valuable in the judgment of its Creator, that He gave the Son of his love to redeem it from sin and misery, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. By this adorable method of adjusting the demands of his justice and the honour of his government, to the purposes of his mercy, his wisdom and glory are more eminently discovered to his intelligent creatures, than by all his other works. If the only wise God commends to us his gracious designs of recovering souls from the dominion of Satan, and of winning them to himself, as the highest instance of his wisdom and goodness; then, certainly, he who proposes it as the great end of his life, that, by serving God in the ministry, he may be an instrument of winning souls, is truly wise, so far as concerns his leading aim and object.

2. Wisdom directs us likewise to a consideration and choice of means proper to the attainment of a proposed end. To attempt what is impracticable, however desirable it might be thought, upon a supposition that it could be accomplished, is a mark, not of wisdom, but of folly. A man, without being chargeable with rashness, may undertake to move a stone of several tons weight, and even to raise it, if needful, to the top of a tower: or to force open the strongest gate of a castle; but then the application of mechanical powers would be necessary. If he were unacquainted with these, or disdained to employ them; if, without estimating or considering the resistance to be overcome, and relying solely on his personal strength, he should attempt to move the enormous stone with his hands, or to burst the gates of brass and bars of iron asunder with his feet, his utmost efforts must issue in weariness and disappointment, and no one would think him wise. The experience of ages has demonstrated all endeavours to win souls,

to free them from prejudice, to reclaim them from the love and practice of sin, by the mere force of human arguments and moral suasion, to be equally chimerical and unsuccessful. The Heathen moralists laboured much in this way; but they laboured in vain. Some of them felt and acknowledged that human nature was depraved; but not knowing the root, nor the extent, nor the proper remedy of the disorders they wished to cure, their best sentiments, however specious in theory, made little more impression upon the hearts of their admirers, or even upon their own, than the falling snow makes upon a rock. If the ancient sages could do but little, the modern philosophers, as they choose to be called, have done, if possible, still less. What a poet observed of the former, is, at least, equally applicable to the latter, *Virtus laudatur et aegret*. Virtue is described, defined, recommended, and praised, but wickedness and folly rapidly increase under their instructions; and while in their pompous declamations they propose liberty to others, they are themselves the servants, the slaves of corruption, 2 Pet. ii. 19. The Gospel of Christ, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11. is the only effectual mean for reforming mankind. To the man who possesses, and knows the use of this grand, this wonderful machine, I may be allowed the comparison, what is otherwise impracticable becomes easy. The Gospel removes difficulties insuperable to human power. It causes (Isa. xxxv. 8. Matt. xi. 5.) the blind to see, the deaf to hear; it softens the heart of stone, and raises the dead in trespasses and sins to a life of righteousness. No force but that of the Gospel is sufficient to remove the mountainous load of guilt from an awakened conscience, to calm the violence of tumultuous passions, to raise an earthly soul from grovelling in the mire of sensuality or avarice, to a spiritual and divine life, a life of communion with God. No system but the Gospel can communicate motives, encouragements, and prospects, sufficient to withstand and counteract all the snares and temptations with which the spirit of this world, by its frowns or its smiles, will endeavour either to intimidate or to bribe us from the path of duty. But the Gospel, rightly understood and cordially embraced, will inspire the slothful with energy, and the fearful with courage. It will make the miser generous, melt the churl into kindness, tame the raging tiger in the breast; and, in a word, expand the narrow, selfish heart, and fill it with a spirit of love to God, cheerful, unreserved obedience to his will, and benevolence to mankind.

I shall not trespass upon your time, by delineating at large my idea of the Gospel. Yet it may be proper to mention three points which, in my judgment, are essential to it.

The first respects the character of Jesus the Saviour. That he

is very God, and very man, "God manifest in the flesh;" that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:" 1 Tim. iii. 16. John i. 1, 14. that this divine Word assumed our nature into a personal union with himself, lived and died in behalf of sinners, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, over all, God blessed for ever: that He is the proper object of our worship, supreme love, trust, and adoration: that it is He on whom the eyes and expectation of sinners, sensible of their wants and miseries, are fixed; and out of whose fulness they all receive life, strength, comfort, and grace, to help in time of need, Psal. xxxiv. 5. John i. 16. This doctrine is the pillar and ground of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. They who have a right sense of the guilt and power of sin, of the holiness and majesty of God, and of the hosts of enemies combined against their peace, must sink into despair, unless supported by the knowledge of an Almighty Omnipresent Saviour, who is always near, a very present help in trouble, and who can discern the thoughts of the heart; Rev. ii. 23. for often their most trying and dangerous exigencies are beyond the reach of a creature's eye. Whatever they thought of him before, when they know themselves, they cannot intrust their souls to the power, or care, or compassion of a creature; and therefore, rejoice that they are warranted and encouraged to commend themselves to him as to a faithful Creator, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

The second grand peculiarity of the Gospel is the doctrine of an atonement: that Christ, in his state of humiliation, by his "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 8. made a full, proper, and perfect satisfaction for sin; that is, his sufferings unto death, the torments which he endured in his body, and the agonies of his soul, inconceivable to us but by their effects, (his bloody sweat in the garden, and his astonishing complaint upon the cross, that God had forsaken him,) exhibited a striking and solemn proof to the world, to the universe, no less to angels than to men, that God, in affording mercy to sinners still shows his inflexible displeasure against sin, and makes no relaxation in the awful demands of his holiness, justice, and truth. A substitution capable of manifesting the justice of God in the highest exercise of his mercy, that he might appear just in justifying the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. was of such vast importance to the honour of God's character and government, that if it could have been effected by any inferior means, Christ died in vain, Gal. ii. 21. The interposition of a mere creature, even if voluntary, (but what creature would dare to draw upon himself the displeasure of God due to the sins of men,) could not have displayed the full-orbed glory of all the divine perfections, as it now shines forth in the

person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. None in heaven or on earth were able or worthy to interpose. Therefore the Son said "Lo I come!" He himself, his ownself, bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21.

There is a third point, which is peculiar to the religion of the Bible, and which discriminates it from all religious systems of human institution. There are few of these but contain some important truths. In general, they inculcate a degree of attention to the practice of social virtues. But no other system ever proposed to all persons, and as a general truth, the necessity and certainty of supernatural influence and agency; an agency which, from the greatness of its effect and the universality of its proposal, (being promised to all, without exception, who desire it,) must be divine. That the bodies of believers are the temples of the Holy Ghost; 1 Cor. vi. 19. that God dwelleth in them by his Spirit; that they have received the Spirit of God; that they are led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and have communion with the Holy Spirit; Rom. viii. 4. Gal. v. 18. 25. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. these truths are either expressed, or strongly implied, in almost every page of the New Testament.

The Gospel, then, is a message from God. It stains the pride of human glory, and, without regarding the petty distinctions which obtain amongst men, with respect to character or ranks, it treats them all as sinners in the sight of God, and under the power of depravity strengthened by habit. As such, it points them to a Saviour; it invites and enjoins them to apply to him, to submit to him, and to put their whole trust in him; to renounce all pleas of their own, and to plead his name and his atonement for their pardon and acceptance; and promises to all who thus plead, that the Holy Spirit of God will visit them, dwell in them, and abide with them, to enable them, by his gracious influence, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

I omit other particulars, nor shall I, at present, attempt to prove these, further than by an appeal to observation and experience. I trust, my brethren, we all desire to win souls. It is a good desire, it is a noble, a glorious ambition. I hope we are likewise apprized of the nature of the undertaking, and are too wise to attempt it, or to expect success, by any power or exertion of our own, unless we faithfully and humbly make use of the instrument which God has appointed for the purpose. This instrument is the Gospel message, the principal parts of which I have stated to you. This is the rod of God's strength, which like the wonder-working rod of Moses, when held up in his name, though wielded

by a feeble arm, can perform miracles. And I will venture to affirm, without hesitation, and without exception, that no man, whatever his abilities and qualifications may be in other respects, though he had the zeal of a martyr and the powers of an angel, will be able to force the strong holds of Satan, to cast down the lofty imaginations of men, and win souls to holiness and happiness without it. But if he be called and taught of God to preach this Gospel, he will do great things; he will be honoured and successful; he will win souls; he will be numbered among the wise.

Let us appeal to facts. The apostle Paul was eminently successful in winning souls. He planted churches in many different and distant parts of the Roman empire; wherever he went power from on high accompanied his word, and made it effectual, according to the commission he had received from the Lord, to open the eyes of the blinded Heathens, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts, xxvi. 18. Can we propose a better example for our imitation? Would we know the subject-matter of that preaching which produced such extensive and salutary effects? He gives us full information. He preached Christ crucified; Christ the wisdom and power of God, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.; the unsearchable riches of Christ, Ephes. iii. 8.; Christ the Man who shall judge the quick and dead; Christ as God, who purchased the church with his own blood, Acts, xvii. 31. xx. 28. As a wise master-builder, he laid this foundation, and declared that "other foundation can no man lay," 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. He preached the atonement, that Christ made peace by the blood of his cross, died for us while sinners, and that we are justified by his blood, Col. i. 20. He preached the agency of the Holy Spirit, as absolutely necessary and powerfully efficacious; and ascribes that operation, by which Christ in his true character is revealed to the heart, to the same power which commanded light to shine out of darkness, in the beginning, 2 Cor. iv. 6. These truths were the weapons of his warfare, 2 Cor. x. 4. He went forth conquering and to conquer, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the spirit of demonstration and power.

I need not tell this auditory what were the doctrines which shook the pillars and foundations of Popery at the Reformation, and diffused a knowledge and practice becoming the profession of Christianity, among many which had been long involved in the darkness of ignorance, superstition and wickedness. In our own land, it was not very long before the principles of the Reformation were severely discountenanced. Particularly in the reign of Charles the second, they were opposed by methods which the good providence of God at length effectually restrained, by favouring us with a succession of princes of the house of Hanover.

If the lives and conduct of those who endured fies, stripes, imprisonment, and death, for conscience sake, be compared with the spirit and temper of those who inflicted or approved them, I think a candid and attentive inquirer will be at no loss to determine on which side the advantage lay, in point of real religion and sound morality.

The spirit of our present excellent constitution and government, allows us a degree of religious liberty unknown to our forefathers, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; and the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the apostles, are still preached. Nor have we reason to fear that sanguinary laws, and the iron hand of arbitrary power, will be employed to silence us. Yet the doctrines themselves are far from being generally acceptable. The spirit of opposition is awake, and active as formerly, though the method of its attack is varied. But great is the truth, and will prevail. It has triumphed over violence and rage; it is equally superior to the arts of subtlety and refinement. We are not afraid to repeat the apostle's challenge: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John, v. 5. Which is the scheme of religion in the present day, which produces the most conscientious reverence to the holy name of the Lord our God, the most habitual and devout observance of his holy day, and of family worship? What kind of preaching evidences itself to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the most numerous and notorious instances of persons reclaimed by it from habits of gross licentiousness, and effectually taught to fear the Lord and depart from evil? What are those principles, which, by experience, are found most suitable, and most powerful, to support the soul under the pressure of great afflictions, or upon the near approach of death? I know there are people under afflictions, who, like Pharaoh, harden themselves yet more; who value themselves upon a proud stoical resolution, and deem it a weakness to complain. But Christian fortitude is a very different thing. It is the temper of a humbled, pardoned sinner, who has intrusted himself and his all to the Saviour, and believing that he condescends to direct all his concerns, submits to his appointments, not by constraint, but willingly; sensible that the wisdom and love of him, in whom he confides, will choose better for him than he could possibly choose for himself. I know, or have read that the American Indians, when put to death by their enemies, in the midst of the most excruciating tortures that cruelty can invent, will sing their war songs, and insult their tormentors, without uttering a groan or shedding a tear; and I have likewise read of philosophers, who, to confirm their admirers in a persuasion that infidelity had freed them from all fear

of death and its consequences, have jested in their dying hours. What a contrast to these is the relation we have had of the death of Stephen, who, with the utmost composure, committed his departing spirit into the hands of his Saviour, whom he saw ready to receive him, and employed his latest breath in prayer for his murderers! Acts vii. 54—60. When a believer in Jesus is about to die, he does not express the fiend-like phrenzy of a savage, or the ill-timed levity of a buffoon; he is serious and collected. Conscious of his unworthiness, but knowing in whom he has believed, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. There is often a dignity and energy in the language of plain people in dying circumstances, far superior to what might be expected from their former habits of life: they seem to have new ideas and new faculties; heaven opened to them, and opened in them, while yet in the body. Ignorant and profane persons, who are sometimes spectators of such scenes, have been astonished at effects which, though they could not account for, have, for the moment, secretly extorted from them the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," Num. xxiii. 10. By these effects on the lives and deaths of those who cordially receive it, the Gospel which we preach, the doctrine of the cross, approves itself to be the power of God unto salvation, the sure and only mean of winning souls to His favour and image.

If I have taken up too much of your time with this second particular, let the importance of it, and the state of religion amongst us, plead my excuse. Thus far we have advanced—If it be wisdom to aim at a great design, and to adopt the most fit and proper means for the accomplishment, the man my text speaks of is wise. His end is great, to win souls. The mean he employs is the Gospel, which God has revealed and instituted for this very purpose, and with which his power and blessing are surely connected by promise.

3. Yet the knowledge of a worthy end, and of the means by which it may be attained, is not sufficient to denominate a wise man. If he be truly wise, and his object of great importance, he will not suffer himself to be easily diverted from it, but will rather hold and manage every inferior concernment in a due subservience and subordination to his main point. Sir Isaac Newton, when a child, might possibly have amused himself, as many other children have done, by blowing up bubbles in soapy water with a pipe. But it was not a childish amusement in the hands of this sublime genius, when he applied it, among other experiments, to discover and establish that theory of light and colours,

by which, in his admirable system of Optics he enlightened the world. But if we speak strictly, the most important employments and discoveries of which mankind are capable, if directed no higher than to the concerns of the present life, are trivial and worthless as the sports of children, or the wretched amusements of lunatics, to an immortal, who is soon, very soon, to pass into the unseen world, to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and to be fixed, according to his righteous award, in a state of endless happiness or misery. The desire of pleasing God, and of doing all to his glory, which should be the ultimate end of a rational creature, and will be, if he feels his dependence and his obligations; this, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns every thing into gold, sanctifies the most common actions of life, which belong to the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us, and gives them a sublimity and dignity. Consecrated by this intention, they become acts of devotion. They have a very low idea of religion who confine it to what we usually mean by devotional exercises. The truly religious man, does, indeed, bow his knees in secret before the Most High God; he carefully consults his holy word; he waits upon him in his public ordinances. In these ways he derives fresh supplies from the fountain of wisdom and grace, and his strength is renewed. But he does not leave his religion in the closet or the church; it abideth in him, is the governing spring of his whole conduct, and according to the degree of his attainment in faith and love, and allowing for the unavoidable abstractions incidental to our frames, (which are too weak and limited to be able to fix our attention closely upon many things at once,) whether he be upon the throne or the bench, upon the parade or the exchange; whether he be called to serve God in a public capacity or in private life, whether he be in a state of affluence, or earns his honest bread by sweeping the streets—in every station and situation he is a servant of God from morning to night; and these very different services are all equally acceptable to Him, who seeth not as man seeth, and estimates them, not by their comparative importance in our view, but according to the principle of love by which they are performed, and the sublime end to which they are directed.

But we, my brethren, who are ministers of the Gospel, have this great advantage, (if, indeed, we improve it,) that our particular calling, as members of society, coincides with our general calling as Christians. The person who serves God in a secular calling, may, as I have observed, be equally acceptable to God, because equally devoted to his will; but his advantages and opportunities for winning souls are not equal to ours. It is our professed and appropriate business; and we are freed from the encumbrances of

worldly business, that we may give our whole attention to this very thing, Acts vi. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. If we are wise, we shall watch and pray against being impeded by any studies or pursuits which have not an evident tendency to promote our success in winning souls. You have probably heard what is related of the address of whale fishers, when the whale irritated by the wounds he has received, attacks their boats. It is said they have a tub in readiness to throw into the sea, and that while the whale furiously encounters the tub, the boat has time to escape. Whether this be fact or not, methinks it may suggest a useful lesson to us. Many things, not criminal in themselves, will prove so to us, if we suffer them, by engrossing too much of our time and thoughts, to divert us from our principal object. It may not be wrong, it may be commendable, for a minister to possess some general knowledge of philosophy, history, criticism, and other branches of literature, or of the controversies which have disturbed the peace of the church. But *perimus in licitis*. An over attachment to these studies, though less scandalous, may prove little less hurtful to our ministry than the love of pleasure or the love of money. He who is duly sensible of the importance and difficulty of winning souls, will find but little leisure for sorting shells or butterflies, for studying grammatical niceties, for poring over manuscripts scarcely legible, for deciphering ancient inscriptions, or entangling himself in the dry, uninteresting thickets of controversy. He will be careful lest avocations of this kind should prove, like the tubs I have mentioned, amusements to divert his attention from the state of souls around him, who are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. We are set as watchmen to sound the alarm, to warn the wicked of their evil ways, to direct inquirers into the paths of peace, to point out the snares and temptations to which they are exposed, to exhort and charge those who profess the truth that they walk worthy of God who has called them to his kingdom and glory; and, in a word, to use our best endeavours publicly, and from house to house, in season and out of season, Acts xx. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 2. to build up our hearers in their most holy faith. We are to give an account of the talents, opportunities, and souls intrusted to us; and we should tremble at the thought of being then obliged to confess. "while thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone;" 1 Kings xx. 40. If such an eminent servant of God as archbishop Usher, though possessed of the faith and hope of the Gospel, found cause when reviewing his past life on his dying bed, to cry out repeatedly and earnestly, "Lord, forgive my sins of omission;" how jealous ought we to be of ourselves! It behooves

us to use the language of Nehemiah to many proposals and pursuits which our inclination may plead for, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Neh. vi. 3. Seldom is any man remarkably successful and eminent in arts or sciences, in the acquisition of wealth and power, who does not resolutely deny himself in other respects, and make every secondary point give place, so far as it stands in competition with his leading and favourite object. Such a determined resolution, to follow the avowed design of our calling as the *one thing*, in comparison with which every thing else is to be undervalued and neglected, if likely to hinder us, is essential to that wisdom which alone can qualify us for winning souls.

4. This wisdom implies fortitude also. If we engage in this work without counting the cost, and without being apprized of the difficulties and snares to which it may expose us: or if we cannot, in some measure say, with the apostle, "None of these things move me," Acts xx. 24. we shall, probably, be soon discouraged. What should we think of a statesman, who, having formed a wise and noble plan for the benefit of a kingdom, and having the means necessary to accomplish it within his power, should be deterred from carrying it into execution, though it was approved by all competent judges, merely because he could not bear to be misunderstood or misrepresented by the very lowest of the people, or by the children who play in the street? His want of spirit, upon such a supposition, would, doubtless, be esteemed a want of wisdom. But this is a faint representation of our folly, if believing ourselves to be the servants of God, being convinced, as we say, of the worth and danger of souls, and knowing that the Gospel of God, committed to our trust, 1 Thess. ii. 4. is the only possible mean of their recovery, a regard to the fear or favour of men should prevail on us to suppress or soften our message, and to accommodate ourselves to their taste, instead of conforming to our instructions, lest we should displease them. Would an earthly king bear with an ambassador who was guilty of such timid treachery? We cannot, my brethren, think too humbly of ourselves; but we may magnify our office, and we ought. In this sense, at least, we are ambassadors "for Christ," 2 Cor. v. 20. that the message we are to deliver is not ours, but his by whom we are sent. We are not answerable for the success, but we are under the strongest obligation to be faithful. And he whose we are, and whom we serve, is well able to support us. Let us not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings, Isaiah. li. 7. In the sight of our Lord God all the nations of the earth collected are less

than nothing, and vanity, inconsiderable as the drop which falls unperceived from the bucket, or the dust which cleaves to the scales without affecting the balance, Isa. xl. 15. The apostles were wise to win souls. They tried the spirit of the world before us, and were despised and insulted by it. They were accounted the offscouring and filth of all things, and suffered much shame for their Lord's sake, 1 Cor. iv. 13. Acts, v. 41.; but they esteemed shame, in such a cause, their highest honour. Jesus endured the cross, and despised the shame for them and for us. He was buffeted, spit on, treated as a madman, a demoniac, and laughed to scorn. Let us go forth, bearing his reproach, in meekness of wisdom, instructing those who oppose, not rendering railing for railing, but pitying and praying for them; but let us be firm and unmoved, and not hesitate to speak the truth in love, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. We shall not speak wholly in vain; and to be instrumental in saving one soul from death, is an honour sufficient to compensate for all the slights and contempt we can meet with from an unkind world. It is, indeed, our duty to study to find out acceptable words, to endeavour to please men for their edification, and to be careful not to add to the unavoidable offence of the Gospel, by debasing our zeal with the unhallowed fire of an angry spirit; but we degrade our character, if we appear too solicitous to conciliate the good opinion of men, or to depend upon their favour. The Lord, who employs us, will take care of us; and to live in a spirit of unreserved dependence upon him, will raise us to a noble independence with respect to creatures. All hearts are in his hands. He will protect our persons and characters, supply our wants, control our enemies, and raise us friends so far as he sees it needful, without any solicitude on our parts. if we can but put our trust in him. Such are the principles of Christian fortitude. He who is wise to win souls, loves his fellow creatures; but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord. He will neither provoke nor dread their frowns, nor will he meanly court their smiles. He knows that if they receive his message, they will love him for the truth's sake, and he neither expects nor desires their favour upon other terms. By the cross of Christ he is crucified to the world, and the world to him, Gal. vi. 14. He has chosen his side. He will serve the Lord, Joshua, xxiv. 15. and he will use his utmost influence to prevail on others to serve him likewise; so far as he succeeds, he feels a joy superior to the joy of harvest, or of those who divide the spoil, Isa. ix. 3. When he cannot succeed, he is grieved, but not disconcerted; and for the most part, his calm but steadfast perseverance in well-doing, will gradually establish his

character, stop the mouth of calumny, and extort a reverence to his person, even from those who cannot bear his doctrine.

5. I shall mention but one particular more, which, though experience shows to be not so absolutely necessary as those which I have already specified, because, in fact, it has been too little regarded by many who have been wise to win souls, yet is certainly a branch of that wisdom which, as ministers, we ought incessantly to ask of God: I mean, a due attention to the importance of union among those who are engaged in the same cause. A great stress has, indeed, been often laid upon uniformity of sentiment and modes of worship; but this, in the present state of human nature, can no more be effected, either by force or persuasion, than men can be forced or persuaded to a uniformity of stature or complexion; and, if it were practicable, it might prove of little value. The form of religion may be strenuously contended for by those who are strangers to the power of it; but the best form we can conceive, if destitute of power, is lifeless, like the body without the soul. The true unity of spirit is derived from the things in which those who are taught and born of God agree, and should not be affected by those in which they differ. The church of Christ, collectively considered, is an army; they serve under one Prince, have one common interest, and are opposed by the same enemies. This army is kept up, and the places of those who are daily removed to the church triumphant, supplied entirely by those who are rescued and won from the power of the enemy, which is chiefly effected by the Gospel ministry. This consideration should remind ministers, that it is highly improper (I might use a stronger expression) to waste much of their time and talents, which ought to be employed against the common foe, in opposing those who, though they cannot exactly agree with them in every smaller point, are perfectly agreed, and ready to concur with them in promoting their principal design. A wise statesman, who has a point much at heart, which he cannot carry without assistance, will gladly accept of help from persons of all parties on whom he can prevail to join with him; and will not, at such a crisis, preclude himself from this advantage, by an unseasonable discussion of more minute concerns, in which he knows they must and will be against him. When I see ministers of acknowledged piety and respectable abilities very busy in defending or confuting the smaller differences which already too much separate those who ought to be of one heart and one mind, though, while they are all fallible, they cannot be exactly of one judgment; though I give them credit for their good intention, I cannot but lament the misapplication of their zeal, which, if directed into another channel, would, probably, make them much more successful in winning souls. Let us sound an alarm in the enemies' camp, but not in our own! I have some-

where met with a passage of ancient history; the substance of which, though my recollection of it is but imperfect, I will relate, because I think it very applicable to this part of my subject. It is an account of two large bodies of forces which fell in with each other in a dark night. A battle immediately ensued. The attack and resistance were supported with equal spirit. The contest was fierce and bloody. Great was the slaughter on both sides, and on both sides they were on the point of claiming the victory; when the day broke, and, as the light advanced, they soon perceived, to their astonishment and grief, that owing to the darkness of the night, they had been fighting, not with enemies as they had supposed, but with friends and allies. They had been doing their enemies' work, and weakening the cause they wished to support. The expectation of each party to conquer the other, was founded upon the losses the opponents had sustained; and this was what proportionably aggravated their lamentation and distress, when they had sufficient light to show them the mischief they had done. Ah! my friends, if shame be compatible with the heavenly state, as perhaps, in a sense it may, (for believers, when most happy here, are most sensibly ashamed of themselves,) shall we not, even then, be ashamed to think how often, in this dark world, we mistook our friends for foes; and that, while we thought we were fighting for the cause of God and truth, we were wounding and worrying the people whom we loved; and perhaps, indulging our own narrow, selfish, party-prejudices, under the semblance of zeal for his glory?

II. I hope what I have hitherto offered, though more directly addressed to ministers, may not be altogether uninteresting or unuseful to the rest of my auditory; but you who are not in the ministry, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have a desire in common with us, to win souls. And there is not only ample room and scope for your endeavours, in concert with ours, but without concurrence on your parts we can expect but little success. You, likewise, if animated by the wisdom which is from above, even those of you who are in the most confined situations, may be greatly instrumental in winning souls.

1. By your example. If you walk agreeable to your profession, blameless and harmless as the children of God, shining as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. When we preach a free salvation by the blood of Jesus, they who know no better, misrepresent our doctrine, as being unfavourable to the practice of morality, supposing that by the stress we lay upon faith in his atonement, as the only solid ground of hope for acceptance with God, we encourage men to expect to be saved at last, whether they

obey his commandments or not. We endeavour to convince them of this mistake, and to prove that, as without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6 ; so it is no less impossible for any person to possess true faith, without earnestly endeavouring to please and obey him in all things, from principles of love and gratitude. The proof of this is easy to those who understand the Scriptures, and acknowledge their divine authority. But many, yea, most people, are more likely to be convinced by what they observe of you, than what they hear from us. We assure them that our Gospel teaches those who receive it to renounce all ungodliness and worldly lust ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, Tit. ii. 12 ; to be temperate in prosperity, patient under affliction ; to fill up their several relations in life with integrity and diligence ; to be cheerfully submissive to the will of God under all changes ; to be meek, gentle, and benevolent, forbearing and forgiving ; in a word, to do, in all cases, to others, as we would they should do unto us, Matth. vii. 12. Happy for us, if when we look around upon our hearers, we can with confidence say, "ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," 2 Cor. iii. 2. If any ask us concerning the tendency of our doctrines, shall we send them to you, that they may notice, not only your serious and constant attendance upon public worship, but the good order of your families ; your behaviour as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants ; your punctuality in business and to all your engagements and promises, and the tenderness you discover to the characters and concerns of your neighbours ? Shall we send them to you when you are in trouble, when you are visited with sickness and strong pain, or when the desire of your eyes is taken away with a stroke, Ezek. xxiv. 16. that they may see with their own eyes and be satisfied, that you have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor contented yourselves with mere lifeless notions of truth ; but that your religion is real and powerful, and not only inspires you with a good hope respecting a future state, but is the source of your comfort, and the spring of your conduct, in the present life ? May we venture, my friends, to make this appeal ? Then, undoubtedly, you are wise to win souls. A profession like yours cannot be without an influence within your own circle. Do any persons, who know your whole deportment, affect to scorn or pity you ? If they treat you as hypocrites, they are hypocrites themselves ; they are contradicted by their own consciences. I will not say they love you ; but, be assured, they secretly reverence you. It is only the trifling half professor who hears the Gospel and talks about it, but dishonours it by his practice, whom the world real-

ly despise. And who can blame them for despising such characters? But, alas for those, who, by thus causing the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, lay stumbling-blocks before the blind! Levit. xix. 14.

The effects of a consistent conversation becoming the Gospel in those who profess it, were remarkably exemplified in the first Christian church at Jerusalem. They were apparently like sheep in the midst of wolves. They were surrounded by the very people who had lately murdered their Lord. But the holiness, love, joy, peace, union, and simplicity, which animated their conduct, impressed an awe upon the beholders, so that no poor pretender durst presume to join them; Acts v. 13. and, though divested of all outward advantages and support, the people were constrained to magnify them. Were this spirit more general amongst us, I believe it would be more effectual to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and to silence the cavils of infidels, than all our books and sermons. And the twelve apostles, were they now living amongst us, would probably preach to little purpose, unless a measure of this spirit were discoverable in their professed admirers.

2. By your prayers. You are not called to preach the Gospel, but, in this way you may greatly assist those who are. Brethren, pray for us. Our work is great; the difficulties we have to surmount, the snares and temptations which surround us, and our infirmities, are many. Who is sufficient for these things? The apostle Paul, distinguished as he was by the eminence of his grace, experience, and services, set a high value upon the prayers of God's people. Hear how he pleads with them, with an earnestness like that of a needy beggar requesting arms, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together in your prayers to God for me;" Rom. xv. 30. and pray, "that the word of the Lord may have free course, may run, and be glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1. The Lord has promised to do great things for his people, but he has said "that he will be inquired of by them, to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Prize and improve your great privilege of access to the throne of grace, by which every believer in Jesus, like Israel of old, has power with God and with man. In answer to effectual fervent prayer, the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a night, Isa. xxxvii. 21. 36. and Peter was delivered from a strong prison, and from the malice of Herod, Acts xii. 5. 12. The efficacy of prayer is still the same. If the Lord were pleased to pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon his people, we should find our public ordinances more lively and more fruitful: *We* should then hope to be more successful in win-

ning souls, and *you* might justly claim a principal share in the comfort and honour of seeing that good work prosper, to the success of which your prayers would largely contribute. Next to the immediate assistance and consolations of the Holy Spirit, nothing encourages a faithful minister so much, as when he thinks he can perceive that, while he is speaking, his hearers are drawing down a blessing upon his words by their prayers: it adds wings to his zeal, gives him a double impression upon his own heart, of the weight and importance of the truths he delivers; and enables him to dispense them with a double impression of demonstration and power upon the hearts of others.

3. By affording your countenance and assistance, according to the ability the Lord has given you, to promote every prudent and well-directed scheme which is set on foot for the more effectual spreading of that knowledge which is necessary in order to win souls from the dominion of sin to the service of God. Among these there are few, if any, which I can more warrantably commend to your attention, than the laudable and benevolent object of the Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor; an institution which it has pleased God signally to prosper, both by the large increase of their fund from year to year, and the many instances of the known happy effects which have followed the perusal of the books they have distributed. Many more instances, as yet unknown to us, we trust will be manifested in the great day, when the Lord shall appear in glory. Though the beginning of this society was small, they have, since the year 1750, when it was first formed, distributed more than four hundred thousand books, upwards of one hundred and five thousand of which were Bibles and New Testaments; the rest were small and plain books, well adapted to the capacities and circumstances of those who have, mostly, but a confined education, and who have not much time for reading. The number of books bestowed annually has been on the increase from year to year. In the course of the last year, according to the printed account, the number of all the different books was fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty. How much these donations may have multiplied the means of religious knowledge among people otherwise destitute, in these kingdoms, in our Plantations, and in America, who can say, who can even conjecture? And we hope, by the benefactions of this year, the Society will be able to do more the following year than in any former.

People who are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge, are still very numerous. The much which has been done, is little, compared with what the Society might yet do, were their resources equal to their wishes. I trust my request, that you will

strengthen their hands at this time will not be in vain : and that the brief account I have given you of their design and progress, will render further solicitation needless. To bespeak the benevolence of my stated congregation, when a collection is proposed, I seldom do more than inform them of the occasion, and that it has my good wishes. After the repeated proofs I have had of their generosity, I need do no more. Nor will I suppose that it is necessary to use any further arguments to prevail with you.

There may be some persons present who will kindly assist us in procuring the means of religious knowledge for others, who are hitherto unacquainted with the power and the comforts of religion themselves. May the good Lord now awaken their desires to obtain the one thing needful, the pearl of great price! That knowledge which is necessary for the poor, is equally so for you, whatever your situation in life may be. Will you pity others, and not feel a concern for your own case? You may deserve thanks from us for your ready assistance in this good work, and yet your heart may be in a state of alienation from God; you may have amiable qualifications, which entitle you to the esteem of your fellow-creatures, as you are members of society, and be, at the same time, destitute of the faith and hope of the Gospel. Permit me, before we part, to offer one consideration to your serious thought. We read that eight persons only were saved in the ark; 1 Pet. iii. 20. and only four of these, Noah and his three sons, were men. Considering the large dimensions of the ark, I think we may take it for granted that Noah and his sons did not build it without assistance; and there were no men to assist them in escaping from the flood, but such as afterwards perished in it. What an awful case! To afford their help to build an ark for the preservation of others, and then to remain out of the ark themselves, until the flood came and swept them all away. There is a day of wrath approaching. It will burn like an oven; it will ravage like a flood. The Gospel points out a refuge. The believer in Jesus Christ, like Noah in the ark, is in perfect safety. He is already delivered from condemnation, and shall stand before the Lord in humble confidence, when he shall come to judge the world. Your concurrence in this charitable design of distributing Bibles among the poor, that they may be timely warned to flee from the wrath to come, is commendable: thus you assist in preparing an ark for them; the very book or books which your money will purchase, may be blessed to the saving of souls, and consequently you may be the instrument. Can you bear the thought of being instrumental to the salvation of others, and to lose your own soul, and be yourself a cast-away at last.

after all the means and opportunities you have been favoured with; after all the warnings and calls you have had; after all the good you may have done as a member of society? Alas! is it possible that you can believe there is a flood coming, and that an ark is prepared, and not flee, instantly flee, for refuge, to the hope set before you? Oh! may the Lord make you truly wise, and effectually win your soul to himself.

Brethren, the wisdom spoken of in my text is very different from the wisdom of this world, which knows not God. But the Scripture cannot be broken; let us therefore abide by the sure decision of that *word* which cannot deceive or disappoint us. They are truly wise who are wise to win souls; and though they may be now obscured by misrepresentations and reproaches—they shall shine, ere long, as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3.

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THE GREAT ADVENT.

**A Sermon,**

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON APRIL 23, 1789.

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY  
RECOVERY.

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He shall call upon me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble : I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.—PSALM, xci. 15, 16.

—temporis illius  
Me consolor imagine :  
Festis quum populus me reducem choris  
Faustisque excipiet vocibus, et Dei,  
Pompa cum celebri, me comitabitur  
Augusta ad penetralia.

BUCHANAN, Psalm xlii.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1789.]

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## TO THE READER.

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The manifest interposition of Almighty God in favour of these kingdoms, has seldom, if ever, been more signally displayed, or more generally acknowledged by persons of every rank, party, or description, than in the late memorable and important event of the King's happy recovery. If so interesting a subject should give occasion to the publication of more thanksgiving sermons than usual, it will likewise suggest a sufficient apology for them. Considered as testimonies of loyalty to the King, and of gratitude to Him by whom Kings reign, they can scarcely be too numerous.

## THE GREAT ADVENT.

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I THESSALONIANS, iv. 16, 17.

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first ; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

OUR beloved King is now on his way, amidst the acclamations of an affectionate people, to St. Paul's Cathedral: there he will, this day, make his public acknowledgment to God, who heard his prayer in the time of trouble. It will be a joyful sight to thousands; and, perhaps, there is not a person in this assembly who has not felt a desire to be one of the spectators. But I am glad to meet you here. Many of you, I doubt not, earnestly and repeatedly prayed for the recovery of our gracious Sovereign; and you judge with me that the most proper expression of our gratitude and joy, is to unite in rendering praise to God upon the very spot where we have often presented our united prayers. And I infer from the largeness of the congregation, that few who stately worship with us are now absent; those excepted, who, residing in or near the line of procession, could not attend with propriety, nor perhaps with safety.

If He, in whose name we are met, shall be pleased (as his word encourages us to hope) to favour us with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to enable us, in the exercise of that faith which gives subsistence and evidence to things as yet future and unseen, to realize the subject of his text to our minds; we shall have no reason to regret our coming together upon this occasion.

The immediate design of the apostle in these words, is to comfort believers under a trial, which some of you perhaps feel at this hour, and to which any of us may be called sooner than we are aware, the removal of our Christian friends or relatives, with whom we have often taken sweet counsel, to a better world. Such a stroke, whenever it takes place, will awaken painful sensations, which he who knows our frame does not condemn. The tendency of the Gospel is to moderate and regulate, but not to stifle or eradicate, the feelings of humanity. We may sorrow, but provision is made that we should not sorrow like those who

have no hope; "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. It is but a temporary separation; we shall see them again to unspeakable advantage; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." The change of expression here is observable; "Jesus died." Death to him was death indeed: death in all its horrors: but he died for his people, to disarm death of its sting, to throw a light upon the dark passage to the grave, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. For now, they "that believe in him shall never die," John xi. 26. He so dispels their fears, and enlivens their hopes, that to them death is no more than a sleep; they sleep in Jesus, and are blessed. And when He, "who is their life, shall appear," as he certainly will, and every eye shall see him, "they also shall appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

But I think I am warranted to consider the text in a more general view, and to accommodate it to the happy event which demands our especial thankfulness and praise on this day. Let our thoughts rise from the King's splendid, though solemn, procession to St. Paul's, to contemplate that great advent of the King of kings, the idea of which filled and fired the apostles' thoughts. "Behold! he cometh in the clouds!" Rev. i. 7. He cometh in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, with all his angels, and with all his saints!" Matt. xxv. 31. 1 Thess. iii. 13.

If I attempt to illustrate the procession (so to speak) of that great day, for which all other days were made, by the most striking circumstances of the present day, it will, indeed, be comparing great things with small. In some respects, comparison will utterly fail, and I must have recourse to contrast. For what proportion can there be between finite and infinite; between the most important concerns of time and those of eternity?

Let us, however, aim to fix our feeble conceptions upon the Personage whose approach is here announced; upon the manner of his coming; upon his train of attendants; and upon the final event of his appearance, with which the scene will close.

"The Lord *Himself* shall descend." At another time, if both houses of Parliament, the judges, the foreign ministers, the principal part of the nobility and persons of distinction in the nation, were to assemble in St. Paul's, their presence would form a grand and affecting spectacle. But upon this occasion, though they

should be all there, if the King was not seen among them, it is probable they would be all in a manner overlooked; and disappointment and anxiety would mark the countenance of every beholder. But it is more than probable, it is absolutely certain that if all the glories of the invisible world were to open upon the view of those who feel their obligations to the Great Redeemer, they could not be completely happy, unless they were permitted to behold his glory. He has stipulated on their behalf, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, should be with me where I am," John, xvii. 24. ; and by his grace he qualifies them for their high privilege; so that even now they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Jesus is the light, the life, the sun of the soul that knows him according to the revelation given in the Scriptures of his person, offices, and grace. And, as the most magnificent palace would be but a dungeon, if it had no apertures to admit light; so the whole creation would be dark and dreary to his people, were it possible that they could be excluded from his presence.

In this life they can know but little of the particulars of that happiness which God has prepared for them that love him; but in general they know, and this suffices them, that they shall see him as he is, and shall be like him and with him, 1 John, iii. 2. They love him unseen, and while he is yet absent from them, the expectation, founded upon his own gracious promise, that he will shortly descend *himself*, to receive them and to avow them for his own, before the assembled world, is the food and joy of their hearts, which soothes their sorrows, and animates them under every difficulty they are exposed to, at present, for his sake.

Oh! the solemnity, the terrors, and the glories of that approaching day! Then they who have slighted his mercy, and abused his patience and forbearance, will tremble. Then many whom the world has admired or envied, many of "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," shall call (alas! in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his presence, Rev. vi. 15, 16. But they who love him and long for his appearance, will say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!" Isa. xxv. 9. May we, my brethren, have grace to use all diligence, that we "may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14.

Should we be asked, Why does every face express an air of satisfaction to-day? Why is the feeling of our own personal tri-

als in a degree suspended? Why does the public appearance of the King diffuse so general a joy among his loyal subjects? We can give a ready answer: we love our King. Few of us indeed, are personally known to him. The blessing of being under a good King, can only be known to the bulk of a nation by the influence of his administration upon the public welfare. This influence we have felt. It is true, we were too little sensible of it, too little thankful for it, until an alarming dispensation awakened our fears, lest we should lose the privileges we had not sufficiently prized; but then each man would remind himself how highly favoured we had been, as a people, for many years under his government; then we understood our great obligations to the King as the minister of God to us for good. We were sitting peaceably under our own vines and fig-trees, highly distinguished among the nations, by our civil and religious liberty, our prosperity at home, and our reputation abroad. The news of the King's illness, therefore, not only awakened our apprehensions, but revived our gratitude; and from the same principle we now rejoice in his recovery.

Again; because we loved him, we sympathized with him. We were afflicted by his affliction. We not only considered him as a King, but we felt for him as a man, a husband, a father. Such an instance of the dependent, precarious state of human life; such a proof, that no rank or situation is exempted from a share in the calamities which sin has brought into the world, impressed us with compassion blended with awe. And not our compassion only, but our prayers, were engaged for the King, the Queen, and Royal Family. I am persuaded many persons could scarcely have prayed more earnestly, had it been their own private and domestic concern. Our prayers have been heard, and signally answered, therefore we rejoice and give thanks to-day. We wish not to detract from the skill of physicians; they have been employed and owned as instruments of the merciful will of God; but we ascribe the praise for a recovery, so little hoped for, and so critically seasonable, to Him who raiseth the dead, who speaks and it is done.

And we rejoice in expectation. Indeed, in this view we may, and should, "rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11. How much may depend upon this single, this precarious life, we know not; neither do we know what might have been the consequences, if the rumor, at which we once shuddered, and which, for some hours, was generally believed, that God had taken him from us, had proved true.

Let us praise God, who has preserved us from knowing them. But the manner in which we have been relieved, encourages us both to pray and to hope, that our King is an object of God's especial care, and that he will live (long may he live!) to communicate still greater benefits to the nation, as the patron of true religion, the guardian of our constitution, and an exemplar of piety and virtue to his subjects; that God may give him to reign in the hearts of an enlightened, free, and affectionate people, and not permit any device or weapon formed against him to prosper.

For similar reasons, but vastly superior in importance, even as the heavens are higher than the earth, we rejoice in the assurance and prospect that the Lord himself will descend. He is "the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep," John x. 11; and therefore, they who know his name, and trust in him for salvation, are bound to him by the strongest ties of attachment and gratitude. They admire his condescension and his love. To his mediation and care they are indebted for his life and hopes. They remember what they were doing, and how carelessly they were sporting in the path that leadeth to destruction, when he first stopped them, turned them, and led them into his fold. He is, even now, their sun and shield, their wisdom and strength; on him they cast their cares, from him they receive their supplies; therefore they love him, though unseen, 1 Pet. i. 8. and rejoice in the hope of his appearance.

They know that he who will descend to receive them was once a man of sorrows and a companion of grief. And though this too little affected them in the time of their ignorance; it has been otherwise since they have derived life from his death, and healing from his wounds. They have sympathized with him in the agonies which he endured in Gethsemane, and upon Mount Golgotha. They remember that his face was defiled with spitting, his head crowned with thorns, his back torn by scourges, his hands and feet pierced with spikes; that he made his soul an offering for their sins, and was crucified for their sakes. Thus "he loved them, and gave himself for them," Gal. ii. 20. Thus he delivered them from approaching wrath; and this love has won their hearts. And they are waiting his return from heaven, 1 Cor. i. 7; that when they shall see him as he is, with all his angels, and with all his saints, they may join in nobler strains than they can at present reach, in songs of praise to Him who redeemed them to God by his own blood.

But though they have much to praise him for in this life, they have much more to expect when he shall descend. Their privi-

leges are great while here. They are already delivered from guilt and condemnation; they have access by him to a throne of grace; they have fellowship with him by faith, and joys which a stranger intermeddles not with—"But it does not yet appear what they shall be," 1 John iii. 2.—They are still in a state of warfare and trial; they are exposed to many troubles, to reproach, opposition and temptation; they are still straitened and hindered, in their best attempts and desires, by an indwelling principle of evil. They are sowing in tears; but when the Lord shall descend, they expect to reap with joy," Psalm cxxvi. 5. He is coming to wipe away all their tears, and then they are assured they shall weep no more. The days of their mourning shall cease for ever. He has prepared for them a kingdom, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. i. 4. In that kingdom they shall shine forth, each like the sun (Matt. xiii. 43.) in the firmament, an immense constellation of suns!

The manner in which the Lord will descend, can be but faintly illustrated by any circumstances borrowed from the pomp of this day. When the King enters St. Paul's, his arrival will be announced by the voice of the multitude, the discharge of cannon, and the deep-mouthed organ. But what are these, when compared with the voice of the archangel, the shout of all who love his appearance, and that trump of God which will shake the creation and raise the dead? Perhaps by the word *archangel*, in this connexion, we may understand the Lord of angels, the King himself. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people," Psalm l. 4. "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," John v. 25. The *shout* seems a military term. By a shout, soldiers encourage each other in the onset to battle; and there is a triumphant shout of victory when the enemy is utterly defeated. Such will be the shout when the Lord shall descend. His soldiers, who, fighting in his cause, have often endured hardship, and have sometimes lost a skirmish, shall, on the great day of decision, in the final event of the war, stand forth "more than conquerors, through him that loved them," Rom. viii. 37. Their shout shall proclaim his praise: "For they got not the victory by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them," Psalm xlv. 3. The Lord leads them on, teaches them to fight, clothes them with complete armour, and supplies them with strength. He himself subdues their foes; and when he shall descend with glory he will terminate the contest. His people will then utter a universal shout, and shall hear the noise of war no more.

When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the trumpet of

God was heard exceeding loud, Exod. xix. 16—19. it waxed louder and louder; the people trembled and Moses spoke. The apostle records his words: Even Moses the favoured servant of God, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb. xii. 21. But the sound of the last trump, when the Lord shall descend again, will be much louder, and the effects much more important and extensive. It will be heard not only in the neighbourhood of one mountain, but from east to west, from pole to pole; not only by the living, but by the dead; by all who ever lived.

Then, at his great command, they that dwell in the dust shall awake, Isa. xxvi. 19. The earth and the sea shall deliver up their dead. There will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. "Some shall rise to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2.

The joy, this day, for the recovery and appearance of our King, is general, I hope universal. I hope there are few persons in the kingdom who do not cordially share in it. However, if contrary sensations do exist, they are suppressed and concealed. But the Great King has borne with many avowed enemies, and with many traitors disguised under the profession of his name, from age to age. He will not bear with them always. He knows them all, and not one of them can escape his notice. To them the language of the trump will be, "Arise and come to judgment!" My heart is pained to think, that possibly, some of this description may be now present in our assembly. Yet I am glad you are here, that I may warn you to flee from the wrath to come. What a dreadful day will it be, when you, if unhumiliated, unpardoned, unsanctified, as you now are, shall be compelled to stand before his tribunal! For we are assured, that when he returns to bless his willing people, he will summon his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, Luke xix. 27. He will place them at his left hand, and denounce that awful sentence upon them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41. As yet he is upon a mercy-seat. Oh! "seek him while he may be found; call upon him while he is near!" Isa. lv. 6. There is forgiveness with him. Humble yourselves before him, and entreat for mercy. Entreat him to show you who he is, and what he has done for sinners; that you may believe and be saved. Otherwise you must stand before his judgment seat. Then his wrath will burn like fire.

But it is of the dead in Christ I am chiefly to speak. These shall rise first, and, together with those of his servants who shall be living at his coming, shall be caught up to meet him in the air.

There are expressions in Scripture which intimate, that the servants of the Lord Christ shall have the honour of being, in some manner beyond our feeble apprehension, assessors with their Lord in the day of judgment, Luke xxii. 30. 1 Cor. vi. 3. They will witness and approve his proceedings. In this state of infirmity, it becomes them, and is their duty, to pity and pray for the wicked, and to use all their influence to persuade them to pity themselves, to forsake their evil ways, that they may live. But in the great and terrible day, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, the righteous will be so perfectly impressed with the justice and holiness of the sentence of condemnation, that they will not hesitate to say, "Amen: So let thine enemies perish, O Lord!" Judges v. 31.

But the apostle, using the language of prophecy which speaks of the future as though it were actually present, says, further, "Then we that are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air!" Not, as I apprehend, that he expected to be living when the Lord shall descend; by the word *we*, he expresses his joint relation with the many members which constitute the one body, of which the Lord Christ is the head. Of these, there will be some living when he shall appear. And of these, he says elsewhere, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. They will not suffer that separation of soul and body which we call death. But as mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, He will change their vile bodies, according to the pattern of his glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. and they, like Enoch and Elijah of old, shall ascend, together with those who are raised from the dead, to meet him in the air.

These will constitute his train. The redeemed from the earth; they who lived and died in the faith of his name, through a course of successive generations; and they who shall be alive at his coming, shall be all collected together, and prepared to welcome Him.

Of the numbers who will rejoice to see the King to-day, many, though loyal subjects, will only behold him at a distance; and the far greater part of his people will not behold him at all. Few but the nobility and principal persons can gain admission into the church; though the crowds in the street will participate in the general satisfaction. Could we suppose that, instead of the common people, the streets were filled, and the windows lined by the great; that all the sovereigns, potentates and illustrious personages in Europe, were assembled, to be spectators of the joyful

event which now calls for our thanksgivings ; splendid as the course might appear in the eyes of men, they would be unspeakably inferior, in rank and dignity, to those who shall meet the Lord. Not one of his people will be absent ; and, however poor and unnoticed many of them once were, they will then, every one, be greater than the kings of the earth. They will all claim the title, and the claim will be allowed, of "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 18. They will all possess "that honour which cometh of God only," John v. 44. The glorious company of apostles, the goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, will march in the procession ; and, besides these, an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number, whose exaltation and happiness are but imperfectly represented to us by images borrowed from the things which are deemed most valuable and honourable amongst men. They are said to be clothed with white robes, to have crowns upon their heads, to be furnished with harps, and to bear palms (the emblem of victory) in their hands, Rev. iv. 10. vii. 9

"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke, xii. 32. May grace preserve you from being ashamed of your Lord now, and you will not be ashamed of Him, nor will he be ashamed of you, when he shall come to judge the world, Matt. x. 32. Mark, viii. 38.

When all mankind shall be ranged before this Great Judge, he will own and vindicate his people in the presence of assembled worlds, and pass an irrevocable sentence of exclusion and condemnation upon his enemies ; and then, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," Matt. xxv. 34. ; then he will present them "before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," Jude, 24. ; then time shall be no more, Rev. x. 6. ; they will no longer measure their existence by the revolutions of the sun and the moon ; they will enter upon an eternal state. With this event the apostle closes the description in my text. Here he stops—the rest is too great for language to express, or thought to conceive. He can only say, "and so we shall for ever be with the Lord." Who can expound this sentence ? We must leave this world, and be admitted into the inheritance of saints in light, before we can fully understand the import of these few words.

We shall be with the Lord. There is no doubt, that if the power of our King were equal to the benevolence of his heart, he would willingly make all who shall see him to day, yea, all his subjects, in every part of his dominions, completely happy. But

can he take them all with him to court? Can he treat them all as his own children? Can he invest them all with dignities and possessions equal to the largest desires of their hearts? Could we, for a moment, conceive it possible for an earthly king to do thus, still it would afford but a very faint illustration of our subject. The highest effects of his favour would be precarious and transient, confined to the term of a short life, and, in their nature, incapable of answering the instinctive appetite of the soul of man, formed for immortality, and endued with a capacity for good, which nothing less than being with the Lord can satisfy.

When Peter saw his Saviour transfigured upon the mount, a glance of his glory instantly fixed and filled his mind. He forgot all inferior attachments, and said, "it is good to be here," Matt. xvii. 4. He would have been glad to build tabernacles upon the mount, and to return to the world no more. He knew not, indeed, what he said; there was much for him yet to do and to suffer for his Master; but he well knew why he said it: and all who are partakers of the grace of God are like-minded with Peter. And though at present they walk by faith, and not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 7. they are sometimes favoured with seasons of refreshment, with golden hours, when, according to his gracious promise, he manifests himself unto them, as he does not unto the world, John, xiv. 22. and causes his goodness to pass before them: then, for the time, they are raised above both the cares and the comforts of this world, and could be glad to remain with him. But, like Peter, they must return to fill up the duties of their situation in life, till his appointed hour of dismissal. However, these foretastes convince them that they cannot be properly happy till they are with him in his kingdom, where nothing will conceal him for a moment from their view.

Their nearest approaches to him now are likewise subject to abatements. Something from within or from without still occurs to interrupt, and too often to suspend their joys. Their communion with him is indistinct, through the medium of ordinances, and a veil of flesh and blood. This veil hinders them, not only as it is polluted, but as it is weak, and subject to many infirmities. We cannot see him as yet, and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. If he did not accommodate the discovery of himself to the frailty of our nature, we should be overpowered. The beloved disciple had often conversed familiarly with his Lord, and reclined on his bosom during his state of humiliation; but when he appeared in the Isle of Patmos, though his majesty was attempered with mildness and

love, and his design was to honour and comfort him, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead," Rev. i. 17.

Further : pain, indisposition, and trouble, often distract their attention, or detain them from the opportunities in which he has promised to meet his people. They are glad when it is said unto them, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord ;" Psal. cxxii. 1. but they are frequently shut up, and cannot come forth : Psal. lxxxviii. 8. and though he supports them under all their afflictions, yet it is no small trial, to be confined from his ordinances. But when they shall meet their Lord in the air, they will be freed from every defect, defilement, and impediment. They will see Him as he is, without any interposing veil or cloud. They will be out of the reach of sin, temptation, pain, and grief. They are blessed now, though often called to mourn, because they will then be comforted, Matt. v. 4.

Again : we shall be for ever with the Lord. Oh ! that word *for ever* ! Even to be with the Lord, and to possess a happiness commensurate to the utmost grasp of our capacity, if it were only for a month, or a year, or an age, or a thousand ages—the thought that this happiness must at length have an end, however distant the termination might be, would cast a damp upon the whole enjoyment. But to know that the happiness is eternal, that they who are once with the Lord, shall be with him for ever, this is, if I may so speak, the heaven of heaven itself. Such honour awaits all the saints : for thus hath the Amen, the faithful and true witness, already declared, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the house of my God, and he shall go no more out:" Rev. iii. 12. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isa. lx. 20.

I hope I have not digressed from the design of this day by attempting to lead your thoughts to the day of the Lord. I have availed myself of every occasion which my views of the text have suggested, to impress upon your hearts, and my own a sense of the very great mercy which God in answer to prayer, has bestowed upon us, by restoring health to the King, and enabling him to pay his public acknowledgment to the Most High, and to revisit his affectionate people. But never are our temporal mercies so sweet, so valuable, nor so likely to be permanent, as when they are thankfully contemplated in immediate connexion with the hand of Him by whom kings reign, and, "who doth what pleaseth him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," Dan. iv. 35. Nay, to us, who are soon to pass into

an eternal state, the most important concerns of nations and kingdoms are, in reality, trivial as the sports of children, unless we can acknowledge, trace, approve, and admire, the great and ultimate designs of God, to which all the revolutions that take place in human affairs are subordinate and subservient.

His wise and holy providence ruleth over all; and every movement has either a more remote or a more direct tendency to bring forward the glories of that day, when the Lord himself shall descend to receive his own people, and to execute vengeance upon his adversaries.

Knowing to whom I am preaching, I have not thought it necessary to offer proof, that the God who has restored health to the King, and happiness to the kingdom, is he to whom my text refers, He of whom we say in our public Liturgy, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge." It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. We rest in his own declaration unmoved by all the cavils of those who, alas! know him not, that all things "are delivered unto him, all power committed to him, in heaven and earth," Matt. xi. 27. xxviii. 18. How else could we trust to him for the expiation of our sins and the salvation of our souls, guilty and helpless as we are in ourselves, and conscious of the snares, difficulties, dangers, and enemies to which we are exposed? "The Lord reigneth," Psal. xcix. 1. "He is King of saints, King of nations, King and Lord of the universe." "The government is upon his shoulders," Isa. ix. 6. This God is the God we adore, and we now aim to imitate the songs of those with whom we shortly hope to join: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12.

While I exhort you to rejoice, and join with you in rejoicing, for the late instance of his goodness to the King, to the nation, and to ourselves, I feel the highest pleasure in the thought, that I see many around me, (Oh! that I could hope the same of you all,) to whom I may warrantably say, Rejoice on these accounts; but rather, especially and above all, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven," Luke x. 20. and that the Lord whom you love, and who now guides you by his counsel, will shortly descend to receive you to his glory, Psal. lxxiii. 24.

## HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

## FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

## I.

MAN can seldom prize the blessings  
 Which our gracious God bestows,  
 In the moment of possessing ;  
 Or return the praise he owes.  
 But, with other eyes he views them  
 In affliction's threatening days ;  
 When he fears, lest he should lose them,  
 Then he trembles, weeps and prays.

## II.

Comets or eclipses wake him,  
 For a moment fix his eye,  
 Hurricanes or earthquakes shake him,  
 And extort an anxious cry ;  
 While the sun, with gentle motion,  
 Spreading blessings through the year,  
 Causes no devout emotion,  
 Neither gratitude nor fear.

## III.

God, in mercy to this nation,  
 Has afforded us a king,  
 Whose benign administration  
 Cheer'd us like the sun in spring.  
 Truth and liberty were nourish'd  
 By his mild auspicious rays :  
 Thus, in peace, the kingdom flourish'd ;  
 But our hearts forgot to praise.

## IV.

When a dark eclipse succeeded,  
 Fear a thousand ills surmis'd ;  
 Then we felt how much we needed  
 What we had too little prized :  
 Then we pray'd, and since have proved  
 Fervent prayer is not in vain ;  
 Prayer the dark eclipse removed,  
 And our sun shines bright again.

## V.

Lord! to thee, the Great Physician,  
We our hearts and voices raise!  
Thou didst answer our petition,  
Now accept our humble praise!  
Bless our king, Almighty Saviour!  
May he long the sceptre wield,  
For our good, and with thy favour,  
Thou, his Wisdom, Strength, and shield!

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THE  
IMMINENT DANGER AND THE ONLY SURE RESOURCE OF THIS  
NATION.

**A Sermon,**

PREACHED IN THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNETH,  
ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.



Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.—HOSEA, vi. 1.

In publico discrimine, omnis homo miles est.

[FIRST PRINTED IN 1794.]

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THE DANGER AND RESOURCE OF THIS NATION.



JONAH, iii. 9.

*Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?*

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were Heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his predictions, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, "they believed God," (Verse 5.) The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation of business and of pleasure took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy; though they had no encouragement but a peradventure, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not?"

It appears, from this and other passages of Scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die," Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15; and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them," Jer. xviii. 7, 8. The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent, he is of one

mind, who can turn him? Numb. xxiii. 19. Job xxiii. 13. Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgment of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance, and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us, Matt. xii. 41. if we do not imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately on their first hearing him; and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more than, Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet had so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet; nor is it necessary. We know, or may know, from his written word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, Isa. iii. 10, 11. The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the Scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God is preached unto us. Jesus Christ as crucified is set forth amongst us, Gal. iii. 1. 1 John i. 7. Rom. viii. 1. Acts xiii. 39. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified. They have also free access to a throne of grace; and, like Israel, they have power, by prayer, to prevail with God and with man, Gen. xxxii. 28. And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not? Rev. ii. 21. May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his providence. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness, Isa. xxvi. 9, 11. His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet, sooner or later, they must, they shall see. The great God has a controversy with the potsherds of the earth. The point to be decided between him and

many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home, is, whether he be the Governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concerns in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havoc must spread, men must perish by millions, yea, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause, and, either in a way of judgment or of mercy, all men shall know that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, "Ye," or they, "shall know that I am the Lord! Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good?" Ezek. *passim*.

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horrors which overspread a great part of the Continent, the distant report of which is sufficient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged; yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though we are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him either to save or to destroy, by many or by few, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. Our fleets and armies may be well appointed and well commanded; but, without his blessing upon our councils and enterprises, they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissention. And by his mighty wind, he can dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth not?" Lam. iii. 37.

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, "Think ye that these men were sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 4, 5. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts!

It will not become us to say, either to God or man, that we have indeed sinned, but there are greater sinners than ourselves. It is true the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exceeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and cruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who, though they are overawed by their oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in secrecy and silence for the abominations which they cannot prevent. But the French have not sinned against such advantages as we possess. They were long the slaves of arbitrary power, and the dupes of superstition; and of late they have been the dupes of madmen assuming the name of philosophers. We, on the contrary, were born and educated in a land distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of Gospel truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favoured, and for an equal space of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us in disobedience and ingratitude.

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than specimens of what human depravity is capable of, when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions necessary to the peace and welfare of civil society are judicially removed. The influence of daring infidelity and profligate example, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity.

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our hatred or our scorn, but rather of our pity. They know not what they do. Let us pray for them. Who can tell but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may give them also repentance? And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be instructed and warned by their history; for, by nature, we are no better than they.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting to-day, is to "humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved; and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and

land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdom."\* I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—Oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described! Isa. vi. Oh! that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen; could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence and the attitude of his attendant angels? They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability, as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to him. Oh! that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription—Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one, for himself, would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, "Wo is me, I am undone!" we should, at least, say (the Hebrew word might be so rendered) I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear, to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin and the misery which abounds in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, "their iniquity is not yet full," Gen. xv. 16. I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though, by grace, delivered from the reigning power of sin, are still sinners, Rom. vi. 14. In many things we offend all, in thought, word, and

\* Title page of the appointed Form of Prayer.

deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light and experience ; for those personal sins, the record of which is known only to God and our consciences ; for the defects and defilements of our best services ; for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God ; our alertness in the pursuits of our own will and way ; our indifference to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions, when our own temporal interests are affected, are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them—"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," Psalm cxxx. 3, 4.

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant or felt, when he said, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell than for our own. We shall be so, if, with the eyes of our mind, we behold the King, the Lord of hosts ; because his glory, which should be the dearest object of our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him. He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to show amongst us such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this island ; it was probably at an early period of the Christian era. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the dawn of returning Gospel light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliffe, the morning star of the Reformation, the true Gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this Gospel have suffered for it. They were

preserved faithful in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils, at different times, have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide-spreading and flourishing commerce has raised us to a pitch of opulence which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great-Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend, in every direction to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply, with equal propriety, to us? "What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 4.

How is the blessed Gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number; and, for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The Gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is, indeed, justified of all her children, Luke vii. 35. Rom. i. 16. The Gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery; guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, Titus ii. 12. But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the pre-

judices of those who speak against what they know not. Alas ! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversation, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that Gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love and peace !

What, then, must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths and worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning, thoughtless security, dissipation, and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequence of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the African slave-trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins, because I hope, and believe, a very great majority of the nation earnestly long for its suppression. But, hitherto, petty and partial interest prevail against the voice of justice, humanity and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France, you would, perhaps, be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this traffic, which I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own observation, are equal in atrocity, and, perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us ; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him !

II. Have we not, therefore, cause to say, with the Ninevites, who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations; and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed; if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves; if all the day long he has stretched out his hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people, Rom. x. 21. and, hitherto, almost in vain; if neither the tokens of his displeasure nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds; who can tell if he will yet be entreated? may we not fear lest he should say, “My spirit shall strive with them no more:” “They are joined to their idols let them alone:” “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you, when you make many prayers, I will not hear!” Hosea, iv. 17. Isa. i. 15.

Where are now the mighty empires which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain-tops. Nothing of them remains but their name. They perished; and their memorials have almost perished with them, Psalm ix. 6. The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, “Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Jer. v. 9.

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece and in the Lesser Asia? When the apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the Gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are every where spoken of; and that we are examples to all that believe? that our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first? Rom. i. 8. 1 Thes. i. 7. Rev. ii. 1, 18, 19. Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny

him?—that they are neither hot nor cold?—that they have a name to live, and are dead?—that they have at least forgotten their first love? Titus, i. 16. Rev. iii. 1, 15. ii. 4. When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting they gradually became more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions, which once enjoyed the light of the Gospel, have been long overspread with Mahometan darkness, and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, Jer. vii. 4. if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of his glory into the hands of their enemies, I Sam. iv. 5, 11. to teach them, and to teach us that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell? Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked, Deut. xxxii. 15. Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain in a time of disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted and instigated by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

“Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things: therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things,” Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives to

a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God! Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not? If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by his blessing, it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth; take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm, Isa. vii. 2; but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe, Psalm xlvi. 1. xc. 1. cxix. 114.

1. He who loved you and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, of all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain, Matt. xxviii. 18. Psalm xcix. 1. lxxvi. 10. In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed; so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people, 2 Kings xix. 28. Isa. lix. 19. Job xxxviii. 10, 11. Psalm lxxv. 7.

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make him your fear and your dread, he will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, Isa. viii. 13, 14. Psalm xlvi. 2.

2. Your part and mine is to watch and pray. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded

up, and our lamps burning, that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event, Mark xiii. 35. xiv. 33. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his Gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, Mal. i. 11. and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled; and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light will undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved King, and his family, upon the counsels of government and parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret, mark of divine protection. The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us strength according to our day. He is always near to his people, a very present help in time of trouble; and he can make the season of their greatest tribulations the season of their sweetest consolations, Ezek. ix. 4. Matt. x. 30. Dent. xxxiii. 25. 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an axe, or a saw, in the hand of God. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed; and the Assyrian army melted away like snow, Isa. x. 15. xxxviii. 14—36. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened, while the church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance, Acts xii. 5—13.

And as we have heard, so have we seen, God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable, was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When

he thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream! Psal. cxxvi. 1.

I believe prayer was no less efficacious towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters, upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men were turned like the tide, in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident. Then we had a repeated proof that he hears and answers prayer.

The present, likewise, is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us, as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate, and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite, in supplications for mercy, who can tell but he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? Yea, we have encouragement to hope, that "he will be for us," and then none can prevail against us, Rom. viii. 31. But without his blessing, our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state—you, I trust, will show yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows; and by standing in the breach and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction, Gen. xviii. 32.

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are little concerned for their own sins, and are, of course, incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it. Or if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the

possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? Or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every suppliant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, he will give it you; if you seek it, in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find, Matt. vii. 7. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26, 27. If you are not saved by faith in his blood, you are lost forever. "Oh! kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" Psal. ii. 12.

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